

ROLE OF MARKETING MIX AND HALAL CERTIFICATE TOWARDS PURCHASE INTENTION OF AGRO BASED PRODUCTS

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Abstract: *The agro based products is one of the areas that Malaysian government encourage to stimulate the economy. These products offer unique flavours to the food industry as it capitalizes on local varieties. Though the products are good and have great future, they suffer from lack of strategies to position their product effectively in the market. Hence, this study aims to investigate marketing strategies of local agro based products that influence purchase intention among consumers in Perlis, Malaysia. There were five constructs tested namely price, product, place, promotion and Halal certificate that influence intent to purchase. Data were collected through self-administered survey using mall intercept technique. There were 164 data valid for analysis. The results show that product, place and Halal certificate have a relationship with intent to purchase. However, price and promotion appear to have no effect to the endogenous variable. Discussions, conclusions and recommendations are included in the article.*

Keywords: *Marketing Mix, Halal Certificate, Mall Intercept, Agro Based Product*

Introduction

Small Medium Industry (SMEs) is very important in Malaysia. Department of Statistics Malaysia (2018) reported that SMEs in agriculture sector shows a significant GDP growth. In fact, as a whole, the agriculture business contributes 8.2% to the Malaysia's GDP for 2017 (Othman Luk, Yee, Khor, Yong, & Yow, 2018) and 11.2% of SMEs GDP growth for the same

year (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). With the positive development of the sector, it is not surprised that government proactively taking various initiatives to ensure the agro based products achieves its fullest potential, particularly related with the productivity and the ability to reach the targeted consumers (Othman Luk et al., 2018).

However, SMEs in Malaysia face many challenges. Scholars such as Khalique, Md. Isa, Shaari, & Ageel (2011) highlighted that some of the challenges of agro-based products are related to products development and effective marketing strategies to market them, both locally and internationally. Hence, SMEs must ensure that the formulated marketing activities such as the marketing mix is aligned with the demands and lifestyle of the consumers (Ahmad, 2009). Moreover, many agro products are taken as convenience goods that require less marketing effort which resulted in less awareness among their customers. This situation warrants studies if the marketer wished to penetrate larger market. In addition, many previous studies on marketing mix and purchase intention have centered their discussion only on products attributes such as the quality, packaging, product image or on promotion such as personal selling, advertising and sales promotion. Though some have discussed product, place, price and promotion, their study have yet to cover the agro-based products by SMEs. In addition, as Halal industry offers a huge opportunity for SMEs to go global with high demand for such products (Ismail, Yahya, & Othman, 2016) this study intends to investigate on both the marketing mix and the Halal certificate in purchasing the agro products.

In particular, this study was conducted to investigate on marketing mix and Halal certificate towards the intent to purchase of agro based products in Perlis, Malaysia. Therefore, the research objectives for this study are as follows:

- 1) To investigate the significant relationship of marketing mix (price, product, place, promotion) on the intent to purchase of the agro based products.
- 2) To examine the significant relationship of Halal certificate on the intent to purchase of the agro based products.

The agro based products investigated in this study are under Peladang brand marketed by Farmers Organization Authority. There are more than 200 products available in the market. These include the cans and bottled products, paste and flour.

Literature Review

This section will discuss on each variables used in this study. First, it will discuss on purchase intention, follows by the marketing mix and Halal certificate.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the customers' willingness, desire and preference in deciding to buy a product (Mirabi, Akbariyeh, and Tahmasebifard, 2015; Younus, Rasheed, & Zia, 2015). It includes the probability of customers' willingness to acquire a certain product or service in the future (Schmalfuß, Mühl, & Krems, 2017). Previous studies have pointed to the elements of the marketing mix as the most important elements that directly affect the intention to purchase (Familmaleki, Aghighi, & Hamidi, 2015; Hui, 2017). However, the results of several studies were conflicting. Some of the factors on marketing mix and purchase intention were found to be significant and some of them were insignificant (Jaafar, Lalp, & Naba, 2012; Mirabi et al., 2015).

Marketing Mix

Basically, most marketing gurus mention 4Ps under the marketing mix. The first P is product. Product is a physical object that satisfy consumer desires with traits or attributes that are distinguishable from other products (Indumathi & Dawood, 2016). It includes the form of total products, including the physical product, the satisfaction and the other benefits that the customers receive from the purchase (Rittiboonchai, Kriwuttisom, & Ngo, 2019). Currently, most customers search online for comments about products during the pre-purchasing stage and they also shared opinions about their product experience at the post purchasing stage (Glovinsky & Kim, 2018). These interactions would have unintentionally impact on their purchase decisions (Nielsen, 2015). As such, entrepreneurs must focus on marketing mix, especially the product attributes as it affects purchase decision (Rittiboonchai et al., 2019). Hence, many previous study were conducted among consumers to identify the product attributes with purchase intention.

