

THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC BRANDING ON MUSLIM CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract: *The concept of Islamic branding refers to Muslim consumers' attachment to certain food products that they believe the product is Halal. Thus, apart from using the Halal logo, most food products in the Malaysian market have packaging that is purposely designed to carry specific visual cues with Islamic elements to convince Muslim consumers to purchase. This strategy often works effectively for certain products, especially for low-involvement products such as foods, where consumers often make their purchase decision quickly without putting too much effort into looking for more information to support their purchase decision. Instead, the decision often relies solely on habit and scarce information related to the products. Hence, a decision often relies so much on the visual cues on the packaging, including the colour, pictures, and wording, the signal that the products are Islamic; thus, it is undoubtedly Halal. Unfortunately, such practice can potentially expose Muslim consumers to the danger of Halal fraud. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of Islamic branding on Muslim consumer's purchase decisions using visual cues. The research was carried out using a quantitative method, where a survey was conducted on 153 Malay Muslim respondents. Questions were adopted from the previous study, and the visual cues used were selected based on the products that carry specific Islamic branding cues. Concurrent validity was used to analyze the instrument's validity, and the final data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The findings show the effectiveness of Islamic branding in convincing Muslim consumers of food purchases. However, the findings also show that specific Islamic branding that was heavily used before but later was associated with negative publicity is no longer effective in convincing Muslim consumers. Furthermore, the continued use of such Islamic cues on food packaging could backfire on the product and dilute product equity. This study highlights the loophole in the Halal product market in Malaysia. Despite the widely used Halal Malaysia logo and certification in the Malaysian market, many manufacturers in Malaysia still refuse to obtain the legit Halal endorsement as obtaining a Halal certificate is optional. Hence, it creates an opportunity for marketers to manipulate Muslim consumers through this means. Therefore, the*

findings should provide evidence for authorities to enforce strict regulations based on Islamic branding on food products. This research uses questionnaires and visual cues from Malaysian market products to investigate the effectiveness of Islamic branding in influencing Muslim consumers to purchase. Previous studies do not highlight the impact of Islamic branding cues but rely solely on the survey data; thus, the conclusion sometimes does not reflect the actual products in the market. By using the visual cue, this study also revealed that some of the Islamic brands widely used before are no longer influential; in fact, the continued usage of such cues could backfire on consumer trust.

Keywords: *Islamic Branding, Food Product, Purchase Intention, Islamic Visual Cue,*

Introduction

Food products that are certified with halal certification are acceptable by Muslim consumers as well as non-Muslim consumers; this approval is due to the whole concept of halal obligation that is associated with Shariah compliance (Zakaria et al., 2018). Thus, some products might have a cliché appearance that projects themselves as “Islamic” brands via their creative packaging and labelling (Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011). In Malaysia, most food manufacturers consist of small-medium enterprises, or SMEs, where food production consists of various products, from snacks to ready-to-eat and fast-moving consumer goods (Fikri et al., 2021). Despite halal certification being essential to these food manufacturers in convincing consumers to purchase their products, some manufacturers have resorted to a more straightforward solution to convince them that their products are halal. Hence, it uses Islamic elements in its packaging and brand name, which are among the most common tactics used by food manufacturers (Samidi et al, 2016). This marketing strategy is known as Islamic branding, where consumers view products as halal without proper verification of whether the products are halal (Temporal, 2011). Hence, consumers may experience consequences due to their negligence in choosing the right food product.

Islamic branding symbols are not formally used as guidelines for Muslim consumers to identify the halal product. Therefore, the Halal logo currently plays an important role in identifying Halal food products. To this point, the study has focused on the existence of the Halal logo in product packaging instead of discussing Islamic branding symbols. Unfortunately, the marketers refused to get halal certification due to their inability to fulfil the requirement (Halim & Ahmad, 2014); hence, they make alternatives by using Islamic elements such as Islamic brand names, Islamic symbols, Islamic-specific colours, and Islamic wording in order to convince people that the product is literally Halal (Mohsen et al., 2018). Due to low-involvement products, consumers will take less time to make purchase decisions when Islamic symbols exist in the product packaging (Akbari et al., 2014). Significantly, consumers need to go through the process of decision-making before they want to make any purchase (Ozkara & Bagozzi, 2021). Indirectly, Islamic branding symbols help the consumer to make a purchase decision. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of extrinsic cues and intrinsic cues on purchase intention.

