

## Food purchasing practices of state exemplary family award recipients

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### Abstract

Halal awareness among Muslims in Malaysia is one of the main reasons for the increase in halal food production in Malaysia. Most Muslims in Malaysia are aware of purchasing and consuming food products of their choice. Thus, this study aimed to analyse the food purchasing practices implemented among State Exemplary Family Award recipients. This study used a qualitative approach with a grounded theory design. Two data collection methods were used in this study including documentation and interview study. The documentation study reviewed verses from al-Qur'an, tafsir books, hadiths, journals, and previous studies related to this study. The interview study was conducted through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to collect data from nine families of the selected respondents. The data obtained from the interview study were analysed by using Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (NUD.IST) software, also known as QSR NVivo software version 7. A total of six themes were successfully developed in analysing the food purchasing practices among State Exemplary Family Award recipients and portrayed in a model known as Food Purchasing Practices of Exemplary Family (FPPEF). The model describes the purchasing behaviour of AKM recipients to purchase halal food products. Therefore, this study also contributes to developing a guideline for purchasing food products that Muslim families can practice.

## 1. Introduction

Food is one of the essential basic needs for humans, animals, plants, and marine life to survive (al-Toriqui, 1984). Allah (SWT) has created various types of foods from multiple sources where it is permissible to eat – either animal or plant sources for humans to consume. Thus, the variation in food sources helps humans select what to eat. Something lawful and good according to the command by Allah (SWT) in Surah al-Baqarah, verse 168:

*“O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy”.*

(Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 168)

In Islamic law, the halal term in the halalan toyyiban

concept can be defined as lawful or permitted (Mahiah *et al.*, 2014; Kabir *et al.*, 2021). Halal covers all aspects of human life, including dietary products and services (Alias *et al.*, 2013). Meanwhile, the toyyiban term is interpreted as food originating from halal sources, clean without any impurities, does not cause harm or disease, and nutritional value is beneficial (Sazelin and Safiah, 2015). This term also focuses on the halal aspect of the food based on delicious, tasty, and nutritious criteria (Norkumala, 2019; Mohd Fadzli *et al.*, 2021).

The halal food industry is considered one of the essential industries in Malaysia. As a result, this industry has become a powerful economic force domestically and overseas. The halal market is predicted to rise from US\$3.1 trillion (RM13.03 trillion) in 2018 to US\$5 trillion by 2030 on the global market. Meanwhile, the Malaysian halal market was expected at US\$68.4 billion

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in 2018 and will continue to grow to US\$113.2 billion by 2030 (Biruntha, 2021). Despite the rapid development of the halal food industry, there are some issues regarding halal food products in the market. Some of these problems include the misuse of the halal logo on packaging, misunderstanding of the product origins, misuse of labelling that use Islamic images, ambiguous substances used in halal food product, and halal awareness among consumers (Damit *et al.*, 2017; Nor Zaidi *et al.*, 2022; Roslin *et al.*, 2022; Azizah, 2022; Burhanuddin, 2023).

Previous studies done by Sungkar (2010) show that factors affect the purchasing behaviour or intention of consumers on halal food products. The factors include the religiosity of the consumers, trust in halal logo or labelling, educational levels, income levels, unlimited access to information, higher demand for convenience products, and increasing awareness of the health and nutritional value of the foods. Also, based on the findings in research by Haslenna *et al.* (2013), the author mentioned that familiarity with halal food products was identified as the main factor influencing the purchasing behaviour of Muslim consumers. A study by Nor Sara Nadia *et al.* (2014) determined that halal consciousness and food product ingredients are the main factors that influenced Muslim consumers to purchase halal food products manufactured by non-Muslim companies.

The studies discussed above showed several factors that influenced Muslim consumers' purchase of halal food products. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the halalan toyyiban food purchasing practices applied by the State Exemplary Family Award recipients. This study is essential because making decisions is the first step in food care that benefits spiritual and physical health and develops an excellent and balanced Islamic family institution in all aspects of life.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the food purchasing practices that have been implemented by the State Exemplary Family Award recipients' families. Three families were selected respectively from

Perak, Terengganu and Johor. An interview was conducted through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among nine selected State Exemplary Family Award recipients' families. Based on Nyumba *et al.* (2018), the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method is used to achieve a deeper perspective on social issues from a purposely selected group of individuals. In the FGD interview, the researcher interviewed several individuals from a family group consisting of parents and some of their children from the State's Exemplary Family Award recipients in one interview session (Khairudin and Mohammad Amir, 2020). The respondent's families were asked several questions and were free to share their experiences related to their families' halalan toyyiban purchasing practices.

Data obtained from the interview study were analysed using Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (NUD.IST) software, also known as QSR NVivo software version 7. This software helps the researcher carry out coding and analyse data obtained from the interview study. Firstly, the interview transcripts were read carefully and repeatedly to create the main category and construct themes related to the halalan toyyiban principle model developed by Mohammad Amir (2015). After that, a matrix table was built in the software, and then the researcher analysed and made correlations between the data obtained. Finally, the main categories and themes that have been constructed are discussed deductively to get specific findings.

