

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Introduction

This study associated human attributes of the halal food model with the attributes of information searching model to ensure an effective searching was applied for halal food product information, contributing to the perception of wholesomeness of halal food. The human attributes selected in this study included attitude, habit, and awareness of individuals. Specifically, the attitude was related to the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) model (Ajzen, 1985, 1991), while habit was related to the schematic of the Triandis model (Chang and Cheung, 2001). In the case of individual awareness, it was related to the conceptual framework developed by Siti Zanariah Yosef and Nor Azura Adzharuddin (2017). This research linked these attributes with process verification, as identified in Section 3.2 (proposed framework) and further elaborated in Section 3.7. Meanwhile, four components were linked to the wholesomeness of the proposed model, namely information sources, process verification, awareness of information, and traceability. Notably, traceability and wholesomeness were the attributes of the challenges in halal food, which were selected in the study by Mohd Aliff et al. (2015).

### 3.2 Proposed Framework

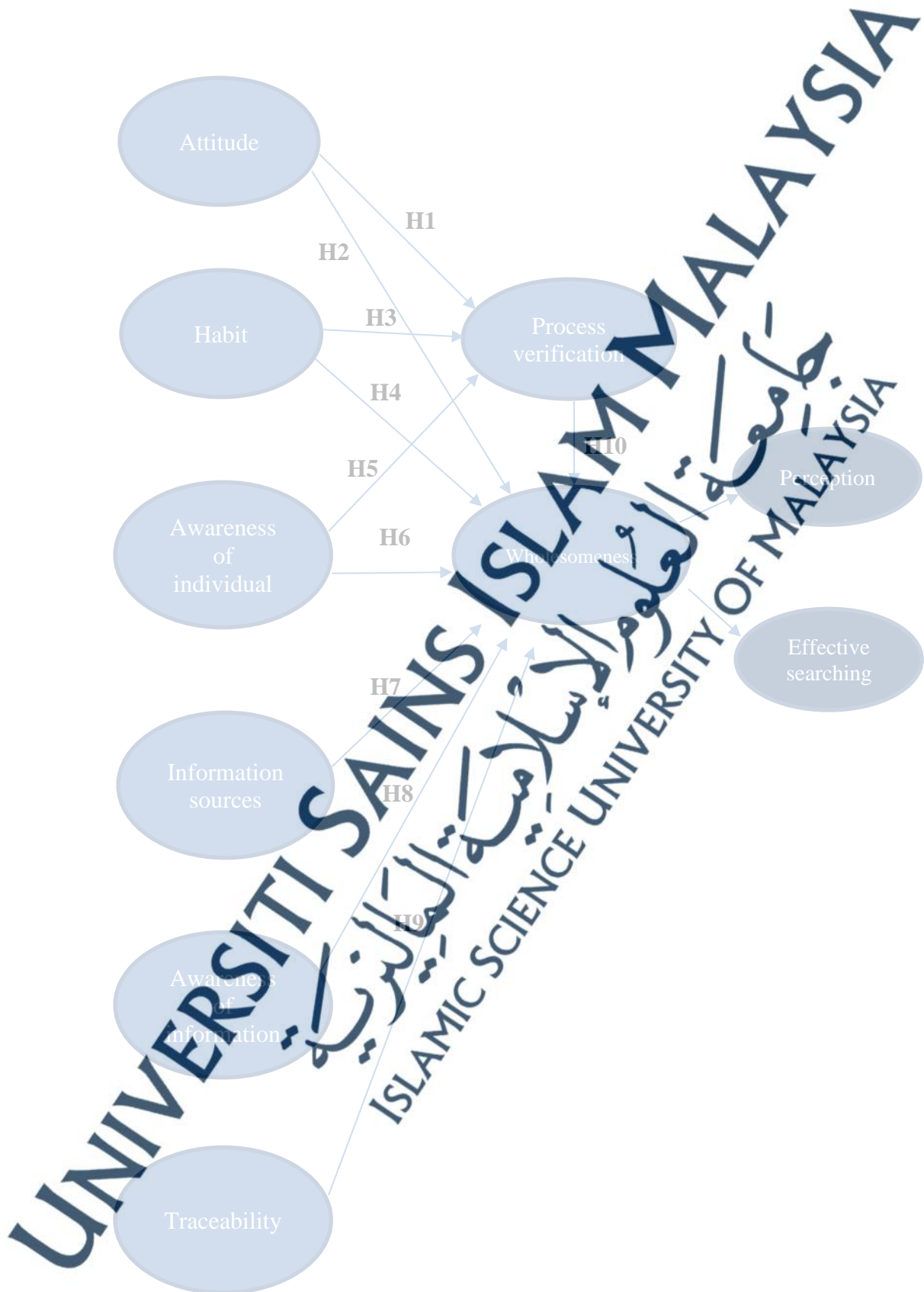


Figure 3.1: Proposed framework

### 3.3 Hypotheses

Based on the proposed framework, the following hypotheses were tested in this research:

**H1:** The attitude of consumers towards halal food is positively related to the process verification of halal food information.

**H2:** The attitude of consumers towards halal food is positively related to the perception of wholesomeness, which leads to effective searching for halal food information.

**H3:** The habit of consuming halal food is positively related to the process verification of halal food information.

**H4:** The habit of consuming halal food is positively related to the perception of wholesomeness, which leads to effective searching for halal food information.

**H5:** The awareness of an individual is positively related to the process verification of halal food information.

**H6:** The awareness of an individual is positively related to the perception of wholesomeness, which leads to effective searching for halal food information.

**H7:** Information sources used for searching for halal food information is positively related to the perception of wholesomeness, which leads to effective searching for halal food information.

**H8:** The awareness of information about halal food is positively related to the perception of wholesomeness, which leads to effective searching for halal food information.

**H9:** The traceability of halal food information is positively related to the perception of wholesomeness, which leads to effective searching for halal food information.

**H10:** The process verification of halal food information is positively related to the perception of wholesomeness, which leads to effective searching for halal food information.

In the following sections, human attributes, information seeking attributes, and halal food challenges attributes will be reviewed in detail.