Literature Review

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the willingness of consumers to buy a product based on their preferences and circumstances (Kudeshia et al., 2016). Muslim consumers usually make halal

purchases based on the halal logo on the packaging (Temizkan, 2022; Awan et al., 2015). Sometimes, when consumers are in a hurry, they tend to make a quick decision by ignoring the halal logo when the product seems less risky (Jain, 2019). The food product is considered a low-involvement purchase. Thus, quick decision-making is involved in making a purchase decision (Sheikh Qazzafi, 2019). Familiarity with certain products or brands can influence purchasing habits. Hence, Muslim consumers' decisions are based on their habits and following the rules of the religion (Billah et al., 2020). As consumers viewed the local food products as familiar, they believed that the halal status was no longer a concern (Damit et al., 2017). Malay Muslim consumers have a low tolerance when dealing with familiar food products; since they live in a majority Muslim country, they become too complacent with purchasing specific food categories as they become confident with their Halal status (Hussin, 2017). Moreover, purchase intention becomes one of the projecting elements of actual buying behaviour that will lead to a purchase decision (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018).

Halal cue, which is an Islamic Branding symbol, seems important for building trust among Muslim consumers. For instance, in Malaysia, the Malay and Chinese ethnicities reacted positively only to their native language (Aminnuddin, 2020; Run et al., 2010). As most Malays consumers do not speak or comprehend Mandarin language, products that use this language on the packaging are often meant to target Chinese consumers. Hence provides a cue for Muslim consumers to stay away from these products as they do not understand the information on the packaging. Consumers who show interest in the purchase can be considered potential customers, leading to future purchase decisions (Rezvani et al., 2013). In addition, the intention to purchase arises because of feelings (affective) and the mind (cognitive) of the goods or services desired (Zailani et al., 2011). Islamic branding provides a signal to Muslim consumers that the products are halal as it also serves a similar purpose as a halal logo in guiding Muslim consumers in halal decision-making (Wirakurnia et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2016).

Islamic Branding

A brand is an underpinning of choice for one product from other products to satisfy the same necessity (Aaker & Equity, 1991). Islamic branding refers to the products or services that enhance Islamic values and fulfil the necessities of Islamic requirements based on *Shariah compliance* (Hussin, 2017). *Shariah* law is the rules that Muslim need to follow and practice in their daily life (Haddah & Lummis, 1987). In the case of this research, Islamic branding of food products involves the marketing and branding strategies of food items with Islamic principles in order to attract Muslim consumer's attention (Tabatabai Nasab & Banejad, 2016). Moreover, Islamic branding has an important role in convincing the consumers that the product is Halal. The term "Halal" refers to what is permissible in Islamic law, and it encompasses not only the ingredients used in food but also the entire production process, including packaging and distribution (Maison et al., 2018). Unfortunately, the misuse of Islamic branding signs and language in marketing has confused Muslim consumers (Aaker & Equity, 1991). *Islamic branding* is defined as *Shariah compliance* (Noor, 2010); thus, Islamic branding signs and languages hold a similar purpose to the halal logo by indicating that the product is permissible. Unintentionally, Islamic branding has influenced Muslim consumers' purchase decisions by projecting itself as a recommendation and reference. Hence, Islamic branding signs and languages have created trust and confidence among Muslim consumers to purchase halal products (Suki, 2014).

Extrinsic Cues

Extrinsic cue indicates the physical features of the product packaging; hence, they reflect the product information through the visual appearance (Vocino & Oppewal, 2009). Extrinsic cues often consist of semiotic elements encompassing sign, visual, and language cues (Oswald, 2015). These unspoken words, through signs and visuals, are potent signals that represent the products without the need for explanation. Thus, marketers use this opportunity to attract Muslim consumers by projecting the product as halal. In low involvement decision making consumers often spend less time making decisions when it comes to low-risk and cheap products such as food (Sheikh Qazzafi, 2019). Hence, Islamic branding cues have become powerful tools to convince Muslim consumers in the retail market (Esteky, 2021). Visual cues refer to sensory cues recognized in sensory marketing (Krishna et al., 2017). For low-involvement products, visual cues influence in consumers' decision-making process based on the product's appearance, such as wording, colour and information on the product packaging (Jain, 2019). To attract consumers' attention, the marketers used visual cues to project the product as halal to influence consumers' purchase intention. Presenting the brand's name, logo, packaging or recognition sign will stimulate consumers' eyes towards the brand (Simmonds et al., 2020). Hence, visual cues play an important role in brand recognition and creating a positive user experience. Plus, the food appearance is one thing that consumers will notice first (Adebowale et al., 2020). Therefore, extrinsic and intrinsic cues are crucial to portraying the criteria or quality of the product by presenting visual cues.

