



Assessing the Awareness of Halal Practices Among Muslim Students at UiTM Campus Samarahan, Kuching Sarawak.

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Abstract

In 2020, Malaysia was shaken by the exposure of a fake halal meat cartel that had operated for over four decades, smuggling non-halal meat and fraudulently labeling it as halal certified. Shockingly, several customs officers who are responsible for enforcing import regulations, were reportedly bribed to allow the entry of uncertified meat into Johor, where it was repackaged and distributed nationwide. This incident raised serious concerns among Malaysian consumers about the integrity of the halal products. This study aims to examine the extent of awareness and understanding among Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) students regarding the importance of halal. A quantitative research design was adopted to collect data in an objective and systematic manner using structured questionnaires, specifically distributed online via Google Forms to ensure broad participation and efficient data collection. The findings of this study are expected to highlight existing gaps in awareness among educated youth, who play a critical role as future consumers and industry contributors. These insights may assist regulatory bodies, educational institutions, and halal authorities in developing targeted initiatives to improve public understanding, strengthen enforcement mechanisms, and uphold the integrity of halal practices.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the integrity of the halal supply chain has come under intense scrutiny, particularly following the exposure of a major corruption scandal in Malaysia in late 2020. This case, widely known as the fake halal meat cartel, revealed that non-halal meat including horse, kangaroo, and pork had been illegally imported from countries such as Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Spain, and Ukraine, and deceptively sold in the Malaysian market as halal-certified beef. Shockingly, this operation had been active for nearly four decades, sustained by a complex network of smuggling, document forgery, and bribery involving multiple government agencies.

The scandal not only violated the religious expectations of Muslim consumers but also highlighted critical weaknesses in upstream halal certification processes, particularly in the sourcing, importation, and verification of raw meat products. It exposed the vulnerability of the halal supply chain to corruption and raised significant concerns over traceability, regulatory enforcement, and consumer trust. This case serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for more robust mechanisms, transparency, and technological integration to safeguard the halal integrity of products from the source to the consumer.

2. Literature Review

Halal practices are a fundamental aspect of a Muslim's daily life, ensuring that food, beverages, and other consumables comply with Islamic law (Qur'an, 5:3). The concept of halalan toyyiban not only refers to what is permissible (halal) but also emphasizes cleanliness, safety, and quality in all aspects of consumption (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia [JAKIM], 2020). For Muslim students, especially those living on or near campus, awareness of halal practices is essential in guiding purchasing decisions and maintaining religious compliance. University environments often expose students to diverse food and product options, making it crucial to understand their level of halal awareness. As noted by Othman et al. (2022), young consumers in higher education settings are particularly influenced by peer norms and information sources, which can shape their understanding and application of halal principles. This is particularly relevant in East Malaysia, where the Muslim population lives alongside diverse religious and cultural groups (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). Studying halal awareness among Muslim students at UiTM Campus 2, Kuching, therefore, will provide insight into their knowledge, perceptions, and practices, as well as the factors that may influence them.

Halal refers to anything permissible according to Islamic teachings, as outlined in the Qur'an and Hadith (Qur'an, 2:168; Qur'an, 5:3). In Malaysia, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) is the authorized body responsible for halal certification and logo issuance, ensuring that products meet Shariah requirements (JAKIM, 2020). The concept of halalan toyyiban extends beyond permissibility to include hygiene, safety, and quality assurance (Ali et al., 2017). Halal practices encompass a range of activities, including proper slaughtering methods, the absence of prohibited substances, and appropriate handling, storage, and preparation of food and products (Aziz & Chok, 2013). These practices are guided by Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and are designed to protect both spiritual and physical well-



being. In the context of this study, awareness refers to an individual’s understanding, knowledge, and mindfulness of halal requirements, including the ability to recognize official halal logos and certifications (Awan et al., 2015). Awareness also involves the willingness to apply this knowledge when making consumer choices, ensuring compliance with religious obligations and personal values. Halal awareness has been studied across various contexts in Malaysia, with most research focusing on West Malaysian populations. Othman et al. (2022) found that Islamic Studies students at UiTM Shah Alam demonstrated high awareness of halal status in food choices, which significantly influenced their purchasing behavior. Similarly, Nawi et al. (2019) reported that students at Hulu Langat Community College had moderate awareness of halal certification and practices, but showed high interest in purchasing halal products, indicating a positive attitude toward compliance. Despite this, there is a scarcity of studies focusing specifically on halal awareness among UiTM students in Kuching, leaving a gap in understanding campus-based influences on student practices in this region. Even in previous studies that has been conducted in Sarawak, they mainly focuses on urban areas rather than within higher education institutions. By assessing the awareness of halal practices among Muslims students at UiTM Campus 2, Kuching, we can also gain more recent data, given the influence of social media and technological changes in halal marketing strategies nowadays.