### 3.4 Human Attributes

This subsection presents the human attributes selected from previous studies due to their impacts in information searching for halal food product information. For example, consumers with a strong attitude towards halal food consumption would result in a positive influence on the searching for halal food product information. Meanwhile, a consumer who has a habit of consuming halal food will affect this searching process due to their familiarity with this consumption. Therefore, the awareness of individual of the purchase and consumption of halal food plays an important role in searching for halal food product information.

#### 3.4.1 Attitude

Eagly and Chaiken (1998) defined attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour". Therefore, a strong belief of an individual leads to a positive attitude towards a behaviour, while a weak belief leads to a negative attitude towards a behaviour. Ajzen (2001) stated that attitude impacts an object. In general, the impact is perceived as an evaluative structure used to form the attitude object, while attitude may affect the attention to attitude objects, the use of categories for encoding information, and the interpretation, judgment, and recall of attitude-relevant information (Vogel, Bohner,

and Wanke, 2014). These impacts are often remarkable due to the strong attitudes, which are accessible and based on elaborate supportive knowledge structure. For this reason, attitudes could shape encoding information, attention, and behaviours despite the pursuit of unrelated goals by the individual.

### 3.4.2 Habit

Habit is improved when an action is performed repeatedly due to the fast movement of the neurons from a trigger point upon the opening of the neurons path. The examples of a habit are watching TV and eating halal food. Depending on the complexity of the habit and the number of times it is performed, the development of habitual behaviours requires days, months, or years. With the pathway created by the neurons, habitual behaviours would stay fixed and durable. Several studies, which incorporated TPB in food-related behaviour, implemented habit as an independent predictor of intentions (Alam & Sayuti, 2011; Dang, Nardia & Gupta, 2020). It was highlighted by Ali et al. (2018) that eating halal food is a part of the Muslim or Islamic identity, indicating that the acceptance of halal products, such as halal meat, could be considered a norm or a habit for some Muslims. For some individuals, the acceptance or consumption of products is considered a habit due to their familiarity in it. Besides, habit is an automatic behaviour, which goes beyond an individual's awareness. In another study by Wood and Neal (2007), it was found that when behaviours are performed consistently, an increase in the link between the context and the action is present, which enhances the automaticity of the behaviour in that context. Moreover, Baugh (1994) identified the features of automatic behaviour, namely efficiency, lack of awareness, unintentionality, and uncontrollability. In contrast, strong self-control may influence the formation of habits, which subsequently impacts behaviour. This finding

is in line with the empirical result in Adriaanse, Kroese, Giebaart, Ridder, and Denise's (2014) study, who found that habits mediated the relationship between self-control and unhealthy snack consumption.