Intrinsic Cues

Intrinsic cues refer to the attributes initially engaged with the nature of the product itself (Veale & Quester, 2009). Consumers usually trust intrinsic cues when there are no doubtful indicators to evaluate them (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999). For instance, Malay foods are viewed as safe and halal because consumers feel that Muslims make the products. Moreover, since consumers believe they are familiar with what goes into the product, the halal status is no longer a concern if the product is from their own country, Malaysia (Hussin, 2017). Hence, consumers will feel safe and confident with the familiar food product because there may not be any suspicious ingredients based on their information. Therefore, in the case of Islamic branding food products, most local products produced by Muslim manufacturers do not have halal certification due to a low level of awareness and lack of concern about halal implementation (Hasan et al., 2020). Familiarity with the products often becomes the key that leads to this belief, as consumers often feel that they are in their comfort zone when dealing with these products (Damit et al., 2017).

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using an online questionnaire to collect data on consumers' purchase intentions towards Islamic branding. Quantitative research is more suitable in mature research streams that emphasize testing rather than exploration, and this approach allowed this study to examine the relationships between Muslim consumer purchase intention on Islamic branding products.

Instrument

The tool applied for this study is a survey questionnaire directed through a Google Form. A questionnaire was chosen for this research, considering people tend to be truthful when kept anonymous (Miller & Salkind, 2012). It is crucial to use instruments that encourage

respondents to be truthful, as the study is done to measure consumer behaviour. The target study population is 18 years old and above, and the respondents must be Muslim consumers who live in Malaysia. Both criteria are on the screening questions that need to be answered before the respondent proceeds with the questionnaire. The instrument items were developed based on the conceptual study framework. The questionnaire was adopted and adapted based on the current research. The survey also used both English and Bahasa Malaysia for the respondents to have a better understanding of answering the questionnaire. This study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the result regarding Islamic branding purchase intention. Social science studies normally use a Likert scale to measure attitudes (Joshi et al., 2015). In this study, few studies are referred to as having a better construct; the measures are adopted and adapted based on study preference.

For extrinsic cues, language and wording cues and colour cues from sources Khan, Waheed, & Ahmad, (2018). For intrinsic cues, familiarity cues are from a study by Jaafar (2018). Lastly, purchase intention is from Khan et al., (2018), and attitude is from sources Billah et al., (2020). Instead of using a questionnaire that adopts and adapts from the previous study, this research used visual aids that significantly impact the research (Comi et al., 2014). A visual cue survey helps researchers stimulate prompt answers from the respondents based on the specific image provided (Wheeldon, 2011). Thus, the researcher decided to use related images as a visual element to enhance consumers' understanding of the questionnaire. In the case of Islamic branding symbols, the visual cues survey provides better results in respondents' responses because visual information in the picture is better remembered than verbal information (Childers & Houston, 1984; Paivio, 1971).

Population

The population selection was based on the number of people in selected places (Mukesh et al., 2017). Hence, the population of this study is composed of Muslim consumers in Malaysia. The majority of Malaysian citizens are Muslims, and the target population are aged between 20 to 70 years old due to their purchasing ability after they get hired. Other than that, in Malaysia, it is easy for Muslim consumers to have halal food access.

Sampling

Purposive sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques. Thus, it is used because we have a specific group with the same characteristics. A screening question is used to make sure the respondent's criteria are met: first, the respondent must be a Muslim consumer and second, aged 20 years and 70 years old, which refers to people who have buying power. This sampling method primarily helps find the relationship between research questions and sampling (Bukhari et al., 2021). Hence, an online platform, which is Google Forms is used to collect the data.

Sample Size

This research employs power analysis because this method allows the researcher to estimate the minimum sample size required based on the significance level, effect size, and statistical power (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Power analysis determines the minimum sample size by considering the part of a model with the highest number of predictors (Hair et al., 2011). The priori statistical power analyses were conducted using G*Power 3.1 to compute the sample size necessary to detect a small effect for a repeated measure of between-within interaction. A total number of 153 respondents have participated in this study, which is more than the recommended sample size of a minimum of 138 respondents.