The second P under the marketing mix is price. Nganga (2017) state that price is a main element which should be emphasised in marketing mix. It is defined as the money that customers exchange in terms of service or product, or the value they receive from consuming the products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Previous studies show that customers purchase intention may be changed under the influence of price (Ali et al., 2017; Familmaleki et al., 2015). People with negative experience toward a product will give a positive impact on the future purchase if the quality matched the price (Jaafar et al., 2012). Their study discovers that price is a significant predictor of how likely a consumer will purchase private label food products. However, Mirabi et al. (2015) studies showed that price doesn't impact on customers' purchase intention.

Place is the third Ps under the marketing mix. Place is also known as an area of activity that includes a supply method, a marketplace coverage, a product inventory, a way to transfer the product and a distribution place (Indumathi & Dawood, 2016) which is also known as the total channel member. Therefore, place consists of 2 parts namely channel of distribution and market logistics (Wongleedee, 2015). The physical distribution activities remain a necessary marketplace activity, requiring optimal resource planning for inbound, outbound, and reverse logistics (Pomering, 2017). Some studies find there is a high influence of the place that determine the respondents' purchasing behaviour in many developing and developed countries such as Australia, Egypt, Thailand, China and India (Pomering, 2017; Salman et al., 2017; Wongleedee, 2015; Yeu et al., 2012).

Finally, the last P's is promotion which is also known as a marketing communication (Nganga, 2017) or communication channel that allows an exchange of information between sellers and buyers in order to create positive attitudes and purchasing behaviour and to support marketing objectives (Wongleedee, 2015). One of the main roles of promotion is the coordination of all efforts to form channels, deliver and persuade customers in purchasing their product and services, or to push the concept (Ismajli, 2013). Different products and different places affect the methods of communication used by the sellers. The Indian manufacturers prefers traditional ways like traditional newspapers and magazines, while those in China uses the network, social media, and the internet as their preference (Yeu et al., 2012). Rittiboonchai et al., (2019) discover that promotion encourages online purchase by customers in Thailand and Vietnam. However, Salman et al. (2017) found that promotion had neither a positive nor a negative relationship to purchasing behaviour.

Halal Certificate

The last variable under this study is Halal certificate. Most products that are sold in Islamic countries are recommended to have a Halal certificate as it indicates the production follows Shariah law (Fuseini, Knowles, Hadley, & Wotton, 2016). The origin of the word "Halal" is Arabic and means all the acts, products and beverages produced is in accordance with Islamic law (Mukhtar & Mohsin Butt, 2012). The concept of Halal covers every aspect of Muslim life (Majid et al., 2015). As the number of Muslims in the world is close to 1.6 billion and is expected to increase by 30% of the world's population by 2025, the market for Halal products is vast. Many Islamic societies consider Halal certificate as an important factor that affect purchase intention (Ali, Xiaoling, Sherwani, & Ali, 2017; Majid, Sabir, & Ashraf, 2015). The studies by Ali et al. (2017), Amat, As'hari & Sundram (2014) and Majid et al., (2015) found that Halal certification has a positive influence in purchase behavior. Moreover, Islam is link with Halalan and Toyyiban that means high quality product (Ahmad, Abaidah, & Yahya, 2013). Hence the certificate also indicates the products are high in value.

Research Methodology

Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires from 1st to 15th of February 2018 using mall intercept survey (Flint et al., 2016). Three study areas were chosen as the research sites. These sites were selected because they carry the agro products used for this study. Those sites are one local supermarket and two agro based bazar in Perlis. In order to ensure the robust sampling opportunities, respondents were chosen from the local population who passed by these areas.

There were five constructs that tested as the exogenous namely price, product, place, promotion and perceptions on Halal certificate and one endogenous which is the intent to purchase the agro based product. The measurements for these constructs were adapted from previous scholars and measurement using six point scale (1 as strongly disagree to 6 as strongly agree). The mean values for each constructs are above mid-points of six. See Table 1.