### 3.4.3 Awareness of Individual

Gutwin and Greenberg (2002) defined awareness as "knowledge created through the interaction of an agent and its environment". Therefore, individuals' awareness could be measured by monitoring and perceiving the information of the environment they are in. In another study by Greenberg, Gutwin, and Cockburn (1996), awareness could be defined by specifying it into the following features:

- 1) Awareness is knowledge about the state of some environment.
- 2) Provided that environments change continuously, awareness knowledge must be constantly maintained.
- 3) Individuals interact with the environment to maintain awareness.
- 4) Awareness is generally a part of some other activities, making it the secondary goal to the primary goal of the activity.

Muslim's awareness has a strong influence to educate the manufacturer of halal food products in the market. Notably, the understanding and awareness of the halal and haram concept are essential for Muslims as they could not solely adhere to the act and the authority. For example, Muslim consumers should be aware of the contents and ingredients of their food or any products when they shop. All Muslim consumers need to know about any products they attempt to buy.

Few types of research in Malaysia, which were related to halal products, were performed, such as the research by Marmaya, Zakaria and Desa (2019). Despite the increase in the factor of awareness among Malaysians, the awareness level remained in

a low category compared to other countries, such as Indonesia and Thailand. The main factor leading to this situation is the limited source of product information in the market. Notably, this issue becomes most severe when the media report of the misuse of halal logos by irresponsible individuals almost every day, regardless of the form of print or electronic media. To overcome this issue, the level of consumer awareness was identified, and a suitable concept in promoting halal products was suggested.

### 3.5 Information Seeking Attributes

The attributes in the following subsection are based on the model of information searching among the professionals, which originated from the research on engineers, healthcare professionals, and lawyers by Leckie et al. (1996)

#### 3.5.1 Sources of Information

Professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, clerics, nurses, and engineers seek information from various sources, including colleagues, librarians, handbooks, journal articles, their knowledge, and experiences. In general, these sources of information could be categorized according to the types of channels, including formal, informal, internal, external, oral, and personal. Furthermore, formal sources including conferences, journals, and internal and external sources are within and outside of the organization, while oral or written sources include a paper copy or electronic text. Personal sources consist of an individual's knowledge, experience, and practices. Notably, the formal, informal, internal, and external sources could easily be identified in the literature. To illustrate, a study of information needs among rural healthcare workers by Lundeen et al. (1994) found that the most frequent sources consulted by

physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals were journaling articles and informal discussions with colleagues, while health care administrators preferred journal articles and reports.

It was found in the current study that Malaysian Muslim consumers preferred formal information sources, such as JAKIM, TV, and radio compared to informal information sources, such as family members and friends. This preference was due to their belief that formal sources are more reliable and credible compared to the informal sources. On the contrary, the research on engineers demonstrated that the engineers had a strong preference for informal sources of information, including colleagues and their collection of technical reports, handbooks, and journal articles (Thomas, 1977).

Personal knowledge and experience were categorized as separate characteristics due to the lack of acknowledgement as the primary sources of information. Besides, one of the aspects differing a professional from other types of workers is the advanced body of a specialized knowledge, which should be mastered by an individual from a particular profession. Therefore, it was indicated in previous studies that professionals primarily relied on their knowledge and experience when faced with a work-related decision or problem (Provan, Dekker & Rae, 2017; Thindwa, Chawinga & Dube, 2019; Ramasamy & Ali, 2020)

A different situation was observed in this study, in which consumers were presented with a wide range of selection of information sources for halal food based on their attitude towards halal food consumption. A strong attitude towards this consumption resulted in the searching for credible and trusted information sources for halal food, as they believed that formal sources, such as JAKIM are reliable.