Results and Discussions

Extrinsic Cues



Figure 1: Product with Islamic Wording Survey Result

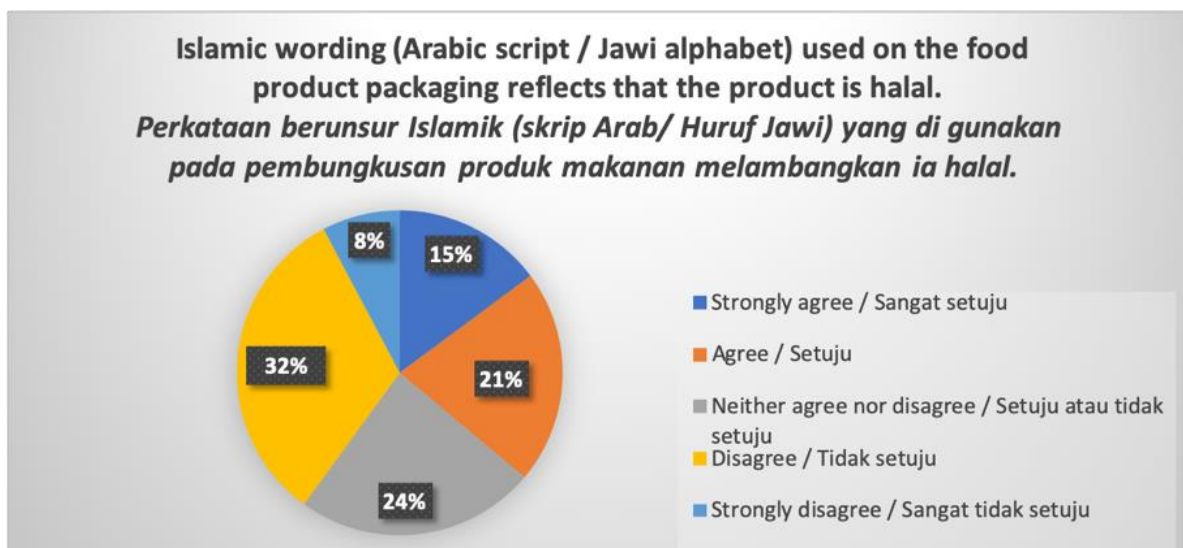


Figure 2: Extrinsic Cues on Islamic Wording Survey Result

This study highlights the results from the visual cues survey about consumers' perceptions of Islamic wording that is presented on the product packaging, shown in Figure 1. Based on the visual cue of product use in the survey, the result shows that 61% of the respondents agreed that the product with Islamic wording is Halal. Thus, this indicates that Muslim consumers depended on Islamic wording to convince themselves in decision-making. The remaining 39% disagreed that the product with Islamic branding on the packaging is Halal. In this case, Islamic wording does influence the consumer's decision-making process by portraying the product as Sharia compliance and Halal to consume.



Figure 3: Green Color Packaging Survey Result



Figure 4: Extrinsic Cues on Green Color Survey Result

Figure 3 shows that 61% of respondents agreed that the product with green colour packaging is Halal. In contrast, Figure 4 claimed that the respondent disagreed with the green colour of product packaging. 71% of respondents disagreed that the green product packaging does not represent the product as Halal. From both surveys, there are variances in results observed across different research study situations. Contradictions in terms of answers given by the respondents when the questionnaire is done without a picture. Moreover, colours have the power to influence consumers' emotions and behaviour (Kumar, 2017). In the case of this research, the product with green colour packaging has influenced consumer decision-making; Muslim believe green colour is their sacred colour (Podeh, 2011).

