THEMATIC ANALYSIS USES IN INTERPRETING MUSLIM CONSUMERS' AWARENESS ON HALAL LOGO

Penggunaan Analisis Thematic Dalam Mentafsir Kesedaran Pengguna Muslim Terhadap Logo Halal

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Abstract

The awareness levels on halal logo amongst Muslim consumers are still low, yet have to be directed analytically to demonstrate their expressions. It is due that the Halal logo intensely perceived as a routine in the ordinary life and culture of the Muslim consumer. The purpose of the study is to interpret consumers' awareness of the halal logo by using thematic analysis. Data collected using verbal data interview from focus group sampling technique. Hence, it is highlighted a few issues influencing their awareness levels such as purchase consideration, educational status, and familiarity level on the halal logo. Essentially, this study found that strengthening halal logo as unit trust implies as sufficient to avoid purchasing disputes, thus may indicate higher credential when choosing certified -halal products.

Keywords: awareness, halal logo, Muslim consumer, thematic analysis.

Abstrak

Tahap kesedaran yang rendah terhadap logo halal di kalangan pengguna Muslim masih rendah, namun harus ditunjukkan secara analitik untuk menunjukkan ekspresi mereka. Ini kerana logo Halal secara intensifnya dianggap sebagai rutin dalam kehidupan dan budaya pengguna Muslim. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menafsirkan kesedaran pengguna terhadap logo halal dengan menggunakan analisis thematic. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan temu bual data lisan dari teknik persampelan kumpulan berfokus. Oleh itu, ia menekankan beberapa masalah yang mempengaruhi tahap kesedaran mereka seperti pertimbangan pembelian, status pendidikan, dan tahap keakraban pada logo halal. Kajian ini mendapati amat penting

untuk menguatkan kepercayaan pada logo halal, kerana berguna untuk mengelak kecurigaan semasa membeli, bahkan untuk meningkatkan tahap keyakinan dalam memilih produk yang diperakui-halal.

Kata kunci: Kesedaran, logo halal, pengguna Muslim, analisis thematic.

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of a halal concept is seen as a significant consideration of achieving a higher level of trust during purchases. It is essential at this point to introduce some further definitions and basic concepts related to halal awareness, specifically to Muslim consumers. They found that the relative risk increased with the sentiments of their awareness level delivers by the credible status of halal concepts and its indication. Agreed by many researchers, it is also impactful to influence consumers' decision-making and behaviour. Halal logo as a marketing tool may serve an excellent platform to help Muslim peoples, ironically, in delivering the information and offers an original reference about product attributes aligned with Islamic principles. It compromises the units of the trust, and belief in informing their target consumers that their products are halal and shariah-compliant (Shafie, 2006). Additionally, by acknowledging the certification, it substantially may decrease the doubtless on product status during consumptions (Marzuki, Hall and Ballantine, 2012), and suit with Islamic compliance according to religious rules and guidelines (Z. Zakaria, 2008).

The element of awareness perceived amongst Muslim consumers is crucial to be discovered, as it's affecting how they perceived halal labelling and its definition, what's their understanding towards them, and also in determining the influential aspects relates to their perceptions. Muslims have always associated with Islamic values and its principles and knowingly linked with their religious obligation to consume halal in every aspect of life. Thus, the availability of the halal product in the marketplace is very relevant for them, especially to the halal food products. It implies a piece of evidence to the introduction of halal logo and certification, which sufficiently crucial in making a purchase selection and directs people to rely on it. With the rising percentage of 63% of Muslim peoples in Malaysia, it has boomed the demands for the recent halal market to grow well and persistent.

Religious value is said to be the most impactful factor in influencing consumers' attitudes and behaviour (Peetinger et al. 2004), plays a dominant role in shaping food choice (Dindyal, 2003), and affecting purchasing decisions and eating habits (Blackwell et al., 2001). Salam (2012) added Islamic religion has a more profound impact and more influence on its followers when compared to other main religions.

Hence, the Muslim's belief in Islam can influence their level of awareness, especially on halal food (Simon, 1994; Hussaini, 1993).

Praslova-Forland and Divitini (2003) described awareness as the social situation in a group or community in a shared environment, which can be physical, virtual or both (e.g., peoples' roles, activities, status, responsibility) with a time from a short term overview of the social situation of a community to a long term memory of a community's social life. A more concise understanding of this topic is required to interpret consumers' awareness of the halal logo as it is potentially driven to an efficient alternative in highlighting new insights and factors influencing their understanding. In general, the awareness towards halal brand may indicate a positive influence on consumer's confidence in buying and consuming Halal labelled products (Golnaz, Zainal, & Mad Nasir, 2012).

