

HALAL AWARENESS AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AMONG MUSLIMS IN LAWAS, SARAWAK

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Abstract: *The concept of halal in Islam is not only limited to the permissibility of food consumption, but also encompasses the concept of halalalan tayyiban, which includes aspects of cleanliness, safety, and quality. In the context of contemporary society, halal awareness plays an important role in promoting sustainable consumption practices among Muslims in accordance with Islamic principles. Although awareness of halal concepts among Muslim consumers is increasing, misunderstandings and superficial interpretations persist. This study, therefore, aims to identify the factors influencing food selection among Muslim consumers, to identify the level of halal awareness among Muslim consumers in Lawas, Sarawak, and to explore its role as a catalyst for sustainable consumption within the Muslim community. A quantitative research design was employed through a structured questionnaire distributed online. A total of 177 Muslim respondents participated in this study. The data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods, including percentage analysis. The findings indicate that the overall level of awareness among respondents is high, particularly in understanding that halal is not only related to the process of slaughtering, but also includes aspects of cleanliness and food quality. However, the study also reveals the existence of misconceptions, such as reliance on staff attire resembling Muslims or “pork-free” labels as indicators of halal status. In addition, the findings show that factors influencing food selection include halal certification, premises cleanliness, and food quality, which generally reflect the integration of religious considerations and lifestyle. The study further explains that although awareness of halal concepts exists, there remains a gap between knowledge and actual practice among the Muslim community in Lawas, underscoring the need for stronger educational emphasis on the concept of halalalan tayyiban. In conclusion, halal awareness serves as an important foundation in promoting sustainable Muslim consumption.*

Keywords: *Halal Awareness, Halalan Tayyiban, Muslim Consumer Behavior, Sustainable Consumption*

Introduction

The principle of *halalan tayyiban* is a fundamental concept that serves as a guideline in Muslim daily food consumption. This principle highlights two main criteria that must be fulfilled, namely *halal* and *tayyib*. Halal can be referred to as permissible according to Islamic Law, as clearly stated in the al-Qur'an and the Hadith. Meanwhile, *tayyib* covers a broader aspect, which includes various aspects such as production, processing, preparation, packaging, logistics, and even product naming (Ariffin et al., 2023). All these aspects must be well understood by Muslims to increase halal awareness.

In this discussion, the study focused on the level of halal awareness among Muslims, which is crucial in guiding food selection permitted for consumption according to Islamic principles. According to Pejabat Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan (2020), the role of halal awareness in influencing purchasing decisions is strongly linked to religious values, which emphasise the importance of consuming halal as a source of blessing and purity in a Muslim's life. In this regard, halal awareness also plays a significant role in shaping social responsibility among consumers, encouraging individuals to not only select products that are halal, but to take into consideration the ethical aspect in acquiring or consuming goods, and be consistent in their practice (Shaari., 2020).

However, there are still some misconceptions among Muslims when choosing food and beverages, especially in food premises such as restaurants and cafes. In Malaysia, some food operators use Islamic identity to attract Muslim customers. For example, the use of Jawi writing in restaurant signage, vendors wearing a hijab or a Muslim skullcap to attract Muslim costumers. These visible religious symbols may give the impression that the premise is halal, even though it does not fully comply with halal requirements as prescribed in the Al-Qur'an and Hadith (Anis Husna et al., 2023).

This confusion may lead to a more critical issue, which is *syubhah* (doubtful matters). In Islam, *syubhah* is strongly discouraged, as it creates uncertainty regarding the permissibility of food consumption. This can be supported by a hadith reported by Tirmizi, which emphasises the importance of avoiding doubtful matters to protect one's religion and integrity:

الْحَلَالُ بَيِّنٌ وَالْحَرَامُ بَيِّنٌ وَبَيْنَ ذَلِكَ أُمُورٌ مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ لَا يَدْرِي كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ أَمِنَ الْحَلَالِ هِيَ أَمْ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِزِّهِ فَقَدْ سَلِمَ وَمَنْ وَقَعَ شَيْئًا مِنْهَا يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُوَاقَعَ الْحَرَامَ

Translation: The lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between that are matters that are doubtful (not clear); many of the people do not know whether it is lawful or unlawful. So, whoever leaves it to protect his religion and his honour, then he will be safe, and whoever falls into something from them, then he soon will have fallen into the unlawful.

(Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 1205)

Furthermore, weak enforcement by the relevant authorities has contributed to the widespread misuse of fake halal logos. The use of logos that are not certified by JAKIM may lead to lower levels of halal awareness, as members of the public may easily trust any halal logo displayed at food premises. In addition, unrecognised halal logos can create confusion among consumers, particularly those with limited knowledge regarding the authenticity of officially approved halal certification. This situation may expose consumers to doubtful (*syubhah*) food sources given their lack of awareness or understanding.

Therefore, this article aims to identify and evaluate the factors influencing food selection among Muslims in Lawas, and to explore the role of halal awareness as a catalyst for sustainable consumption within the Muslim community.

Literature Review

The Concept and Significance of Sustainable Muslim Consumption

Sustainable Muslim consumption is an approach to purchasing that integrates Islamic law with ethical and social responsibility. While ‘halal’ refers to what is permissible, the concept of *halalan tayyiban* further encompasses cleanliness, safety and high-quality standards. According to Shaari (2020), halal awareness encourages consumers to be socially responsible, leading them to choose halal products while making sure that their choice of actions or decisions are in line with ethics, and sustainable.

This aspect is significant in this study because it shifts the focus from simple religious compliance to a holistic lifestyle. In Lawas, Sarawak, understanding this role is crucial to assess how religious values taught by Islam pertaining to food or dietary requirements act as a catalyst for responsible behaviour, where consumers prioritize health and ethics over temporary trends or social pressure. By practicing sustainable halal consumption, the Muslim community ensures that their daily choices contribute to their spiritual well-being and the long-term good of society. While halal is often perceived as a binary status (permissible or not), sustainability reflects the broader concept of *halalan tayyiban*, which emphasizes cleanliness, safety, quality, and ethical responsibility. In this context, halal awareness encourages Muslim consumers to make informed and responsible food choices that support sustainable consumption practices.

For Muslims, the consumption of halal food is a fundamental requirement of the Islamic lifestyle that must be observed (Md Ariffin et al., 2024). Following this, discussions on halal have often become a central issue among Muslims, and society has become increasingly aware of the importance of halal status in food consumption. The discourse on halal is in fact, no longer confined to Malaysia but has also attracted global attention (Anis Husna et al., 2023; Alam et al., 2025). Although many studies have been conducted on halal awareness, discussions on the factors that act as catalysts for developing a sustainable Muslim lifestyle remain limited. A large number of earlier studies highlight the role of halal awareness as a factor influencing consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of halal food consumption. For example, studies have found that halal awareness, halal knowledge, and halal certification act as important drivers that shape consumer attitudes and subsequently increase purchase intention towards halal food (Mohd Ossman et al., 2025). This is further supported by other studies, which show that factors such as halal awareness, halal certification, and health consciousness have a direct impact on customer satisfaction and purchase intention (Fernando & Citra Kusuma, 2025). However, these studies typically focus on the immediate transaction rather than the long-term sustainability of the Muslim lifestyle, creating a research gap that this study addresses by linking the awareness to ethical consumption.

In addition, studies in specific contexts, such as halal poultry consumption, also indicate that the level of consumer awareness is closely related to their understanding of halal certification, cleanliness, and food safety, which in turn influence purchasing decisions (Zakwan Azhar et al., 2025). In another study, Alam et al. demonstrates that halal awareness is strongly associated with purchase intention and consumer behaviour, where individuals with higher awareness are more likely to choose food that complies with Shariah standards (Alam et al., 2025).

All in all, a synthesis of previous studies reveals that most research primarily focuses on purchase intention, consumer behaviour, and purchasing decisions. Comparatively, fewer studies have examined halal awareness from the perspective of sustainable Muslim consumption, particularly within local communities such as Lawas, Sarawak.

Furthermore, previous studies tend to emphasise micro-level factors such as attitudes, perceptions, and purchasing decisions, without fully examining wider dimensions, particularly the role of halal awareness as a catalyst in shaping sustainable consumption among Muslims. Therefore, this creates a significant research gap that this study aims to address. To achieve this, the study adopts a cross-sectional research design, which is necessary to capture a snapshot of the current level of halal awareness and sustainable consumption practices among Muslims in Lawas, Sarawak. Therefore, this study seeks to describe the level of halal awareness among Muslims in the area, and discuss how such awareness may contribute to sustainable Muslim consumption.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional research design. This approach is used to demonstrate the level of halal awareness and sustainable consumption practices among the Muslim community in Lawas, Sarawak. By utilizing this design, the study analyses how religious values examples? which include among other things cleanliness and hygiene? act as a catalyst for responsible behaviour at a specific point in time. This methodology is appropriate for describing respondents' levels of halal awareness and identifying food selection factors among Muslim consumers in Lawas, Sarawak based on descriptive statistical analysis.