3. Research Question

This study aims to examine the extent of UiTM student’s awareness and understanding regarding the importance of Shariah compliance within the halal supply. This includes identifying the percentage of students who are aware of halal status, examining the factors that contribute to their awareness, and analyzing their role as informed public consumers. The objectives below are structured using the PIE framework (Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation)

1. Planning:
To identify the percentage of Muslim students who are aware of halal status in product selection.
2. Implementation:
To examine the factors influencing how UiTM students are exposed to halal practices in accordance with Shariah compliance.
3. Evaluation:
To analyze the role of students as a public perception and personal leadership in promoting and influencing halal lifestyle choices, especially in making decisions aligned with Shariah principles.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a quantitative research design to collect data in an objective and systematic manner through the use of structured questionnaires. The questionnaires will be distributed to students of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) using an online platform, specifically Google Forms, to ensure broader reach and efficient data collection.

5. Findings

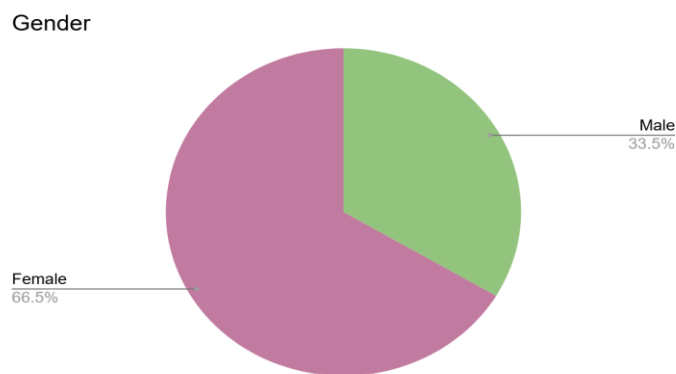


Figure 1 : Gender of Respondents

Figure 1 shows a total of 155 students that have answered our survey with 66.5 per cent of which being female students and the other 33.5 per cent being male.



Students who have taken subjects related to halal

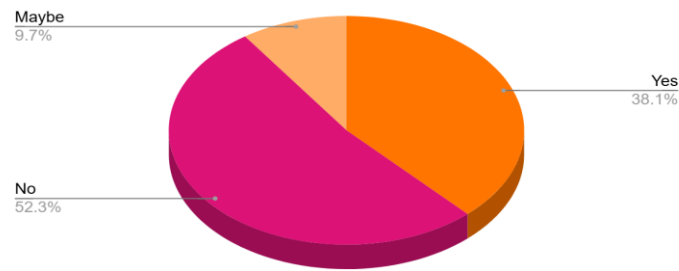
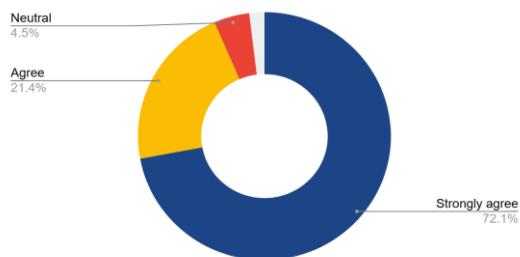


Figure 5 : Students who have taken subjects related to halal

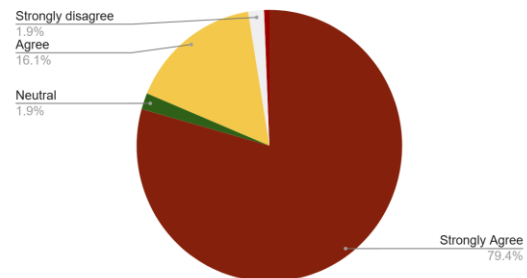
Figure 5 shows students who have taken subjects related to halal. 38.1 per cent have taken subjects that are related. In contrast, 52.3 per cent who have not taken subjects related to halal whereas 9.7 per cent of students are unsure.

