

Muslim Consumers' Patronage Intention towards Korean Restaurant Chains in Malaysia

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Abstract. Korean restaurant chains are a chain of restaurant that is known for serving a variety of foods of Korean heritage. The Korean food are rapidly gaining worldwide acceptance especially from the younger generations as Korean pop culture is now a powerhouse of its own in mainstream media. As these restaurants are gaining popularity, Muslim consumers are not excluded from having high interest and demand in these restaurants. Whatever the situation is, Muslim consumers still have to follow the religious requirement especially in choosing the Halal food. Thus, a few factors have been chosen to be reviewed in this study such as promotion, Halal awareness, subjective norms, hedonic value and utilitarian value that might affects Muslim consumers' patronage intention towards Korean restaurant chains in Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Muslim population in the world was estimated at 1.598 billion people [1] and Asia is a location that has the largest Muslim residents with 985.53 million people. Halal food demand is currently growing aligned with increase in the Muslim population around the world. So, currently Muslim is the right potential target market in Malaysia but still Halal food has become a universal concept due to the increasing demand by both the Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide that seek clean, healthy, and safe food. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multilingual society. Ethnic foods in Asians were including of Korean, Chi-nese, Japanese, Indians, Thai, Vietnamese cuisines and others. So, most of people will tend to being adventurous for trying food from another culture due to high level of curiosity but nowadays, Korean food is being known worldwide and increasingly competing the growth of others ethnic restaurant, and consumers tends to show more interests towards culture of Korean food [2].

Korean pop culture can be categorized into different major segments which are Korean popular culture, Korean celebrities, Korean television dramas, and Korean popular music [3] that has become trending and also favoured by society, particularly those who are in their 20's. Sequence from that, the Korean cuisine now already liked by majority of people who are not Korean which are including Muslim consumers. Halal label on a restaurant is getting the attention of consumers in Malaysia, especially Muslim consumers. This has resulted in a some of the Korean restaurants throughout Muslim nations putting up signs indicating that they do not serve pork in their restaurants. However, the "no pork" or "pork free" labelling on these restaurants still raises doubt among consumers concerning the validity of if these restaurants meet the Halal requirements especially for the new Muslim consumers that never experiencing dining at the restaurants. This is because, for the Muslims, Halal is a prerequisite in choosing a restaurant for having a meal. Even though that particular issues has been rising up but still the number of Muslims consumers visiting to the Korean restaurant chains still high. There must be some factors that may affect the consumers' behaviour to visit the Korean restaurant chains. Thus, this study aspires to review the factors that influence the Muslim consumers' patronage intention towards Korean restaurant chains in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Korean Restaurant Chains

Foods that comes from an ethnic group's legacy and culture is known as ethnic foods [4] and it is becoming more familiar as part of a daily diet of individuals. Based on New Straits Times by Zuliantie Dzul on November 28, 2016 according to some studies, since last year the demand for Korean food has doubled increase. The most favourite items that commonly purchased by consumers are peperoni, a cookie stick dipped in chocolate, ramyun, also known as instant noodles, kimchi, a fermented Korean side dish made of vegetables, toppoki, a soft rice cake and milkis, a popular carbonated beverage. The food premises that sold the Korean ethnic food named as Korean restaurant chains.

Patronage Intention

Intention is defined as the subjective probability a person to perform an action or not and it involves the relationship between individuals and the actions to be taken. Besides that, an intention is also determined as a psychological expression of the actual behaviour of someone's action. Johnstone [5] also mentioned in his studies that visit repeatedly is an indication of patronage. Interpersonal encounters between guests and the restaurant staff are classified as service experience and every meeting has the tendency to impact the patron's overall impression of the restaurant. Food authenticity also is the most concerned by customers rather than other elements and found that experience authentic ethnic cuisine is the most significant motivation for consumer to visit the ethnic restaurant. Patronage intentions in the context of restaurant is the willingness of individuals to revisit the restaurant, share positive comment with others and recommend it to others in future [6].

Promotion

Promotion is one of the seven Ps in marketing mix elements and also known as marketing communication in a business. There are several promotional mix channels that can be used like advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, public relations and publicity, sponsorship and sales promotion [7]. Consumers' purchasing intention and sales promotion can be spurred through different kinds of elements, for example, free samples, price discounts, also social and physical surrounding. Promoting the Korean food in the development of Korean pop culture via social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others is definitely an effective way of promotion because members of Generation Y especially are accustomed to using such interfaces [8]. Besides, promotion is one of marketing communication that is created to persuade and induce action of consumers that indirectly will affect the consumer's patronage intention.

