The *Halal* brand personality and its effect on purchase intention

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**Abstract**

*Halal* is not just a purely religious issue; it is also in the realm of business and trade. The purpose of this study is to propose a model to determine the *Halal* brand personality and then examine its effect on brand trust and purchase intention. In particular, religious commitment with intra-personal and inter-personal dimensions is presented as a moderator variable. A literature review was conducted to select an appropriate theoretical model based on the recognized variables. In addition, the paper provides insight into each variable of the proposed model. The practical implication of this study extends to the new window for marketers and businesses in different countries involved in the *Halal* business. Establishing a strong *Halal* brand assists corporations to achieve worldwide acknowledgement, credibility, and be a major player in this lucrative market. Shaping *Halal* in the lens of branding in the business environment enhances the image of *Halal* and also leads to more recognition among non-Muslim consumers. Finally, this is a pioneer study to propose implementing brand personality and brand trust on *Halal*.

**Keywords** *Halal*, Brand personality, Brand trust, Purchase intention, Religious commitment

1. Introduction

The word *Halal* has many connotations and it is difficult if not impossible to use it to adequately convey the true quality of a product in the religious context intended by the certifying authorities (Wilson & Liu, 2010; Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011). The word *Halal* is derived from the verb ‘Halla’, which means lawful, legal, licit, legitimate, and permitted for Muslims (Jallad, 2008). In reality, *Halal* is a spiritual need of Muslim consumers (Alserhan, 2010) that plays a vital role in their life by sending them a signal to purchase and consume permissible products (Rajagopal et al. 2011; Shafie & Othman, 2006). The Muslim population that is now close to a quarter of the world’s population is projected to increase at an annual
rate of 26 to 28% by 2020 (Muhammad et al., 2009; Hanzae & Ramezani, 2011). This will lead to a very sizeable demand for Halal products globally (Temporal, 2011; Cheng, 2008).

This significant demand motivates businesses (Muslim and non-Muslim) to fight for and secure maximum market share (Lada et al., 2009). For instance, McDonald’s and Nestle invest substantially to capture an extensive share of this market. In the competitive market, each product type offers many different brands and each brand tries to win shelf space and attracts more consumers (Aziz & Vui, 2012). Halal as the central Islamic marketing asset (Rajagopal et al., 2011) possesses the conditions and qualifications of a legitimate brand entity (Nawai et al., 2007; Salman & Siddiqui, 2011; Isfahani et al., 2013). In fact, Halal brand is a safe place to lessen the uncertainty associated with buying a product. It is also a source of establishing a strong relationship by consumers.

Whilst previous studies have been done to explore different aspects of Halal such as Halal market condition (Alserhan, 2010), Halal supply chain management (Tieman, 2011), concept of Halal (Jallad, 2008), Halal certification (Shafie & Othman, 2006; Noordin et al., 2009), and non-Muslim perception about Halal (Golnaz et al., 2010), there is a dearth of research on the implementation of brand theories on Halal brand. To fill this gap, this study uses the five dimensions of brand personality identified by Aaker (1997) as well as brand trust as a fundamental strong relationship between brands and consumers (Serrat, 2009).

There are several reasons for focusing on the Halal itself as an aspect of branding. First, Halal is able to go beyond just the indication of a pure and healthy product, and Halal currently has only an insignificant image relevance in Western consumer minds (Temporal, 2011). Second, it assists companies to penetrate new markets by adding value to its products in the competitive environment. Lastly, Muslim consumers cannot access Halal products just anywhere in the market but only in some outlets (Dali et al., 2009). For instance, in the United States, there are 90000 kosher (Jewish-based) products worth nearly USD 100 billion. In comparison there are just about 1000 Halal products available in the same market (Alserhan, 2010). This situation could be improved by increasing awareness and introducing dimensions of the Halal brand among non-Muslim producers, to cater to and gain a strong foothold in a market of over 1.5 billion people based on values, principles and Islamic practices.

Finally, this study focuses on implementing the brand personality model to identify the Halal brand personality, and its effect on purchase intention through mediating brand trust and the moderating effect of religious commitment. Thus, this study provides an excellent platform through which to apply different brand theories on Halal. The following theoretical
model (Figure1) frames the constructs and their relationships in the model. To further understand the salience of implementing branding theories on the purchase intention, the research objectives driving this study are as follows:

1) To investigate the influence of brand personality on purchase intention.
2) To investigate the impact of brand personality on purchase intention as mediated by brand trust.
3) To investigate the moderation effect of religious commitment between brand personality and brand trust as well as brand personality and purchase intention.

![Proposed Theoretical Framework](image)

**Figure1.** Proposed Theoretical Framework

The proposed model is designed with brand personality as an independent variable with five dimensions, which are: sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness. Brand trust and religious commitment play roles as mediator and moderator variables respectively, whereas purchase intention is a dependent variable. The following discussion provides an overview of variables and conclusion as well.