Section 1 : Planning (P)

Students who ensure that the food products they buy have a halal logo



Students who feel safe when consuming products with a halal logo



Students who are confident that halal certified products have passed strict screening process

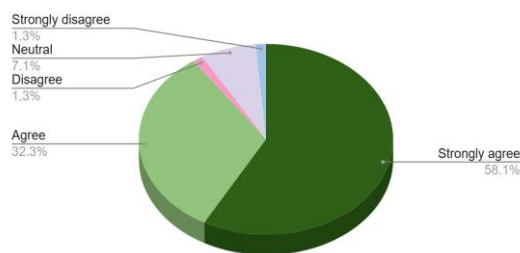


Figure 6 : Students who ensure that the food products they buy have a halal logo

Figure 8 : Students who feel safe when consuming products with a halal logo

Figure 9 : Students who are confident that halal certified products have passed strict screening process

The pie chart shows students who feel safe when consuming products with a halal logo as they are confident as well that the products have passed strict screening process. Most of the respondents strongly agree with the statement as they ensure halal logo's beforehand to feel more safe when consuming, which is about 79.4 per cent. In contrast, those who agree holds 16.1 per cent whereas those who strongly disagree and are neutral both 1.9 per cent. The clear data shown in figure 6 serves as evidence to support this conclusion. 72.1 per cent of the majority shows that they strongly agree . Meanwhile, only 21.4 per cent of students agree and 4.5 per cent of them are neutral. Other than that, figure 9 shows that 58.1 per cent of the respondents strongly agree and only 1.3 per cent strongly disagree and disagree. Conversely, 32.3 per cent states agree and 7.1 per cent are neutral.



Students who had bought a product without checking its halal status beforehand

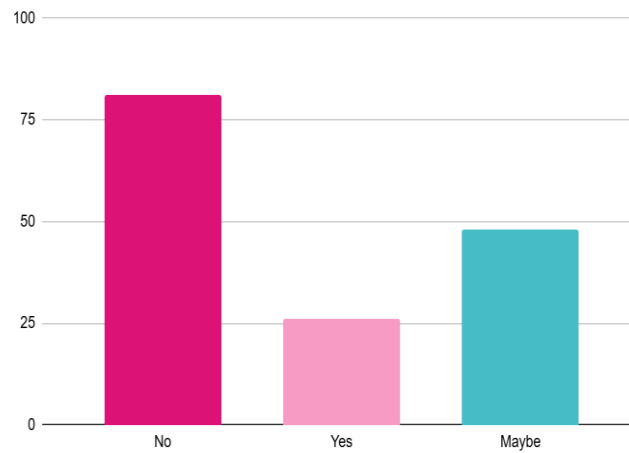


Figure 7 : Students who had bought a product without checking its halal status beforehand

Figure 7 shows students who had bought a product without checking its halal status beforehand. 81 out of 155 respondents shows no meanwhile in contrast 26 out of them stands on yes. Conversely, 48 of the respondents states maybe as they are unsure of it.

Section 2 : Implementation (i)

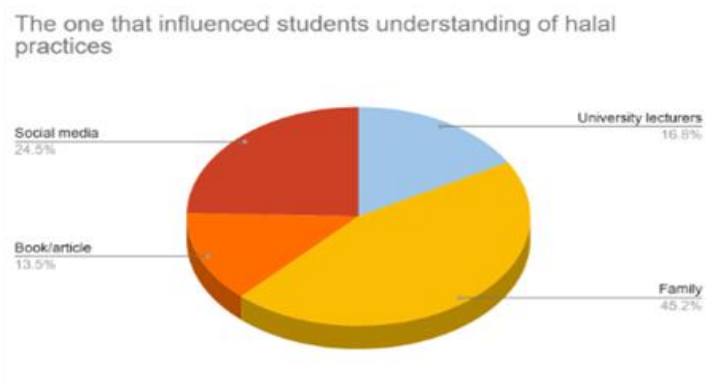


Figure 10

Figure 10: The one that influenced students understanding of halal practices

Based on the pie chart, the family is the most influential factor in students' understanding of halal practices, accounting for 45.2% of the responses. This is likely because the family is the primary environment where religious values are learned and reinforced from a young age. Following family, social media (24.5%), university lecturers (16.8%), and books/articles (13.5%) are the next most significant influences, indicating a preference for more immediate sources of information. The family is the primary environment for learning religious values because it provides consistent, early, and personalized exposure to beliefs and practices.