The study involved 177 respondents, all of whom were Muslim consumers living in Lawas, Sarawak. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that all participants were active consumers relevant to the research goals, with a special focus on those who make daily food selection choices.

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed both online via platforms like WhatsApp and through face-to-face distribution to ensure a broad participation rate. The questionnaire measured respondents' tendencies and perceptions using a five-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (uncertain), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). This scale allows for a systematic and precise evaluation of each item related to halal awareness, halalan tayyiban understanding, and sustainable practices

Table 1: Linkert Scale

Scale	Types
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Uncertain
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Sources: (Joshi et al., 2015)

Result and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 177 Muslim respondents from Lawas, Sarawak participated in this study. The sample consisted of 67.2% females and 32.8% males, indicating a higher participation rate among female respondents. In terms of educational background, the majority had completed SPM (37.3%), followed by diploma (24.9%) and bachelor's degree (23.2%). Most respondents fall within the low to moderate income group, with over 50% earning below RM3000.

Table 2: Respondent's Demography

Variable	Category	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	58	32.8
	Female	119	67.2
Education Level	PMR/PT3/SRP	9	5.1
	SPM	66	37.3
	STPM	14	7.9
	Diploma	44	24.9
	Bachelor's Degree	41	23.2
	Master	2	1.1
	PhD	1	0.6
Monthly Income	Below RM1500	43	24.3
	RM1501 – RM3000	46	26.0
	RM3001 – RM5000	37	20.7
	Above RM5001	25	14.1
	No Income	26	14.7

This demographic profile suggests that the respondents represent a community with basic to intermediate educational exposure and moderate purchasing power. These factors are important as they may influence both the level of halal awareness and food consumption behaviour within the community.

Factors in the Selection of Food among Muslims in Lawas, Sarawak

To gather information on halal awareness among Muslims in Lawas, Sarawak, a questionnaire was distributed that included several factors in selecting halal food. Based on respondent's feedback, the table lists several key factors that influence them in choosing halal food. The factors are as follows:

1. Hygiene and Halal
2. Service and Quality
3. Social Influence

Table 3: Factors Influencing Food Purchase Decisions of Muslims in Lawas, Sarawak

Factor Category	Specific Factor	Key Finding (%)
Hygiene & Halal	Cleanliness and condition of premises	71.2
	Checking halal certification (JAKIM logo)	75.7
Service & Quality	Fast and friendly service	64.4
	Food taste	53.7
	Price affordability	46.3
Social Influence	Influence of friend recommendations	44.6
	Reject visiting viral premises without a halal certification	57.6

The findings show that cleanliness and the physical condition of food premises are the most influential factors in food selection, with 71.2% of respondents strongly agreeing. This is followed by the presence of a valid halal certification, where 75.7% of respondents reported that they actively check for the halal logo before entering a food premise. (Should be the other way around, 75.7% first then 71.2%, halal certification first, then hygiene)

This pattern reflects a strong alignment between consumer behaviour and the concept of halalan tayyiban, which emphasises cleanliness, safety, and ethical food practices. In this sense, halal awareness is not limited to religious compliance but extends to broader values that are closely related to sustainable consumption.

Other factors such as service quality (64.4%), food taste (53.7%), and price affordability (46.3%) also influence decision-making. However, these factors appear to be complementary since halal and hygiene considerations were viewed as of paramount importance.

Interestingly, social influence is less dominant. A large proportion of respondents remained neutral towards friend recommendations (44.6%), and most rejected visiting viral food premises without halal certification (57.6%). This suggests that Muslim consumers in Lawas tend to prioritise principles and verified information over trends and social pressure.

From a sustainability perspective, this behaviour indicates the presence of responsible consumption practices. Consumers are making decisions based on values such as cleanliness, safety, and religious compliance, rather than impulsive or trend-driven choices.

Level of Halal Awareness among Muslims in Lawas, Sarawak

Table 4: Level of Halal Awareness among Muslims in Lawas, Sarawak

Aspect of Awareness	Key Finding (%)
Understanding of the halal concept	84.7
Halal beyond slaughter (includes cleanliness & quality)	88.7
Understanding of halalan tayyiban	72.9
Importance of consuming halalan tayyiban	84.7
Checking halal certification before eating	74.6

The findings indicate a high level of halal awareness among respondents. A majority strongly agreed that they understand the concept of halal (84.7%) and recognise that halal is not limited to slaughtering, but also includes food cleanliness and quality (88.7%). In addition, 72.9% reported understanding the concept of halalan tayyiban, while 84.7% emphasised the importance of consuming such food.