### 3.5.2 Awareness of Information

Information searching behaviour of an individual is determined by the knowledge of different information sources, individuals' perception of a process, and the nature of the acquired information. Therefore, the individuals' awareness of information sources would determine the methods performed for information searching, as clarified in the following subsections. It was highlighted in the previous literature review that some of the most important variables, in this case, were familiarity and prior success, trustworthiness, packaging, timeliness, cost, quality, and accessibility.

#### 3.5.2.1 Familiarity and Prior Success

Professionals search for information from the information sources they are familiar with, and the sources with an earlier success in a similar aspect. To illustrate, engineers will often select an information source based on the authors they have already known and the sources they have used (Todorova et al., 2007). Lawyers will often use their notes from other cases and reference sources they are familiar with (Maynard, 2019).

#### 3.5.2.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a highly significant impact, which describes several perceptions (Breuer et al., 2020). It may refer to the professional's faith that a source will provide accurate information and represent the belief that the source is not socially risky, by which the nature of the request will not be revealed, and confidentiality will be kept (Breuer et al., 2020).

### 3.5.2.3 Packaging

Packaging may exhibit a strong effect, especially when a professional needs information through a particular medium or in a specific format. For instance, Cierloff and Dubois et al. (2020). Evaluated Effects of front-of-pack labels on the nutritional quality of food purchases. They emphasized the availability of the key pieces of information. Regardless of a need is planned or unforeseen, information must be immediately obtained within an acceptable amount of time. However, the usefulness and impact of the information would be reduced if it is acquired too early or too late (Wyrwa & Barska, 2017). In other words, the information must coincide with the need as it is involved in the natural progression of the professional's work.

### 3.5.2.4 Cost

The use of a particular information source is professionally advised based on several factors, including information source importance, the time spent on information searching, and the money expenses needed. Overall, these factors form the significance of cost in information-seeking behaviours, which consist of two categories, namely psychological and physical. To be specific, psychological cost refers to learning to use a new source of information or ask a supervisor while being exposed to the risk of being judged as incompetent, while physical cost refers to the effort to locate and acquire a specific piece of information. For example, it was found in the cost/benefit model proposed by Curley et al. (1990) that there was a statistically significant relationship between the use of an information source and access cost variables through the empirical testing of the model.

### 3.5.2.5 Quality

Although quality may be omitted for efficiency in some cases when a professional is seeking information, it remains to be an aspect to be considered. It was suggested by Orr (1989) that perceived quality and relevance of information should be the primary criteria in the selection of information product or service by the engineers. Although some pieces of evidence supported this assertion, such as the assertion in the study about the factors influencing the use of technical reports by aerospace engineers, Pellegrino et al. (2020) found that technical quality was one of the strongest determinants of usage, although it was supported by the low amount of empirical data.

### 3.5.2.6 Accessibility

Accessibility could be considered as the most dominant factor of information awareness. The view of the relative accessibility of information could be influenced by physical proximity and other considerations, such as the language used to convey the information. Numerous studies illustrated that various types of professionals perceived their collections to be the most accessible, which would be used despite the limitation in the information are rather limited. The studies by physicians Woolf Steven and Dennis Benson (1989) and Bowden et al. (1994) illustrated that the professionals preferred to seek information from their personal or office collections of books and journals they were familiar with before opting for other sources. Similar conclusions were drawn from other studies performed on engineers (Gerstberger and Allen, 1968; Golewska, 1976; Shuchman, 1981; Thomas, 1977), and another professional group (Prentice, 1980). However, the current perceptions of physical accessibility may change due to the proliferation of electronic sources. To illustrate, Marshal (1993) highlighted

that the slow but steady increase in the usage of medical databases takes place through the practices by healthcare professionals.

### 3.6 Summary

This chapter identified the research variables of interest used in the conceptual framework proposed in this study. In this case, the relationships were identified between the independent variables (attitude, habit, awareness of the individual, information sources, process verification, awareness of information, and traceability) and dependent variables (wholesomeness). This was followed by a detailed discussion and review on each variable. All variables were adopted from previous models except for process verification, which was incorporated into the conceptual framework to enhance the searching process for halal food product information among Malaysian Muslim consumers. Lastly, the definitions of research variables were summarized.

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