Halal Awareness

Halal is anything that is lawful or permitted by Islam while Haram is the opposite of Halal which means unlawful or prohibited. Halal food randomly can be seen just same like the other food, yet all the ingredients used, process involved, its nature itself and utilization of various methods from the earliest starting point to the end, is dependably the one endorsed and prescribed by Islamic law [9]. In Malaysia, for a food selection process, the Muslim consumers should ensure that the restaurants visited must having Halal certification and Halal Logo certified by JAKIM which is a halal certification body responsible for monitoring the halal industry to confirm the food consumed is in accordance with Islamic law. Halal awareness is emphasized that exposure of Halal certification and Halal logo at a restaurant is important since it will be used as a guide by consumers who seeking for Halal food at the restaurant. Muslim consumers will definitely looking for Halal food for their daily lives and at the same time it would increase their intention to patronage Halal restaurant [10].

Subjective Norms

The definition of subjective norm also can be other's perceived expectation that influence consumers to perform certain behaviour. The most influential people that consumers may perceive as important may consist of family members, colleagues, teachers and friends that possibly affect the consumers' decision-making on product choice and buying patterns [11]. Subjective norms also defined as opinion from others people who are closed to and important to an individual that influence individual to perform a particular behaviour [12]. In perspective of restaurant, subjective norms can be seen as the perceived social pressure from peoples surrounding that give impact in choosing Halal food in a restaurant. In other words, subjective norms can be related to consumers' decision that is influences by others.

Hedonic Value

Hedonic value is value that consumers get after make a purchasing of a product or services that lead to consumer's experience to feel pleasure, fun and enjoyment [13]. In addition, when consumers have greater happiness experience at the restaurant it will encourage the consumers' intention to come again and spread the positive things to others. The chain restaurant companies ought to invest more in upgrading the interior and exterior design of their dining facilities at the restaurant to create a pleasant, unique ambiance for encourage consumer's intentions to have frequently visited at the restaurant. A restaurant should have enjoyable and pleasant restaurants which require more entertaining atmosphere, such as lighting, colour, music, unique interior design and decor, professional appearance of employees, and other aspects of dining experiences that make consumers enjoyable or exciting [13]. Improving consumer's service value leads in creating consumer's experience satisfaction, which in turn affects positive behaviour intentions of consumers.

Utilitarian Value

Utilitarian value is referred as extrinsic motivation of consumers which reflects performance of a task in order to achieve some distinguishable result. Utilitarian value also defined as general evaluation of practical advantages incorporates of price savings measurement which means the price is worth and reasonable with the service offered, the efficiency of service, and a merchandise selection dimension [14]. Utilitarian buying motives include desires like convenience-seeking, variety seeking, searching for quality of product or service, and reasonable price rate. In concept of restaurant, utilitarian motives is measured through the advantages that consumers get while eat at the restaurant [15]. Utilitarian features in restaurant are including of the menu provided, food's taste, food's portion, food's presentations, and the service itself. The previous study shows that utilitarian values have significant effects on satisfaction and behavioural intentions in restaurant sectors [16].

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

As shown in Figure 1, the research framework of the study includes the relationships between promotion, Halal awareness, subjective norms, hedonic values, utilitarian value and Muslim consumers' patronage intention towards Korean restaurant chains in Malaysia.

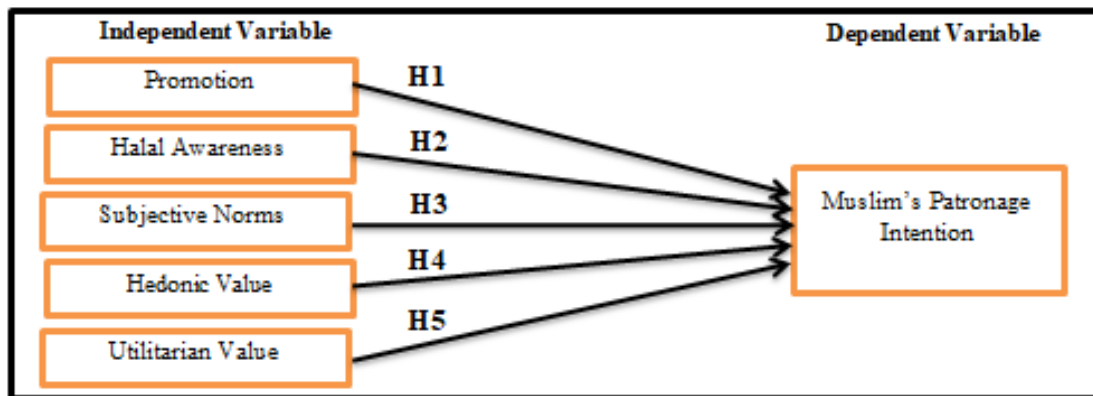


FIGURE 1. Research Framework

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Reliability analysis was conducted in this research to ensure the inter item for each variable has a consistent scale of measurement. The value of composite reliability should be greater than 0.7 to prove that the variable is reliable to used [17]. Based on Table 1, the value of composite reliability is range from 0.844 to 0.936 which means all measurements are above 0.7 and it is reliable.