### 2. Brand personality

Brand personality is derived from human psychology and consumer behavior theories (Heding et al., 2009). Aaker (1997) developed a brand personality model that consists of five core dimensions namely, competence, excitement, ruggedness, sincerity, and sophistication to measure the nature of a brand’s personality. Although some other brand personality models have been developed by different researchers, Aaker’s model (Figure 2) is still more popular
and valid for measuring the nature of a brand’s personality (Freling et al., 2011). In fact, brand personality is similar to human personality that describes a brand with both differentiating and enduring human characteristics (Tuan et al., 2012). Furthermore, personality can create a chance for a brand to shape a specific place in the consumer’s mind (Upshaw, 1995). In the Halal context, consumers have different definitions and perceptions of Halal (Golnaz et al., 2010). Thus, highlighting the Halal brand personality helps to unify meaning among diverse target groups both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is also a way the Halal brand can speak and behave. For example, Marlboro has connotations of masculinity while Apple is invariably recognized as cool, friendly and the choice of creative professionals. Therefore, finding the Halal brand personality helps consumers to feel familiar with it and pick it up without hesitation. Moreover, the personality of a brand like the personality of a human being does not change easily and the combination of personality with a brand makes a strong connection (Temporal, 2001). Therefore, brand personality is closely related to the consumer’s personality, so consumers are likely to choose brands whose personalities match their own (Tuan et al., 2012). In this regard, specifying the personality of Halal brand assists consumers (Muslim and non-Muslim) to make a solid connection with the Halal brand and express their own or idealized self through the brand that they buy and use.

![Dimensions of Brand Personality](image)

**Figure 2.** Source: Aaker, (1997)

Furthermore, brand personality is one of the main elements of brand strategy (Temporal, 2011), that corporations need to develop in order to become a part of consumers’ life (Choi et al., 2010). Indeed, brand personality is a critical part for marketing managers to create differentiation in the market (Sung & Kim, 2010). For instance, Aaker (1997) describes some examples of different brands with different personalities like Mild Seven, which is perceived
as feminine, while IBM is seen as old. Similarly, finding the brand personality of Halal describes the way that Halal brand expresses and represents itself - beliefs, values, features, interests, and heritage that this brand has in the market and lives for - among its competitors. Furthermore, consumer perceptions of the five brand personality dimensions are differentially related to brand benefits (Maehle et al., 2011). These benefits consist of three components, which are: functional, experiential, and symbolic benefits (Park et al., 1986). Functional benefits indicate a brand that is able to solve a consumption-related current problem or prevent a potential problem. Furthermore, a brand with an experiential concept is designed to complete the needs for stimulation and variety that are internally generated while a brand with a symbolic concept is designed to associate one with a desired self-image. For instance, according to Maehle et al. (2011), competence personality relates to the functional benefits while ruggedness and sophistication are more exclusively associated with symbolic benefits. Thus, recognition of the personality of Halal declares the specific benefits of the Halal brand.

Brand personality influences consumer-brand relationship (Louis & Lombart, 2010). In the marketplace, consumers establish relationships with diverse brands every day, so brand personality is an important element in the consumer’s decision making, purchase intention and maintaining a strong relationship with a brand (Louis & Lombart, 2010; Bouhlel et al., 2009). Likewise, brand personality as an appealing concept (Rajagopal, 2005) affects the level of brand trust as a fundamental of consumer-brand relationship (Sung & Kim, 2010; Freling et al., 2011). For example, according to a study by Maehle et al. (2011), sincere brands are deemed high morals, whereas exciting brands offer a chance to experience feelings of excitement. In this regard, a brand with sincere personality traits can make a much stronger relationship than a brand with an exciting personality (Heding et al., 2009). Finding the right Halal personality assists marketers to understand consumer perceptions of the Halal brand and how they feel about it. As an illustration, if Halal reflects a sincere personality, it will reflect the truthfulness of the human personality. Therefore, this characteristic of Halal can foster a durable relationship with the target groups and bring peace of mind to consumers. Finally, when marketers manage and develop brand personality, it will inject charisma unto their products (Temporal, 2001).

3. Brand trust
Trust, which is an essential part of any brand management strategy (Temporal, 2011), is a very important factor in today’s business environment (Liza, 2011) to establish a strong
relationship between a brand and its consumers (Matzler et al., 2006; Bouhlel et al., 2009). Trust will be categorized into emotional and rational aspects (Serrat, 2009; Temporal, 2011). While the emotional part is associated with confidence, security, interest, respect, liking, gratitude and admiration (Serrat, 2009), the rational aspect demonstrates credibility which is related to the ability of a brand to satisfy consumer’s needs, and the performance of the brand (Belaid & Behi, 2011). In the Halal context, according to a study by Wilson and Liu (2010), Halal plays some roles in Muslim life - part of a belief, essential daily living, ethical system, and emotional peace. Thus, building a trustworthy Halal brand enables businesses to appeal emotionally to the consumers. In addition, in order to satisfy the rational side, businesses must pay great attention to the needs of consumers by faithfully complying with Shariah regulations in their products. Accordingly, trust enhances consumer commitment to the brand (Mohamed & Daud, 2012).