## 3. Results and discussion

A set of matrix tables was generated based on interview data analysis with the help of NVivo version 7 software. The results and analysis from the interviews helped the researcher construct six themes for the category of food purchasing practices by the recipients of the State Exemplary Family Award, labelled as Food Purchasing Practices of Exemplary Family (FPPEF) (Figure 1). Table 1 explains the frequency of respondents' interpretations related to themes that carry the connotation of food purchasing practices by State Exemplary Award recipients. The themes presented in

Table 1. Frequency of purchasing practices by the AKM recipients

Food Purchasing Practices of Exemplary Family	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	Frequency
Purchase halal goods	1	1	3	1	1	3	2	2	2	16
Prioritize Muslim traders	3	3	3	0	2	1	2	2	1	17
Examine the content of ingredients	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	9
Prioritize purchasing food with the halal logo	2	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	9
Ensure food products of good quality or fresh	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	7
	Total									64

R: Respondent

this category have been interpreted 64 times during the interview session (Table 1).



Figure 1. Food purchasing practices of exemplary family model

For the theme of purchasing halal goods, R1 stated, "...we have to examine and ensure the food we buy is from a good source". R2 said, "...if it is halal, then buy it". R3 stated during the interview session, "...find the halal and good food products". R4 said, "Questioned the halal and haram status of the food before purchasing it". In addition, R6 also stated, "You need to know the meaning of halal and haram when choosing foods". R8 also shared, "I am a very meticulous person, especially in the halal and haram food product's status". R9 also stated that she only focuses on purchasing halal, clean, and healthy food products.

In conclusion, most AKM recipients were aware and always ensured to purchase halal and high-quality foods only. Allah (SWT) obligates all Muslims to choose halal and tayyib (good) food. This action coincides with the words of Allah (SWT) in al-Quran:

*"O you who have believed, eat from the good (lawful) things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship".*

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:172)

This theme describes the recipients' awareness of purchasing halal food products. Understanding the purchase and consumption of halal food products is vital for Malaysia's Muslim consumers (Nor Sara Nadia et al., 2014). The awareness of consuming halal foods is also due to avoiding consuming food products with doubtful halal status (CAP, 2006). In addition, the consumption of halal food products could also impact the physical and spiritual health of humans (Sawari et al., 2020).

Next, five respondents clearly described examining

the content of food ingredients to be purchased theme. In explaining this theme, R1 stressed that "We have to pay attention to the food process". R2 stated, "...filter first. Examine what the products are made from (ingredients) and from where (the origins of food manufacturing)". R5 stated, "It is important to care for the food source. I am not buying foods from unknown people". Apart from that, R6 said, "Although the food products from Islamic brand name, we must check the ingredients in it". In addition, R9 explained, "When I buy items such as sweets or other foods, I always look at the brand, logo, and ingredients first". In essence, some respondents constantly examined all the ingredients contained in the food products they wanted to buy to avoid buying the wrong food products containing ingredients that are syubhah or forbidden in Islam. Based on a study by Nor Sara Nadia et al. (2014), a few issues needed to be considered regarding food product ingredients, including the consumer's knowledge of the food content ingredients, quality, and food safety. Therefore, familiarity of food product ingredients helps Muslim consumers to make the right decision to buy halal food products from the markets.

In addition, four respondents interpreted prioritising foods with the halal logo theme. R1 stated in the interview session that the halal logo is essential to ensure that the food purchased coincides with the halalan toyyiban concept. R2 mentioned that he was not buying products that did not have a halal logo. Next, R7 also said, "Look at the halal logo first if you want to eat". While R9 stated in the interview, "I always look at the halal logo for food products". The discussion showed that most respondents selected their food products based on the halal logo found on the food product. According to Shafie and Othman (2006), purchasing food products with the 'Halal' logo and certification on the packaging is easiest for Muslim consumers. Food products with the halal logo help prevent consumers, especially Muslims, from choosing non-halal food products. Also, through this halal logo, consumers feel more confident and trust in the ingredients, manufacturing process, and safety of the food products purchased (Sabainah et al., 2017).

Furthermore, four respondents described ensuring the goods purchased were of good quality or fresh theme. R4 stated, "I always buy fresh food only". R5 also explained that they always consider buying fresh raw materials such as fresh vegetables at the market. R8 also said, "...if I buy meat, I will buy the original and freshly slaughtered meat". R9 shared that he always buys fresh food (raw materials). In the last theme, most respondents interpreted that they always ensure that all food products or raw materials are good quality and fresh to consume. According to Ardayanti et al. (2013), quality and safety aspects are other criteria that need to be considered when

deciding to purchase food products. This is because of the aspects associated with many processes such as handling, equipment used during processing, packaging, storage, transportation, distribution, and retailing. Therefore, it is important to consider food products' quality, freshness, and safety before purchasing them.

Lastly, three respondents interpreted prioritising of Muslim traders' theme well during the interview session. In this interview, R1 states, "*We have to prioritise the goods of Muslims*". Next, R5 said he bought food from people he knew and believed in his work. In addition, R8 shared, "*When I shop, I always shop at Malay shops. We do not worry about shopping at Malay shops*". In this theme, most respondents prefer buying goods from Muslim traders because they feel more confident and do not doubt Muslim-made products.

*"The believing men and believing woman are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those-Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise"*.

(Surah al-Taubah, 9: 71)

The texts of Surah al-Taubah verse 71 above explained that every Muslim believer should help defend the truth and avoid confusing things. Thus, Muslims should support and buy food products produced by Muslims to help the Muslim economy thrive (Fahimi, 2019). Therefore, the 'Buy Muslim's First campaign' was held in Malaysia to encourage Muslim consumers to be more mindful of halal food products because of the emerging exploitation and misuse of halal logo labelling issues (Hassan et al., 2022).

#### 4. Conclusion

This study successfully constructed six themes on the food purchasing practices of AKM recipients. Food choices that comply with the halalan toyyiban concept beneficially affect spiritual and physical health. As a result, an excellent and quality family produces a generation that excels in various aspects of life.

#### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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