Thus, with the emerging of halal knowledge and awareness among consumers, this has built booming opportunities and demands for halal markets. Hence, with the rising numbers of Muslim populations across the world, this has positively implicated the delivery of halal concepts and its certification as implied by Islamic principles and rules. To yield a meaningful result of their expressions and tones in viewing the halal logo, the method used to summarise their response by using appropriate procedure has to be directed analytically, yet trustworthy.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis is a process of identifying, organizing, describing, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Signifying as a foundational method for qualitative analysis as according to Braun and Clarke (2006), it also offers core skills for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis, hence sufficient to be used in assisting researchers in the analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Halloway & Todres, 2003; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Compared to other qualitative analysis methods, it's highly flexible can be modified for the needs of many studies, yet provides rich and details data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004).

As it also does not require wholly theoretical knowledge compared to other qualitative methods, it is more accessible, easily grasped and understandable (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thus, in the study context, it has been chosen as a core procedure in analysing the qualitative findings due to its consistency in strengthening methodology, facilitating a greater understanding and may develop interpretations to the research outcomes. Agreed by Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is described as a 'translator' for those speaking the language in qualitative analysis, then enabling who use different research methods to communicate with each other.

By compromising the advantages offering by the application of thematic analysis, the qualitative findings in the forms of data transcription cater to consumers awareness on the halal logo has successfully to be gathered. Compared to other qualitative analysis methods, it's highly flexible can be modified for the needs of many studies, yet provides rich and details data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). As it also does not require wholly theoretical knowledge compared to other qualitative methods, it is more accessible, easily grasped and understandable (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The thematic analysis appears as an option to strengthen the process, provides greater understanding among participants, and consequently develops interpretations of the research outcomes. However, with lack of clear and succinct methods to be taken in the analysis procedures which may be frustrating (Braun & Clarke, 2006), thus this necessity the importance of uncovering step by step approach in conducting data analysis approach for convenient and better application of qualitative techniques (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). To interpret consumers' awareness on halal logo, thematic analysis methods succeeded in examining different perspectives of participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Consequently, the study succeeded to use this procedure to interpret consumers' awareness on the halal logo, bring a consolidation of attention to be considered while analysing.

METHODS
Qualitative study is defined as a systematic scientific inquiry to build researcher' understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. According to McMillan and Schunacher (1993, p. 479), a qualitative study is "primary an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories". The definition implies that data and meaning emerge "originally" from the research content, and they usually derive from the combination of observation, interviews and document reviews (P.K.Astalin, 2013). In this qualitative procedure, the collection of verbal data from the focus group deployed as a sample of practice. The interviews mainly contained open-ended questions allowing the participants to express their feelings towards the halal logo usage in their daily routine. The data collection derives through interview method or focus-grouped discussion technique will determine a situation, screening the alternatives and discovering new ideas (Naoum, 2008; Mahmud, 2008).

The sample of participants consists of Malaysian adult peoples which selected with few preferences such as Malay and Muslim, with range age of 20 – 50 years old and above, having relatively education level, have capabilities to respond on the

questions, despite having exposure and experiences with halal labelling during purchasing. The interview data among eleventh participants are typically recorded and transcribed by applying thematic procedures—then the emerging of data from the text transcription organized into categories and patterns.

There is a limitation of data findings will be revealed due to its sensitive nature of the current study. This paper emphasizes the recommendations as mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006) to apply the thematic analysis in the interpretation approach of six systematic steps for the case study concerning the consumer's awareness on the halal logo. This would include; a six-step of doing thematic analysis, also by using extract data set as a sample of practice. The details of displaying steps by steps approach as research procedure may include these steps as flow chart 1 below.

Flow chart 1: Six Steps Approach of Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006)
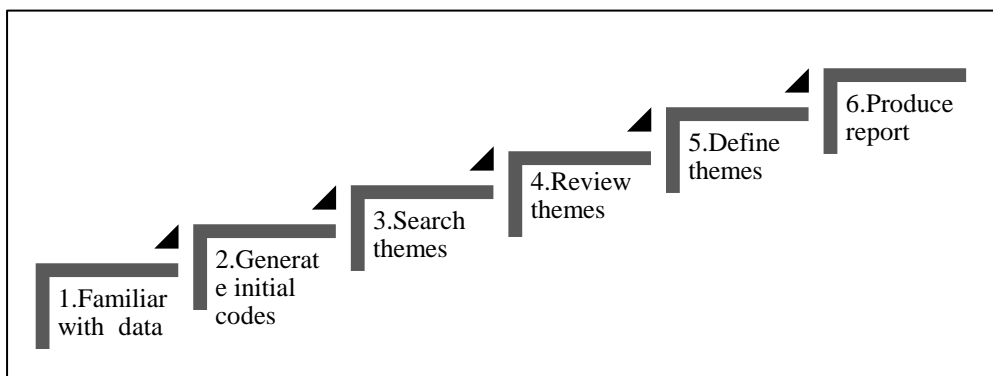
Getting Started