Intrinsic Cues



Figure 5: Familiarity Packaging Survey Result

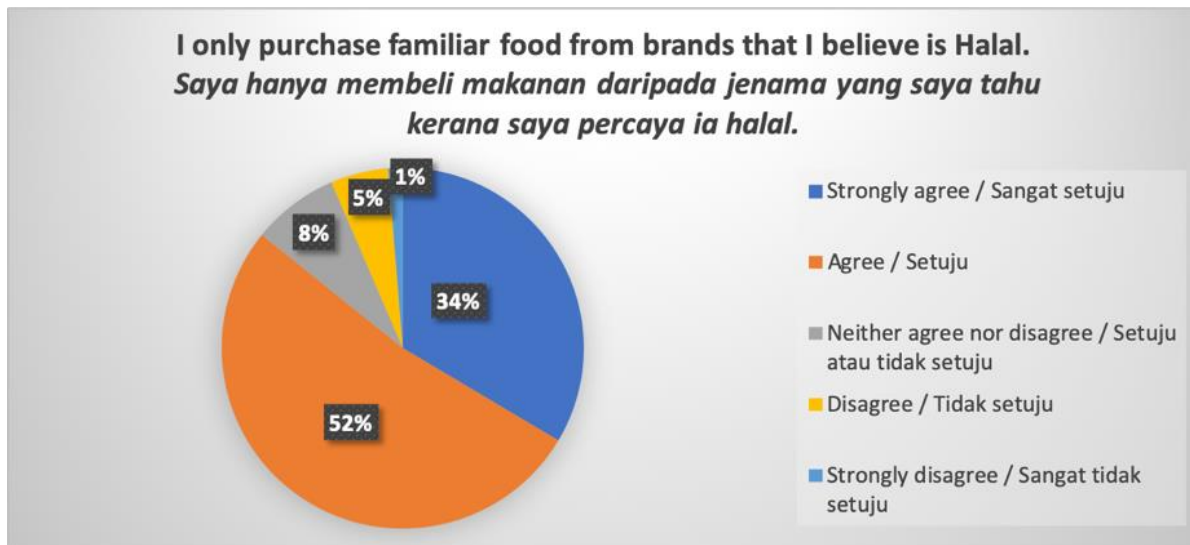


Figure 6: Intrinsic Cues Survey Result

Figure 5 shows the result of the survey on familiarity; the picture given stated that familiar products have advantages in convincing consumers (Lee & Lou, 2011). The majority of 86% of respondents agreed that if Muslims produce the product, it is halal and safe for Muslim consumers. The trust in Muslim marketers is beyond the power of Halal certification since the consumers do trust the branding carried by Muslim marketers. As mentioned by Damit et al., (2017), Muslim consumer often feels they are in their comfort zone when dealing with familiar products. The survey questionnaire convinces that 86% of respondents will only purchase food from brands that they believe are Halal. Furthermore, staying in a country with a Muslim majority makes the consumers feel too complacent with specific food categories as they believe that the food is Halal (Hussin, 2017).