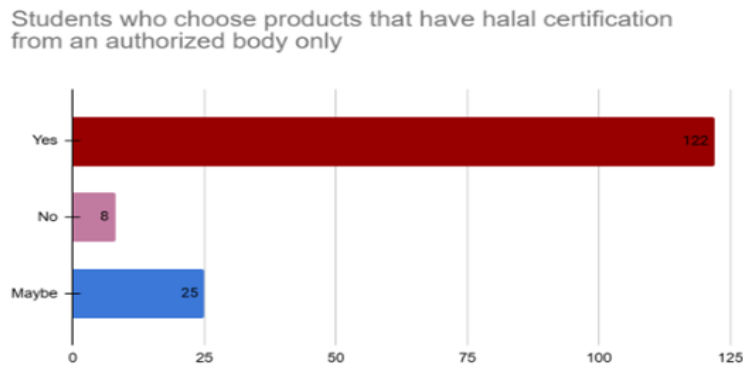


Figure 11

Figure 11: Students who choose products that have halal certification from an authorized body only. Based on the pie chart, 78.7% of the 155 respondents stated they only choose products with halal certification from an authorized body, such as JAKIM. This indicates that the vast majority of those surveyed prioritize formal halal certification when making purchasing decisions. The remaining respondents were divided between "Maybe" (16.1%) and "No" (5.2%). The high percentage of respondents who choose products with halal certification is likely due to the trust and assurance that such certifications provide.

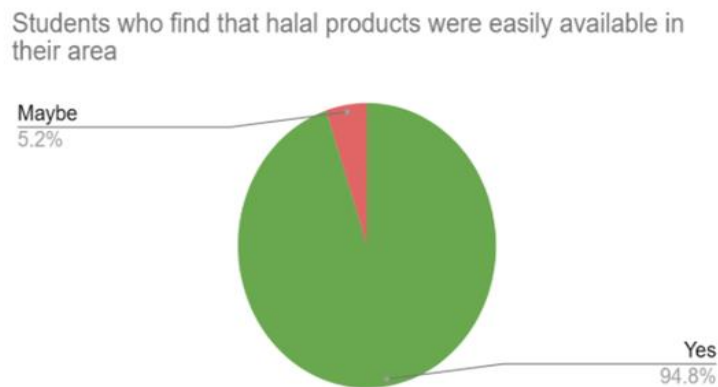


Figure 12

Figure 12: Students who find that halal products were easily available in their area

The survey results indicate that halal products are widely accessible to the respondents, with 94.8% confirming their easy availability in their area and only 5.2% expressing uncertainty. Notably, none of the respondents reported a lack of halal products. This overwhelmingly positive response suggests that the surveyed region has strong infrastructure and market support for halal goods, likely due to high consumer demand, a predominantly Muslim population, and well-established supply chains.

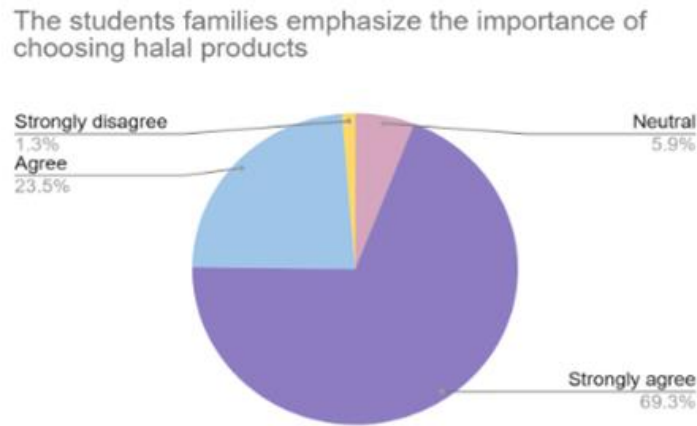


Figure 13

Figure 13: The students families emphasize the important of choosing halal products

The survey data shows that the majority of respondents’ families place strong emphasis on choosing halal products, with 69.7% selecting “Strongly agree” and 23.2% selecting “Agree.” Only a small portion remain neutral, and there is virtually no disagreement. This suggests that halal consumption is not just a personal choice but a deeply embedded family value for most participants.