The application of primary data analysis extracted from the data transcribe was drawn as a sample of practice to enhance better understanding in conducting a thematic analysis. The limitation of this paper will further include the details of analytical procedures in the context of consumers' awareness of halal logo amongst Muslim consumers, as a content of the research interpretations. The use of direct research question reveals as: What is consumers awareness on halal logo during purchasing? Flow chart 1, as above, shows the application of six steps framework in a thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006). However, even usually presented as a linear, six -phased procedure, it is an iterative and reflection process that develops over time and involves a constant moving back and forward between phases, perhaps many times.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Step 1: Familiar with data- To get familiar with the verbal data, the transcripts will be read for multiple times, and repeatedly. The process of transcription may become time-consuming, frustrating, and at times tedious, anyway, can be an excellent method to start familiarizing with the data (Riessman, 1993). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that researchers read through the entire data set at least once before beginning code, as ideas and identification of possible patterns may be shaped as researchers become familiar with all aspects of their data. In this step, it is practical to make early impressions in notes forms or memos, to gain ideas or insights for coding that returned to in subsequent phase (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Below are some initial ideas make on the text extract:

"Multiple perceptions were giving by Muslim consumers, which mainly reflects their level of awareness. And they seem agreed with the significant impacts bringing by the awareness aspect during their meaning interpretation towards perceiving halal logo and its indication. However, many influential factors should also be taken into consideration while giving their interpretations".

Step 2: Generate initial codes- This step involves the production of initial codes from the extract data. They were assuming that the data codes managed to be understood and familiarized, the addressing of research questions delivered in a systematic and meaningful. As shown in figure 1 below, a sample of the interview extract shows, the coding process needs to be conducted manually as part of additional consideration for planning purposes. Ideally, by working with few pages of transcripts, the extraction of the data is carried out line by line by using pencil or highlighter as well as by creating few remarks such as colours or labels on the text to reduce miscellaneous items to suit with potential themes.

Figure 1: Sample of an interview extract

Interview extract	Initial codes
Ten years ago, colossal differentiation can be described with a lack of exposure, weak focusing on halal logo consumptions. Recently knowledge of the halal logo is convenient to help in giving information on halal issues. The respondent will typically assume that the recognition of the halal logo should be applied with Arabic fonts and get JAKIM approval. By having such good halal awareness, the respondent agrees that it's	Lack of exposure and weak focusing Knowledge is convenient to give information Applied Arabic fonts and get JAKIM approval- essential recognition

associated with intention to purchase halal products, despite *with convincing halal labelling, serve guarantee to avoid conflicts during purchasing. Ingredients, nutritional facts, manufacturer details, years of product establishment, packaging are part of the added value* to the halal awareness. Respondent agreed with statement awareness of the halal logo is crucial. *The indication of the halal logo is essential to be applied to the package to increase consumers' confidence.*	Halal awareness associated with intention purchase halal Guarantee to avoid purchase conflicts Halal information is added value to awareness Halal logo to increase consumers' confidence

At this point, the code explicitly managed to capture the main research interests. The features of the extract data will be simplified by identification of the critical section of text and attaching the labels or colours for indexing the items as they relate to a theme or issue in the extract data, as suggested by King (2004). However, it has to be assured that all of the data extracts coded and then organized within each code.

As figure 1 above, the sample of the interview extract demonstrated the entire set of data interpreted systematically. The exciting aspects identified by highlighting the codes and form the basis themes across the data set. From the data extract, the initial codes revealed as *lack of exposure and weak focusing, knowledge is convenient to give information, applied Arabic fonts as necessary recognition, halal awareness associated with intention purchase halal, guarantee to avoid purchase conflicts, halal information is added values to awareness, and halal logo increase consumers' confidence*. To determine their relevancy own to which potential theme, they will be appropriately evaluated and examined.

Step 3: Search themes- A long list of data coding across data set revealed as a preliminary step of turning codes into themes, can be viewed as figure 2 below. At this point, the preparation of data coding may not strictly bond to the rules, as long as it is sufficient to represent the relationship between themes. As recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006), at this stage the collection of data can be viewed by potential themes (at 1st order themes) such as *awareness level* and *purchasing consideration*, and all extracted data coded related with them.