Purchase Intention towards Islamic Branding Food

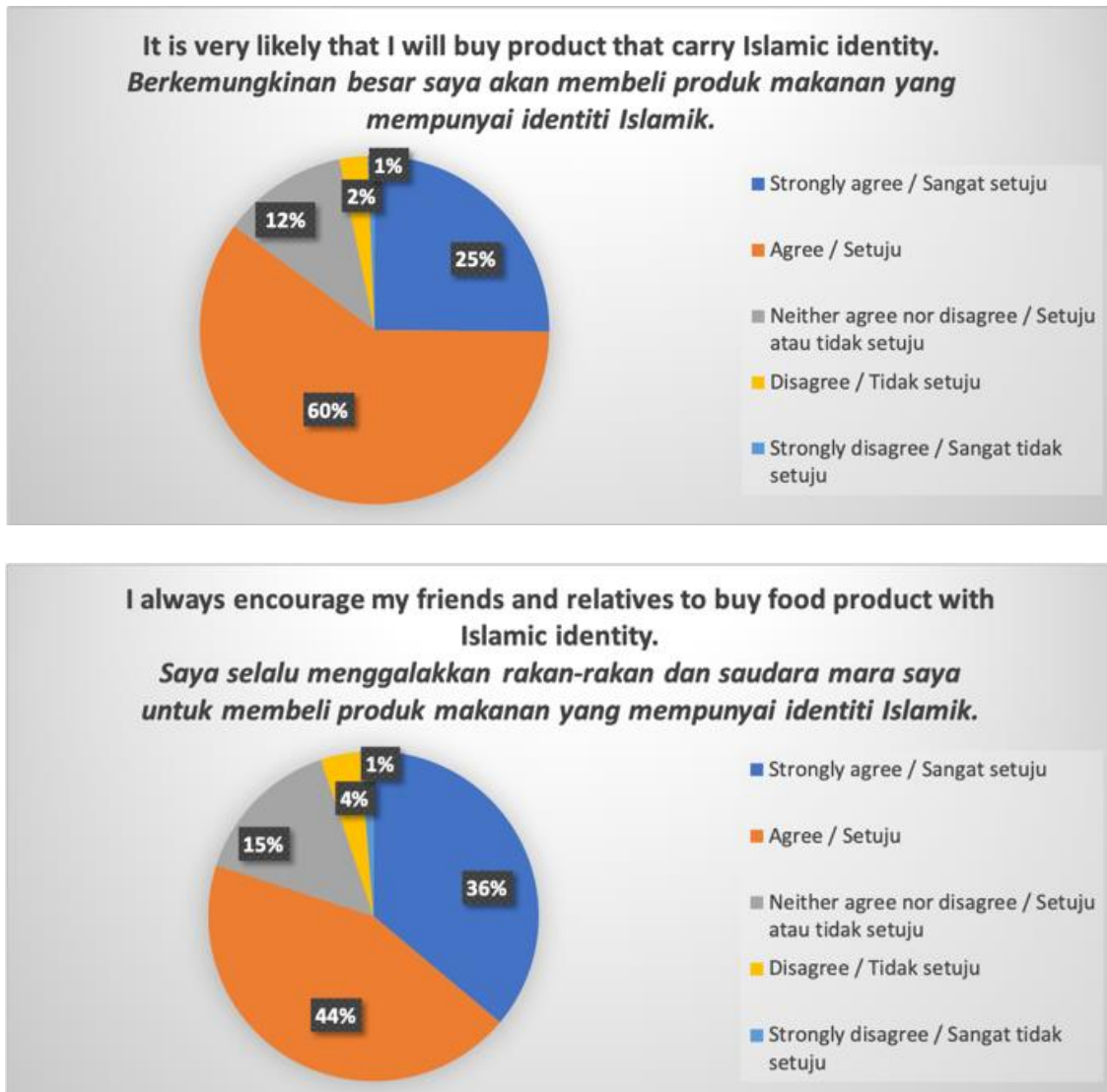


Figure 7: Purchase Intention Survey Results

Figure 7 exhibits that 85% of consumers intend to buy products that carry an Islamic identity, while 14% expressed that they will avoid buying products with an Islamic identity. Thus, results indicate that Islamic identity on product packaging is vital in promoting consumers' purchase intention. Meanwhile, 80% of consumers agreed to encourage their family and friends to buy food products with an Islamic identity. The effect of word of mouth is to encourage consumers' behaviour in accessing the information received by someone they trust (Sa'ait et al., 2016). Thus, it revealed that consumers trust their family and friends more than company advertising in making their purchase decisions.

Conclusion

This study established that the visual cues of the wording, green colour and familiarity of packed food products influenced Muslim consumers' purchase intention. In conclusion, this study helps to analyze consumers' behaviour in real situations to react to various stimuli that may affect their decision-making. The appearance of visual cues was essentially a guide for

Muslim consumers to use before making a purchase decision. Moreover, low-involvement purchase such as packaged food makes consumers spend less time to consider their purchase. The instant decision on buying behaviour is made based on their habits and influence by current surroundings. In the case of Islamic branding of food products, the consumers decide their inner beliefs and visual cues as an instant reference. Hence, their visual assessment of those attributes leads to their purchase behaviour.

This study also possessed some limitations, the first limitation of this study is generalization. This study only focused on specific products that were introduced in the questionnaire. Thus, the result and interpretation of the findings may refer to that particular product only and cannot represent the other product as a whole. The result might differ if the question is asked in different situations. In order to have a better understanding and precise results, the replication of the study must be conducted in the future with a detailed focus. Secondly, the data collection does not focus on a specific age group or generation, which enables the researcher to draw a conclusion based on generation. Thus, future data collection may be conducted on specific age groups in order to obtain valid data based on the results findings.

Besides that, the future practical implication of this study may help the authorities to improvise the existing rules and regulations in order to protect consumers deceived by marketers. Moreover, consumers will have a better understanding and awareness of choosing the right product based on what has been outlined by JAKIM. Despite Islamic branding symbols not being prohibited from producing the packaging, this product seems permissible for Muslim consumers. Hence, well-defined packaging guidelines are crucial; in addition, Muslim consumers must be provided with Halal product awareness in order to avoid consuming non-Halal food products.

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