Section 3 : Evaluation (e)

Students who actively encourage others to choose halal products or services

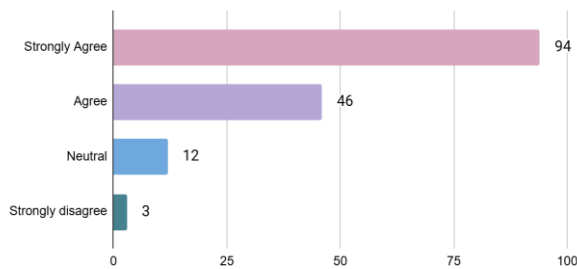


Figure 14: Students who actively encourage others to choose halal products

Students share information related to halal awareness on social media or with their peers

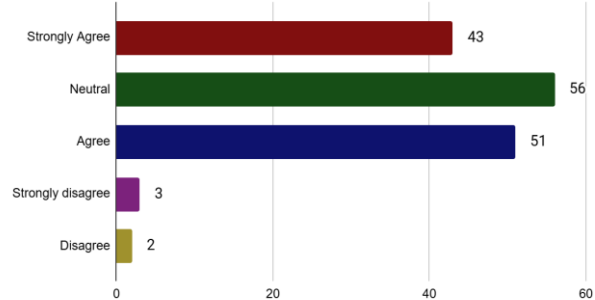


Figure 15: Students share information related to halal awareness on social media/ peers

Students try to lead in practising a halal lifestyle

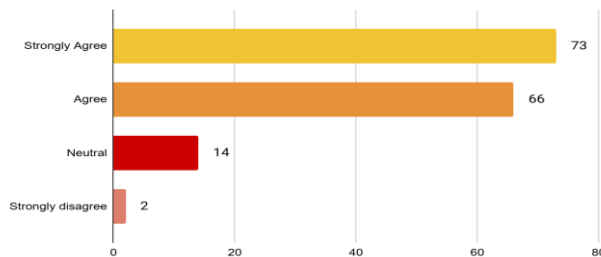


Figure 16: Students try to lead in practicing a halal lifestyle

Figure 16 shows the number of respondents who try to lead in practicing a halal lifestyle. Most respondents strongly agree with the statement, which is 73 respondents followed by those who agree, with 66 respondents. Conversely, only 14 of respondents show neutrality and 2 strongly disagree. The respondents try to lead in practicing halal lifestyle by actively encouraging others to choose halal products or services as shown in Figure 14. A total of 94 respondents strongly agree and 46 of them agree. On the other hand, only 12 respondents' states neutrality and 3 strongly disagree. Another alternative taken by students to lead is by sharing information related to halal awareness on social media or



with their peers as shown in Figure 15 . As many as 43 respondents strongly agree and 51 of them agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 56 respondents show neutrality. Whereas 2 disagree and 3 strongly disagree

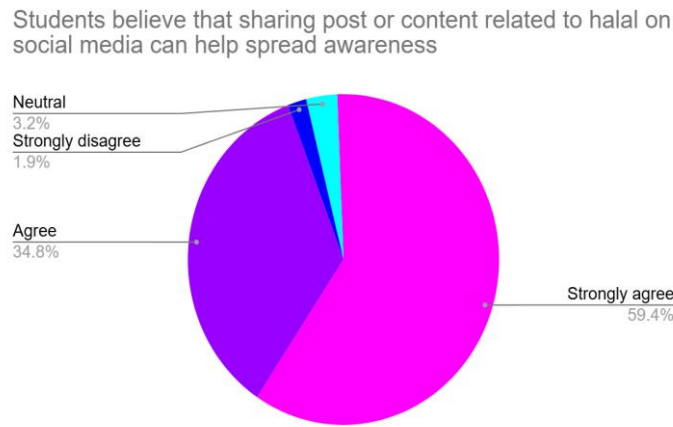


Figure 17: Students believe that sharing post or content related to halal on social media can help spread awareness

Figure 17 shows students who believe that by sharing post or content related to halal on social media can help spread awareness. The result shows 59.4 per cent of the respondents strongly agree and 34.8 per cent agree. Only 1.9 per cent of the respondents strongly disagreed. Whereas 3.2 per cent showed neutrality.