It was revealed as a potential theme of *awareness level*, is associated with relevant data codes such as *awareness much stronger, better intuition/consideration, concerns on the halal logo, weak, less concerned, lack exposure, simply choose a product, and just follow family guidance.* Next potential theme suggested as *purchasing consideration*. It caters *on check regularly, uses heart approach and*

instinct, stops buying if feels doubt, does product research, ask other's recommendation, observe employees' background, find established brands/company, stressing on halal issues, and refers ingredients.

It is sufficient to explore and display the relationship between them beyond the linear template, to make the procedures employed in going text to interpretation explicit (Attride -Stirling, 2001). By looking all data in details at the next step, to ensure the themes hold as they should be, or whether some need to be combined, refined, separated or discarded further.

Figure 2: Turning codes into themes – preliminary step

Codes	1st order themes
Current Awareness much stronger Better intuition/consideration Concerns on halal logo Previous Weak Less concerned Lack of exposure Simply choose product Just follow family guidance	Awareness Level
Check regularly Use the heart approach and instinct Stop buying if feels doubt Does product research Ask other's recommendation Observe employees' background Find established brands/company Stressing on halal issues Refers ingredients	Purchasing consideration

Step 4: Review themes- The preliminary ideas on the potential themes found in steps 3 has been reviewed, modified, and developed. Some themes do not support the data, need to be defined until it is enough to capture an idea owned by the theme segment or category. It is recommended to ensure that data within themes should cohere together, meaningfully, distinct, precise and identifiable between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Relevantly, it has to be substantial that the themes are logic and make sense. It must be capable of supporting the entire data set, clarify the

needs of being distinct or separated themes, thus demonstrate the synchronization of the sub-themes and discovery on any other existing themes as possible in the data set. At the end of this step, there should be a reasonably good idea of what different themes are, how they fit together and the overall story they tell about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 5: Define themes- The refinement made in step 4 to the potential themes and sub-themes shown in table 1 below. The themes name defined to support the entire data and meaningful. It's demonstrated the relatedness of the themes and the essential of the sub-themes (shown in 1st order themes and 2nd order themes) to strengthen the relationship structure, thus display the meaning within data set. Consumers managed to raise out their views and perspectives in demonstrating their awareness level on the halal logo. The feedback analyzed leads to many inputs such as 1st order themes, may include *awareness level, purchasing consideration, Muslim responsibility, familiarity, significance on halal awareness, and capabilities*. At this point, the themes defined were considering the appropriateness, and its suitability that represents the data set.

Table 1: Refining themes into 1st and 2nd themes

Codes	1st order themes	2nd order themes
Current Awareness much stronger Better intuition/consideration Concerns on halal logo Previous Weak Less concerned Lack of exposure Simply choose product Just follow family guidance	Awareness level	Experience
Check regularly Use the heart approach and instinct Stop buying if feels doubt Do product research Ask other's recommendation Observe employees' background Find established brands/company Stressing on halal issues Refers ingredients	Purchasing consideration	Influential factors
Muslim responsibility Looks for halalantoyyiban	Muslim Responsibility	
Basic recognition Familiar with halal logo	Familiarity	

Level of noticeable		
Boost confidence level Halal intention Avoid purchase conflict Perceived labelling well Reduce time Added value Exposure Further consideration Guarantee Define the halal logo Relate with religious belief Communication and interaction	Significance of halal awareness	
Look certainty, cleans, hygiene Capable of finding sources Know how to search for findings Making product comparisons Find alternatives Updates on halal issues	Capabilities	

In 1st order themes, *awareness level*, the critical opinions gathered with multiples tones of their expressions. They said that recently *their awareness much more reliable, have better intuition and consideration, and concerns on the halal logo;* compared to previous years ago that *have weak awareness, less concerned, lack exposure, simply choose a product and just follow family guidance.*

They responded for *Purchasing consideration* as*, check regularly, use heart approach and instinct, stop buying if feels doubt, do product research, ask other's recommendation, observe employee' background, find established brands/company, stressing on halal issues, and refers ingredient.* These implied their consideration during purchasing that significant to be emphasized, potentially has derived their awareness issue.

For the theme of *Muslim responsibility*, as a Muslim consumer, it is compulsory for them for applying their faith and beliefs throughout their daily practices. Thus, it is advisable to look for *halal toyyiban,* especially to their eating patterns behaviour. Many of the consumers seem to have clear understanding reflect on this aspect, thus positively affecting their awareness level.

In term of *familiarity,* consumer expressed, it is essential to *have necessary recognition and familiar* with the characteristics of the halal logo, thus remaining to increase the *level of noticeable*.