TABLE 1. Reliability Analysis

Construct	Measurement Items	CR	Number of Items	
			Initial	Final (after deleted)
Promotion Adopted from: [18] [19] [20]	1) I will go to Korean restaurant chains during sales promotion 2) I will go to Korean restaurant chains when discounts are given 3) I may try the Korean restaurant chains just to confirm whether they are as good as in the advertisement 4) I will go to the Korean restaurant chains that offer loyalty card with rewards (bonus points / gifts / rebates)	0.893	4	4
Halal Awareness Adopted from: [21] [22]	1) I understand that Halal for Korean restaurant chains cover all of its activities from raw material to processing, preparing, and serving the food 3) I do not mind eating at the Korean restaurant chains which are operated by non-Muslims since it has Halal logo 4) I know that JAKIM is the main body that authorizes Halal logo and certification for Korean restaurant chains 2) I believe that Halal for Korean restaurant chains also encompasses its cleanliness 5) I think Halal in Korean restaurant chains means the food which does not contain pork or alcohol	0.844	5	3
	Deleted Items			
Subjective Norms Adopted from: [23] [24]	1) I can be influenced by people to eat at Korean restaurant chains 3) I choose to eat at Korean restaurant chains as preferred by my friends 4) I will select a Korean restaurant chains for a meal by taking preferable consideration from most people who are important to me 5) I would choose to have a meal at Korean restaurant chains by taking preferable consideration from people whose opinions I value 2) I do eat at Korean restaurant chains with my family	0.883	5	4
	Deleted Items			
Hedonic Value Adopted from: [25] [26]	1) I am attracted by the interior design of the Korean restaurant chains 2) I am interested with the music played in the Korean restaurant chains 3) I dine at the Korean restaurant chains because it gives me a feeling of being part of a Korean culture 4) I like the Korean restaurant chains layout and look that are unique to me 5) I can feel the excitement of choosing the menu during my dining experience at the Korean restaurant chains	0.912	5	5

Utilitarian Value Adopted from: [25] [26]	1) I enjoy eating at the Korean restaurant chains because the food is tasty			
	2) I prefer to eat at the Korean restaurant chains that serve meals at the right temperature			
	3) I am impressed with the attractive meals presentation at the Korean restaurant chains	0.926	6	6
	4) I like the variety of menu in the Korean restaurant chains			
	5) I can satisfy my hunger when dining at the Korean restaurant chains because the food portion is enough			
	6) I am satisfied with the quick service at the Korean restaurant chains			
Patronage Intention Adopted from: [25] [26] [27]	1) I am willing to travel long distance to dine at Korean restaurant chains			
	2) I would recommend the Korean restaurant chains to my family and friends			
	3) I would say positive things about the Korean restaurant chains to others	0.936	5	5
	4) I would like to come back to the Korean restaurant chains in the future			
	5) I would visit the Korean restaurant chains more frequently			

CONCLUSION

The study aims to review the relationship between promotion, Halal awareness, subjective norms, hedonic value, utilitarian value and Muslim consumers' patronage intention towards Korean restaurant chains in Malaysia. Also, the measurement items of the selected variables are refined using reliability test. Future researchers are urged to test the proposed model of the study. The expected results could help restaurant industry to build a strong and positive attitude to produce Halal products in the ever-growing Islamic market. Since Halal certification is a necessary element for this Islamic food global arena, is advisable for food manufactures to apply the endorsement as assurance of Halal for the business. It will help the business to extend in long run term and at the same time could attract both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. In addition, restaurant industry should give a priority in increasing the utilitarian value and hedonic value of the restaurant. The restaurant owners and managers need to provide tasty food, offer quick service, improve the interior design, giving reasonable prices, prepare the quality of physical environment and provide good convenience for customers that are reflecting through the ethnic atmosphere, ethnic food and ethnic service style in order to fulfil the customer's dining experiences that make consumers feel more pleasant and enjoyment. Utilitarian value and hedonic value offered also will influence customer's loyalty, trust and intention to do a word-of-mouth promotion.

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