Table 1: Sources of Measurement and Mean for Constructs

No	Constructs	Sources	Total Items	Mean
1	Purchase Intention	Rehman & Dost (2013)	5	4.780
2	Price	Indumathi & Dawood (2015) and Rehman & Dost (2013)	5	4.460
3	Product	Indumathi & Dawood (2015) and Hanaysha (2017)	4	4.516
4	Place	Indumathi & Dawood (2015)	4	4.392
5	Promotion	Duffett (2015) and Hanaysha (2017)	4	4.092
6	Halal Certificate	Soon & Wallace (2017)	4	5.253

Since the respondent for this study is unknown population, the researchers use G-Power software as proposed by Cunningham & McCrum-Gardner (2007). The number of sample size required using a power analysis - a priori to compute the sample size (with the five number of predictors and medium effect size of .15) was 134. There were 204 data collected, however

only 164 data were valid for further analysis. Hence, the number of sample has a sufficient power to explain the research framework. Data were analysed using SmartPLS version 3.2.

Data Analysis

The results reported that there were equally a balance number of male (49.5%) and female (50.5%) respondents. Most respondents are in the range of 24 to 29 years old (45.1%), follows by 18 to 23 years old (40.2%), above 30 years old (12.8%) and 12 to 17 years old (1.8%). The education level of the respondents indicate that 57.3% earned a first Degree and beyond , 20.1% have a Diploma certificate, 17.1% have a Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia and 5.5% have a Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia. Majority of the respondents (58.5%) reported their income as below RM1000, 17.7% earned between RM1001 to RM2000, 14% earned between RM2001 to RM3000 while only 9.8% earned above RM3000 (9.8%).

Prior to testing the models, the researchers run through a preliminary analysis as guided by Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle (2018). There was no missing value in the data set, while removing the univariate and multivariate outliers. Data appears to be normal. The data also free from multicollinearity issues where all VIF are reported below 5. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, data were analysed using Smart PLS Version 3.2. Data analysis were conducted based on the steps proposed by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, (2014) namely measurement model to test the reliability and validity of the model, and structural model to test the hypotheses. In the assessment of the measurement model, the composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) and convergence validity using HTMT were tested. Results are presented in the Table 1 and Table 2.

Based on the results exhibit in the Table 2, all items for indicators loading exceed the recommended value of 0.7. One item of price (P1) and one item of product (P1) were deleted due to low loading. All composite reliability (CR) are above 0.8 and average variance extracted (AVE) are above 0.5. All value reported are above the threshold values of minimum requirements for loadings, CR and AVE as suggested by Hair et al. (2014) indicating that this model achieves its reliability and convergence validity. Table 3 shows the result for discriminant validity using HTMT values. All values are below 0.9 indicating that the model achieves its discriminant validity as guided by Hair et al. (2014). Thus this model is valid for further analysis.

Table 2: Result of Measurement Model

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	CR	AVE
Price	H2	0.822	0.891	0.626
	H3	0.901		
	H4	0.901		
	H5	0.671		
	H6	0.617		
	Product	P2		
P3	0.901			
P4	0.922			
P5	0.917			
Place	T1	0.635	0.886	0.663
	T2	0.846		
	T3	0.882		

Promotion	T4	0.868	0.928	0.682
	R1	0.757		
	R2	0.835		
	R3	0.827		
	R4	0.882		
	R5	0.870		
	R6	0.776		

Table 2: Result of Measurement Model (continue)

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	CR	AVE
Halal Certificate	S1	0.901	0.954	0.838
	S2	0.939		
	S3	0.941		
	S4	0.879		
Purchase Intention	K1	0.839	0.903	0.612
	K2	0.844		
	K3	0.797		
	K4	0.847		
	K5	0.731		
	K6	0.607		

Note: CR – Composite Reliability; AVE – Average Variance Extracted

Table 3: HTMT Criterion

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Halal Certificate						
2. Place	0.532					
3. Price	0.570	0.812				
4. Product	0.462	0.790	0.880			
5. Promotion	0.278	0.539	0.580	0.520		
6. Purchase Intention	0.549	0.747	0.790	0.793	0.469	

The next step of the data analysis is to test the structural model. A bootstrap of 500 samples has been used for this purpose. The R² for this model is 0.586 indicates that the total variables explain 58.6% variance of intent to purchase of agro based product. Table 4 reports the result for hypothesis testing. The analysis was conducted using one tail analysis. There were five hypotheses tested. Two of marketing mix strategies: product ($\beta=0.390$, $t=3.307$, $p = 0.001$) and place ($\beta=0.159$, $t=1.909$, $p = 0.026$) appears to be significant to the purchase intention of the agro based product. However price ($\beta=0.167$, $t=1.449$, $p = 0.074$) and promotion ($\beta=0.031$, $t=0.448$, $p = 0.313$) are not supported. As predicted, the result of Halal certificate ($\beta=0.161$, $t=0.020$, $p = 0.028$) is significant with the purchase intention. Figure 1 exhibits the result of the structural model for this study.