Based on marketing theory, trust is a crucial part of a relationship, which has been studied and attested to by psychologists, sociologists, and economists from the perspectives of management and marketing principles. It is their consensus that when the consumer has trust in a brand it comes with the belief that the brand will consistently deliver its promise of value to consumers (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). By analyzing the consumer trust as a marketing strategy, a company can retain current consumers and win new ones as well (Sichtmann, 2007). For instance, regarding the increased awareness of the Halal brand among Christian and Jewish consumers (Alserhan, 2010), instilling trust in the Halal brand can enhance the demand in the Halal market because consumers would then have confidence in a brand when they recognize it as admirable and pleasant. Further, in the highly competitive market, brand trust is a significant competitive advantage which has a great impact on the behavioral intentions of consumers. Indeed, trust enhances the consumer’s purchase intention (Liza, 2011; Bouhlel et al., 2011) and it affects consumer’s repetitive purchase behavior as well (Belaid & Behi, 2011). Finally, trust is an essential element that focuses on the future relationship between brand and consumer because it is a guarantee for consumers that they will get value from the brand, while a lack of trust would negatively influence the relationship (Gurviez & Korchia, 2002). Therefore, it is necessary for a brand to be perceived as trustworthy and reliable by consumers (Wang, 2002).
4. Religious commitment (religiosity)

Religion is the core worth of a culture that imbues the daily lives of members of any cultural group (Mokhlis & Spartks, 2007). In fact, it shapes the individual’s moral system and society’s ethical structures. Religious commitment, often termed religiosity, is capable of influencing an individual cognitively and behaviorally (Mokhlis & Spartks, 2007). Furthermore, it is a value system that differs from those of the devout, less religious and the non-religious. Devout people strongly follow their religious principles such as regularly attending weekly worship services, being strictly committed to the religious doctrines and membership of the group, but the people whose belief in religious tenet is weak feel free to behave in other ways. This value system of devout people impacts directly on their choice behavior in the market, commitment and level of confidence to a specific brand (Khraim, 2010; Rindfleisch et al., 2005). Religious commitment comprises two dimension intra-personal (internal) and inter-personal (external) that play equal and crucial roles in the lives of devout people (Mokhlis & Spartks, 2007). The internal dimension declares the religious identities, religious attitudes, values, and beliefs, and the external dimension expresses religious affiliation, devotional practices, or membership in a religious community. As for understanding the nature of consumer behavior, marketers should try and determine how strongly consumers are committed and affiliated to their religion because religiosity exhibits their belief system and strict adherence to the doctrines of their faith as well as consumption style and decision-making process (Mokhlis & Spartks, 2007; Khraim, 2010). Finally, religious commitment varies from person to person; therefore, consumption is influenced not only by religion but also by intensity of one’s religious affiliation or religiosity (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012).

5. Purchase intention

The most significant issue in each industry concentrates on increasing purchase intention. This critical concept in marketing approach assists managers in deploying the proper strategies in the marketplace related to market demands, market segmentations, and promotional programs (Tsiotsou, 2006). Purchase intention is a process to analyze and predict the behavior of consumers (Lin & Lin, 2007) pertaining to their willingness to buy, use and their extensive attention toward the specific brand (Changa & Liub, 2009; Shah et al., 2012). Superior purchase intention promotes the purchase (Chen et al., 2012) since the consumer’s experiences after purchase give a collective feeling that affects consumers to repurchase the
brand (Lin et al., 2011). In this regard, assessing the *Halal* brand purchase intention would help to better understand the needs, expectations, and perceptions of consumers (Shaari & Arifin, 2010). According to a study by O’Cass and Lim (2001), there is a strong relationship between brand personality and purchase intention. Thus, by identifying the *Halal* brand personality, businesses are able to boost the purchase intention of consumers and change the attitude of those consumers who see *Halal* as merely a spiritual issue (swine and alcohol free).

### 6. Conclusion

In this research, an attempt was made to conceptually clarify the implementation of brand theories on *Halal*. In this study, we proposed a model that describes the relationships between brand personality, brand trust and purchase intention. Brand personality as a modern and interesting practice in marketing theory has been employed in this research. The highlight point is the application of this model to capture the brand personality of *Halal*. The impact of *Halal* brand personality on trust and purchase intention through the moderation effect of religious commitment is another stream of the research. Brand trust as the vital part of consumer-brand relationship helps to build a durable relationship between brands and consumers and reap significant benefits. Hopefully, the findings from this research will be useful for scholars, *Halal* manufacturers and marketers. The theoretical importance of this study lies in the insight it provides into how consumers are becoming more conscious about the *Halal* brand. Finally, it is recommended to deploy this proposed model empirically.

### About the authors

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References