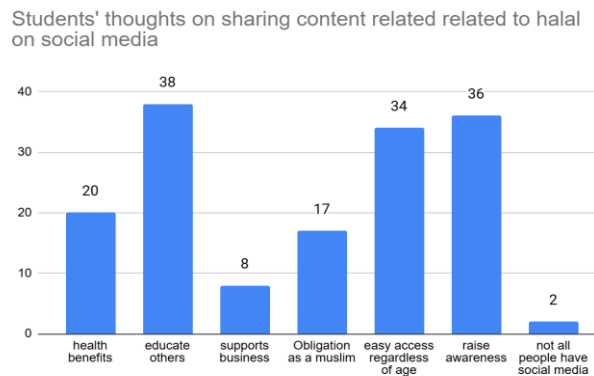


Figure 18: Students' thoughts on sharing content related to halal on social media

Figure 18 shows students' thoughts on sharing contents related to halal on social media. Many respondents, 38 of them, stated that it will be helpful, as it will educate others about a halal lifestyle. Besides, 36 of them stated it will raise awareness as well as 34 of them stated that it's easier to inform people about halal lifestyle since social media has easy access regardless of age. Other than that, 20 of respondents stated, by sharing posts of halal through social media platforms might be one of the reasons for us to achieve lots of health benefits since the halal supply chain itself is very precise. Another reason is since it is an obligation as a Muslim which 17 of respondents stated. Meanwhile, 8 of respondents said this will also provide an opportunity and a pathway to support and promote Muslim businesses. Conversely, only 2 out of 155 respondents disagree regarding the statement as they stated, not all people have social media regardless in this modern technological era.

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the level of halal awareness among university students is generally high. Analysis shows that the majority of students at UiTM Samarahan Campus ensure that the food products they purchase carry an authentic and recognized halal logo. This aligns with the findings of Mohamad Tauhid et al. (2022), who reported that halal logo labeling increases the confidence of Muslim consumers. Nevertheless, there are still gaps in the consistent verification of halal product status.



In relation to the first research objective is to identify the percentage of Muslim students who are aware of the halal status when selecting halal products. The results reveal that 72.1% of respondents consistently ensure that the products they buy carry a recognized halal logo. This suggests a strong level of awareness among the majority of students regarding the importance of halal products. These findings support the conclusions of Rodzian Atan et al. (2022), which highlighted the halal logo as a key factor influencing purchasing decisions. The implication of this finding is that the university could enhance students' halal literacy through seminars, workshops, or awareness campaigns. For the second objective, which is to examine the factors influencing UiTM students' exposure to halal practices in accordance with Shariah compliance, it is noted that each Muslim has a different level of awareness based on background, religion, culture, education, and social interactions (Rasli, 2013). According to Alijah et al. (2017), the family is a productive and reproductive basic unit in society. Therefore, the family plays a vital role as the main factor in shaping reproductive health practices. The findings show that one of the main factors driving halal awareness is family background (45.2%). This is in line with the research objective to identify the influence exerted on students in selecting halal products. In addition, informal exposure was found to have a greater impact compared to formal exposure.

For the third objective, the study's findings show that the majority of UiTM students not only practice choosing halal products but also indirectly act as one of the factors influencing their surroundings. This attitude can be seen from the percentage of students who consistently choose products with halal logos in their daily lives. The findings indicate that more than 94 respondents encourage others to choose halal products. Therefore, it is clear that students not only act as knowledgeable consumers but also contribute to the formation of a society that is aware of the importance of halal. According to Nurul Syhadah (2022), awareness is an important element for every consumer, as it encourages them to make wise choices in ensuring that the food they choose meets the criteria set by Shariah, namely halal, clean, healthy, and of high quality. Through this survey, we succeeded in identifying the aspects that Muslim students would consider before selecting a product, the sources of their awareness regarding halal status, and how they apply Shariah compliance in their daily choices. We discovered three main findings related to the awareness, exposure, and role of UiTM students in promoting a halal lifestyle, according to the responses from the selected sample who participated in the survey.

7. Recommendation and Conclusions

The findings of this study are expected to provide meaningful insights into the level of awareness among university students particularly those from UiTM, as future consumers, professionals, and decision-makers in Malaysia's halal ecosystem. By assessing their understanding of Shariah compliance throughout the halal products, the study can highlight existing knowledge gaps and areas that require targeted education and awareness efforts.

Given the recent exposure of the fake halal meat scandal, which revealed serious weaknesses in enforcement and upstream traceability, this research carries important implications for public policy, consumer trust, and institutional accountability. A higher level of consumer awareness, especially among the educated youth, may contribute to greater demand for transparency, integrity, and stricter compliance from halal-certified suppliers and regulatory bodies.

Furthermore, in hope, the results that we have gained may guide relevant authorities, such as JAKIM, to develop improved outreach programs, curriculum enhancements, or community campaigns that promote ethical consumption and reinforce the importance of upholding Shariah principles in all stages of the halal supply chain.

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