This shows that halal awareness among Muslims in Lawas is rather high that it is beyond the basic understanding of the halal concept. In Islam, the concept of halalan tayyiban promotes not only permissibility but also wholesomeness, safety, and ethical considerations. These elements are closely linked to the idea of sustainable consumption.

The findings also demonstrate that knowledge plays an important role in shaping awareness. As respondents gain more understanding of halal principles, they become more careful in their food choices. This is evident in the behaviour of checking halal certification before eating at a premise (74.6%), which reflects the translation of knowledge into practice.

The findings reveal a strong logical connection between the high level of halal awareness (84.7%) and the actual behavior of respondents in Lawas. These findings suggest that halal awareness may serve as a catalyst for responsible action, as evidenced by the 75.7% of consumers who actively verify the JAKIM halal logo before making a purchase.

Furthermore, the high recognition that halal extends beyond slaughtering to also include cleanliness and food quality (88.7%) directly explains why 71.2% of respondents identify the condition of the premises as a primary factor in their food selection. This alignment suggests that as consumers' understanding of halalan toyyiban increases, their consumption patterns become more sustainable and ethical, effectively translating religious knowledge into daily lifestyle practices.

The Gap and Misconceptions in Halal Awareness and Practice

Table 5: The Gap and Misconceptions in Halal Awareness and Practice among Muslims in Lawas, Sarawak

Aspect of Awareness & Perception	Key Finding (%)
Trust in Muslim-operated premises without halal certification	29.9
Trust in halal-certified premises operated by non-Muslims	28.8
Rejecting “pork-free” & “alcohol-free” labels as halal proof	54.8
Rejecting religious appearance as a halal indicator	41.8

Despite the high level of halal awareness, the study reveals a noticeable gap between knowledge and actual understanding among respondents. A significant proportion of respondents (29.9%) showed uncertainty when asked whether they trust food from Muslim-operated premises without halal certification. This indicates that some consumers still rely on informal indicators, such as the identity of the food provider, rather than verified certification.

In addition, trust issues were observed towards halal-certified premises operated by non-Muslims, with 28.8% of respondents strongly disagreeing to dine at such establishments. This suggests that respondents may not fully understand the role and reliability of the halal certification system.

At the same time, the findings also highlight specific misconceptions in interpreting halal indicators. Although most respondents correctly rejected misleading signs such as “pork-free” or “alcohol-free” labels (54.8%) and religious appearance, such as vendors wearing a hijab or a Muslim skullcap (41.8%) as proof of halal status, a proportion of respondents still demonstrated uncertainty. This indicates that while awareness exists, it is not always supported by an accurate and consistent understanding.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while respondents possess basic knowledge of halal, still, their understanding remains incomplete, particularly in relation to certification and verification processes. This gap is critical, as it may lead to inconsistent behaviour and misinformed decisions. In some cases, such inconsistency may expose consumers to doubtful situations, and potentially to the unintentional consumption of non-halal food.

From a broader perspective, this finding supports the argument that knowledge alone is not sufficient to ensure proper practice in daily life. A sustainable Muslim consumer is not only required to be aware, but also to have an accurate understanding and critical judgment when interpreting halal information. Therefore, strengthening the depth and clarity of halal knowledge is essential, as it provides the foundation for full understanding of the halal concept, hence, contributing to sustainable consumption among Muslims.

Conceptual Framework on the Role of Halal Awareness as a Catalyst for Sustainable Consumption within the Muslim Community

Based on the findings, sustainable Muslim consumption can be characterised by several key attributes. First, the consumers possess adequate knowledge of halal and *halalan tayyiban*. Second, they verify halal status through reliable sources such as certification. Third, they prioritise cleanliness, safety, and quality in food selection.

In addition, they are not easily influenced by trends, social pressure or assumptions. Instead, their decisions are guided by knowledge, values, and ethical considerations. These characteristics reflect a holistic understanding of halal as a way of life, rather than a narrow religious requirement.