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing

Hypo	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Dev	t-value	p-value	Confidence Interval (Bias Corrected)		Decisions
						LL 5.00%	UL 95.00%	
H1	Price -> PI	0.167	0.116	1.449	0.074	-0.010	0.380	Not Supported
H2	Product-> PI	0.390	0.118	3.307	0.001	0.187	0.571	Supported
H3	Place -> PI	0.159	0.083	1.909	0.028	0.026	0.304	Supported
H4	Promotion -> PI	0.031	0.064	0.488	0.313	-0.077	0.142	Not Supported
H5	HalalCert->PI	0.161	0.078	2.068	0.020	0.028	0.279	Supported

Note: HalalCert – Halal Certificate

Discussions

This study discovered that product, place and halal certificate have a significant relationship with purchase intention in agro based products. Previous studies have also suggested that product characteristic had a significant influence on customer purchase decision (Indumathi & Dawood, 2016; Moslehpour, Aulia, & Masarie, 2015). Moreover, Nganga & Diana (2017) also found that product is a secondary factor in purchase decision made by consumers. Thus, the result is paralleled with the previous research on this area. Moreover, as consumers will normally choose the products due to their quality and healthy ingredients (Indumathi & Dawood, 2016), in which these agro based products sold is expected to have the same criteria. They contain benefits that are sought by the consumers that indicate they have great potential to penetrate in a bigger market.

In terms of place, the finding in this study is similar to those found by Hanaysha (2017) where store location is significant with purchase intention. Nganga & Diana (2017) states that place is the most important element in the marketing mix. Most retail products gain the benefits of location as it allows the consumers to gain access to the products. Retailers who are in a suitable location with good products will gain more visibility among their consumers. Hence, the proximity to nearby facilities increases the tendency of consumers to patronize the store.

Halal issue is important for all consumers as it indicates compliance with the syariah and the cleanliness in the production of goods. Therefore, the finding in this study supports the argument that having a halal certificate is important in purchase intention. Previous scholars (Abd Rahman, Asrarhaghghi, & Ab Rahman, 2015; Yousif, 2016) have also discovered a positive relationship between purchase intention and religion factor. In fact, Awan, Siddique & Haider (2015) also found halal certificate play an important role in purchase decision. Thus, it proposes that consumers are aware on the halal certificate logo (Ambali & Bakar, 2014) and seek it as an indicator for a good products.

However, there is not enough evidence to support the significant relationship between promotions with purchase intention. Even though Ismajli, Kajtazi & Fejza (2013) discovered that promotion is significant in marketing relationship and give impact to purchase decision, the agro based products encounter problems with promotional activities. Ahmad (2009) found that most of the promotion activity related to agro product is weak. Therefore, with poor promotional activities, it is expected that customers' awareness on the products will be low which lead into less intention to purchase the products.

This study also found that there is not enough evidence to support the relationship between price and purchase intention which is similar to findings by Mirabi, Akbariyeh, & Tahmasebifard (2015). Most of the agro based product has its own quality and brand. It has its own unique contents and the consumers seldom compare the price with the substitute products.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute significantly to Malaysian economy. Nevertheless, only 1% among the SMEs players are involved in agro business. In order to capture the gap in the market, Farmers' Organization Authority (FOA) introduces agro products. This study investigates the agro based products produced under Peladang brand which is marketed throughout Malaysia. The focus is on the four marketing mix of product, place, price and promotion together with the halal certificate on the consumers purchase intention. The findings suggest there is significant relationship between product, place, and halal certificate with purchase intention but not enough evidence to suggest a relationship between promotion and price to purchase intention.

Since Peladang has good products (PPNJ, 2018) which are also in high quality (Faizah, 2016), the organization should focus in marketing these elements. However, promotion is not strong enough to lure consumers in purchasing them. Even though, there is a high demand from outside the country (Muhamad, 2016) the product is not well known due to less promotional activity (Hofbauer, 2015). Hence, it is recommended that the organization improves its communication tools with the customers. Previous studies have shown success in using technology to market products. Though, efforts were made by the organization to reduce the price by reducing the channel member (Hussin, 2016) it is considered as unnecessary since the study discovers that price is not significant with purchase intention. The organization should focus on the other factors that help to build its products such as its image and place. Many marketers have argued that good products will never be discovered if they are not positioned properly. Therefore, the organization can re-strategize their efforts by considering the SWOT analysis and their marketing strategies such as the inclusion of technology to effectively position their products. Moreover, the adoption of electronic commerce also may be another option to consider for widening the accessibility of the products to consumers (Sultan & Noor, 2017).

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