Another theme identified as, *significant on halal awareness* summarized consumers' opinions that awareness on the halal logo is credible to *boost confidence level, lead to halal intention, reduce purchasing time, avoid purchase conflict, perceived labelling well, added value, exposure, further consideration, guarantee, define the halal logo, relate with religious belief and for communication and interaction purposes.*

The theme of *capabilities* linked with the educational aspects which believe may affect consumers' perception of the halal logo. They explained that education might help the consumer to look *for certainty, cleans and hygiene, useful to find a source of information, benefits during product comparisons, capable of finding alternatives*, and *updates on halal issues*.

Meanwhile, on 2nd order themes, on *experience,* they expressed their feelings and opinions based on their past and current experiences during halal logo consumption; thus, these may indicate some insights on their awareness level. It seems like the level of awareness is raising among them recently, compared to many years ago.

Step 6: Produce report- The findings will be usually implemented at the end of the study, as a research article by signifying the context of introduction, methodology, result, and conclusions by showing the usefulness of thematic analysis as a convenient analysis tool in interpreting consumers' views.

CONCLUSION
This study managed to reveal a few findings on the Muslim consumers' awareness of the halal logo by applying thematic analysis. The critical aspects in clarifying their feedback expressed with additional evidence on its significant, issues influencing their awareness, and suggestions to overcome their purchase conflicts during halal purchasing. However, lots of efforts need to be improved to upgrade consumers' awareness of the halal logo. The understanding of applying religious practices has been perceived as the main factor in increasing Muslim consumers' awareness.

It is proven from many sources of literature in influencing consumers' preferences while purchasing, hence creating an obligation needs to be practised. Despite to the needs of strengthening their religious beliefs, the concept of *halal toyyibban* also emphasized while measuring their awareness, which most of them are quite familiar with. Its synonymously linked with the inputs of safety, hygiene, quality and purity according to the Islamic rules and principles to be applied in all aspects of life not only to the food products.

Consumers' awareness of the halal logo is associated with the understanding of the halal concept itself. It is demonstrated with the practices they apply, primarily

through preferences during purchasing. A study revealed their behaviour in creating a purchase consideration by regularly checking on product's status, refers ingredient, looks for established brand and product, ask others' recommendation, do product research before purchasing, etc. It shows that the understanding of halal awareness through practices is hugely relevant to the way peoples perceived the halal logo.

The finding found that majority of Muslim consumers are realized on the benefits of halal awareness which brings confidence, avoid conflicts, reduce purchasing time, guaranteed of halalness and helps to define halal logo. However, they responded that the familiarity level towards halal logo could be an influential factor to their awareness. The characteristics of halal logo endorsed by the authority, especially JAKIM must be used as a fundamental element to easily recognized halal logo, thus indicate a further level of noticeable. The firm regulation by JAKIM on handling halal labelling must strictly be taken, as it provides the units of trust and confidence as viewed by Boone and Verbeke (2007).

Additionally, it is clear from the data that the presence of educational background strongly influences the consumers' awareness on the halal logo. They are likely to be more knowledgeable and react positively while received updates on halal issues. Therefore, capable of finding alternatives while making product' comparisons and verify its status. The consumers' interpretations and their behaviour in perceiving halal logo likely different from each other, and this define another issue needs to be concerned.

Some issues can be highlighted. First, the labelling regulation must be enforced to highly indicate the status of the halal logo and certification as a vital source of information. Thus, JAKIM as an authority must deliver precise information on any halal related issues to the public, intentionally to avoid conflicts. The requirement of having a halal logo and certification is remaining as a voluntary basis (Zalina, 2008). However, to maintain its great significance and benefits, it should be made compulsory to all entrepreneurs to earn the certificate.

The indication of the halal logo must actively be promoted in strengthening the reputation and its status locally and at the international level. Second, the understanding of halal related issues can be implemented throughout the educational syllabus of Islamic studies subject, as a step to increase initial halal knowledge and awareness, especially for young Muslim children at school levels. Finding found that the halal awareness campaign conducted at primary school level has positively delivered the halal information, notably to differentiate the genuine halal logo.

Lastly, the application of the step by step procedure of thematic analysis has able to demonstrate the consumers' interpretation in perceiving halal logo. Contribution of

the paper towards a more explicit method of how the interpretation should be conducted is meant to be shared. The practice has successfully identified and measured the level of awareness as reported in the previous author' work reported elsewhere [as references below].

AUTHORS' NOTE
Findings from the data set analyzed during the current study are not full-publicly available due to the sensitive nature of the authors' qualitative data.

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