Thus, halal awareness contributes not only to individual behaviour but also to the development of a more responsible and sustainable halal consumption among the Muslim community in Lawas. This conceptual relationship is illustrated in Figure 1 below, which demonstrates how halal awareness functions as a catalyst for a sustainable behaviour within the Muslim community in selecting food for daily consumption.

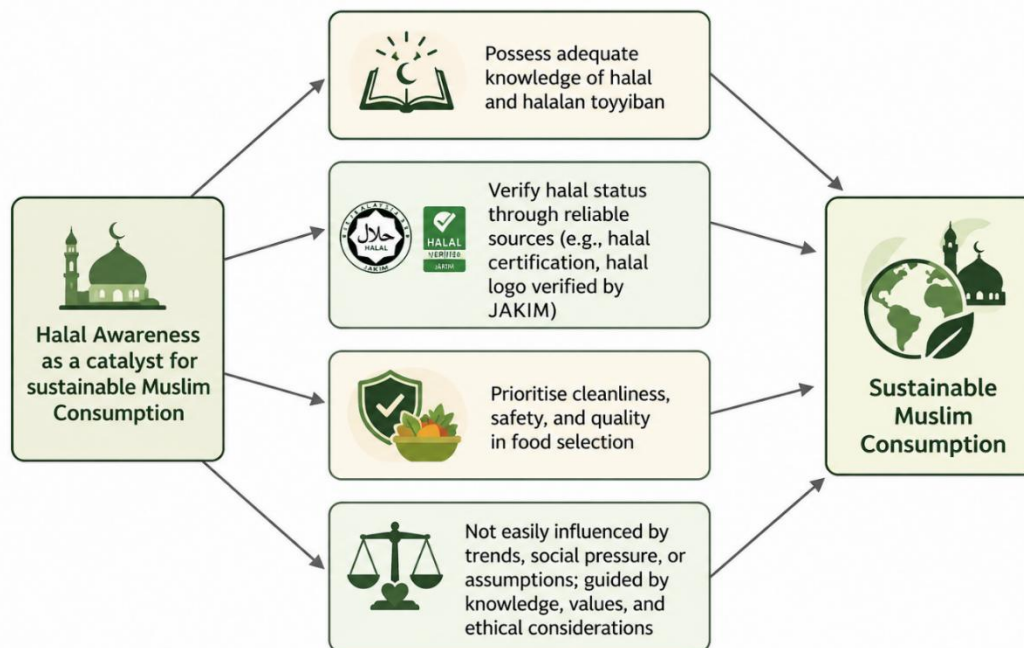


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework of Halal Awareness for Sustainable Muslim Consumption

Conclusion

This study examined the role of halal awareness as a catalyst for sustainable consumption among Muslim consumers in Lawas, Sarawak. The findings reveal that halal awareness among respondents is generally high, particularly in understanding that halal extends beyond the aspect of slaughtering to include cleanliness, safety, and food quality. This reflects a growing awareness of the concept of halalan tayyiban as a comprehensive guideline for daily food consumption.

In terms of food selection, the study found that factors such as halal certification, cleanliness of premises, and food quality play a significant role in influencing consumer decisions. These findings indicate that Muslim consumers are increasingly integrating religious values with lifestyle considerations, which aligns with the principles of Islamic Law in food consumption. However, despite the high level of awareness, the study also identified a noticeable gap between knowledge and actual understanding. Some respondents still rely on informal indicators, such as the identity of the food provider, while others show limited trust in halal-certified premises operated by non-Muslims. These findings highlight the presence of misconceptions and incomplete understanding, particularly in relation to halal certification and verification processes.

This gap is significant to note as it may lead to inconsistent behaviour and increase the risk of exposure to doubtful food. From a broader perspective, the findings suggest that knowledge alone is not sufficient to ensure proper halal practices in daily life. Instead, a sustainable Muslim consumer requires not only awareness, but also accurate understanding and critical judgment in interpreting halal information.

Based on the findings, this study suggests that a sustainable Muslim consumer is characterised by several vital features. First, they demonstrate sufficient knowledge of halal and halalan

tayyiban. Second, they verify halal status through credible sources, particularly recognised certification. Third, they place strong emphasis on cleanliness, safety, and quality in their food choices. Moreover, they are not easily swayed by trends, social pressure, or assumptions. Instead, their decisions are based on knowledge, Islamic values, and ethical considerations. These characteristics reflect a holistic understanding of halal as a way of life, rather than a narrow religious requirement. Therefore, the findings suggest that halal awareness may function as a catalyst in promoting responsible and sustainable Muslim consumption.

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