Chapter 6

Conclusion, Implications and Future Directions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended for the discussion, conclusions and recommendations derived from the results of primary research. The chapter commences with the evaluation of the results of the current study in juxtaposition with the available literature while appreciating how the current findings fit the existing knowledge. A detailed explanation of each of the research questions was suggested in light of existing literature. Last but not least, the limitations with the research implications and recommendations for future research are discussed in the last part of the chapter.

This research was guided by the thesis statement, “what are the factors which may motivate Indian Muslim consumers’ intention to purchase halal certified packaged food products”. After conducting an extant review of the literature the author selected one of the most influential models of behavioural intention, the TPB model (Ajzen 1988, 1991) and extended the model by adding religiosity and subjective knowledge. Fifteen hypotheses based on the proposed extended model were tested using structural equational modelling.

The general findings suggest that Muslim consumers generally have a positive attitude towards halal certified packaged food. They also perceive that their decision to buy (or not to buy) such products may have approval (or disapproval) of significant others hence, may be dictated by their subjective norms i.e. their perceived pressure from important ones. However, the link between perceived behavioural control and purchase intention was not significant. This suggests that purchase intention of Muslim consumers cannot be predicted by perceived behavioural control. It is also possible that by and large Muslim consumers are not able to judge their own abilities and constraints related to the purchase of halal certified food products. This may happen because of most consumers don’t have knowledge of or experience with such products.
Attitude had a significant and positive influence on intention to purchase halal food in the present study. Such positive relationship between attitude and purchase intention of halal certified products has been confirmed in previous halal purchases intention studies (Lada et al. 2009, Alam & Sayuti, 2011). Attitude has been the strongest predictor of purchase intention in this research, followed by subjective norms. The findings of present research corroborate with Alam and Sayuti (2011), Bonne et al (2007, 2008), Lada et al (2009), Khan and Azam (2016) within halal purchase intention situation. By and large the findings are consistent with many other studies which tested attitude-intention relationship within consumer’s food purchase intention context including halal food (Alam & Sayuti, 2011, Lada, Tanakinjal and Amin, 2009 and Khan & Azam, 2016), GM food (e.g. Chen, 2008, Cook, 2002, Kim, Jang & Kim, 2014), organic food (Rahman& Noor (2016), sustainable food (e.g. Honkanen& Young, 2015) green food (e.g. Rambalak and Yadav 2017).

6.2 Attitude and Purchase Intention

The results of this research indicated that the relationship between attitudes toward purchase intention of halal certified packaged food products was positive and significant. Which implies that more favourable attitude toward purchase intention of halal certified packaged food products would lead to the greater purchase intention for such products. This result corroborates with earlier findings related to food purchase intention (Honkanen& Young, 2015, Kim, 2014, Dowd & Burke, 2013 etc.) and more specific studies related to halal food purchase intention (Alam & Sayuti, 2011, Lada et al 2009) which reports attitude as best and strongest predictor of purchase intention. The findings of this study also indicated that among all antecedents of the purchase intention, attitude is the most significant in the present context of purchase intention for halal certified packaged food.

6.3 Subjective Norms and Purchase Intention

This study also found that after attitude, subjective norms is the second most important factor influencing the purchase intention of halal certified food products. Subjective norms refer to the social pressure due to important people felt by the respondents in connection with a given behaviour. Important subjective norms may include family members, friends co-workers etc. The findings of present study
implicate that important people in one's life may influence the decision to buy halal certified food products. The more favourable perceived pressure from important others would exert positive pressure on people to buy halal certified food products. These results corroborate with many previous studies like Lada et al. (2009) and Alam and Sayuti (2011) in halal purchase domain and Gakobo and Jere (2016), Yadav and Pathak (2016) and Teng, Wu and Liu (2015) etc. in food purchase situation in general.

6.4 PBC and Purchase Intention

Perceived behavioural control was operationalized as a two-dimensional construct. The two dimensions of perceived behavioural control are perceived self-efficacy (PBC-SE) and perceived control over behaviour (PBC-control). When perceived behavioural control is not significant it is assumed that behaviour is under volitional control. That would in our case means that Muslims in India feel that buying halal certified food products is under their volitional control. However, which is not practically true in India.

A positive relationship between perceived self-efficacy (PBC-SE) and purchase intention of halal certified food products was hypothesised. However, the relationship between PBC self-efficacy and purchase intention was not significant. The construct was measured by four items and finally, three items were retained in the purified scale. These items assessed how respondents would evaluate themselves having enough knowledge, time, money and other pertinent resources with regard to making the purchase of halal certified packaged food products. It was posited that those who would evaluate themselves having a higher level of knowledge, time, money and other pertinent resources will have a high level of purchase intention of halal certified food products. The result of the hypotheses PBC (self-efficacy) → purchase intention suggests that for Muslim consumers these abilities (having enough knowledge, time, money and other pertinent resources) bear no significance with the intention to purchase halal certified packaged food products. This relationship in case of food purchase intention situation has mixed results in past studies.

The constructs perceived control over behaviour (PBC-control) was supposed to measure the challenges faced by people in terms of low availability and choice. Hence a negative relationship between perceived control over behaviour (PBC-control) and
purchase intention of halal certified food products was hypothesised, which means that those who would feel more challenges in terms of availability and choices will demand less and vice versa. The result was significant but the direction of the relationship was contrary to what was expected. A negative relationship between control over behaviour (PBC-control) and purchase intention of halal certified food products expected but the results of SEM exhibited the positive relationship. Which means those who perceive less availability and fewer choices will buy less and vice versa. However, the result depicts that those who perceive few choices and less availability are willing to buy more. The result of the hypothesis was counterintuitive and against common sense assumption but there can be some pertinent explanations for this result.

As a matter of fact, halal certified food products in Indian are few and there are very fewer choices. It is quite a possibility that respondent who really want halal certified food products have a more realistic assessment of the presence of halal certified food products in India. That's why they rate low availability and high purchase intent at the same time. However, this is against the theory which assumes low availability will lead to low purchase intent and vice versa. Other possible reason could be because of the poor understanding of scale’s items. However, the scale shows acceptable psychometric properties. Sometimes it happens that respondents are not able to rate the questions appropriately which may create unexpected results.

6.5 Religiosity, Subjective Knowledge of Halal and Purchase Intention

The direct relationship between religiosity and purchase intention was not significant (p<.05). This is, however, is in contrast with many previous studies which have examined direct influence of religiosity on halal purchase intention. Only a few studies have an insignificant direct relationship between religiosity and purchase intention (e.g., Khan, & Azam, 2016). In the present study, both direct and indirect effects were calculated. It was observed that religiosity has a significant indirect effect (beta=.291) and significant total effect (beta=.371) on purchase intention. These results were obtained through bootstrapping in AMOS using percentile method at 95 percent confidence interval.
The result signifies that people with high level of religiosity will have a higher level of purchase intention and vice versa. However, this will not happen straightforwardly religiosity will influence purchase intention through mediating variables. This would imply that religiosity will influence purchase intention indirectly and through other variables. Religiosity had a significant relationship with attitude (Religiosity→Attitude, p<.05), subjective norms (religiosity→subjective norms, p<.05), and subjective knowledge (religiosity→subjective knowledge, p<.05). Thus religiosity influence purchase intention indirectly through mediating variables attitude, subjective norms and subjective knowledge.

Both direct effect and total effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention were insignificant. However, subjective knowledge has a significant positive relationship with attitude and subjective norms. This relationship signifies that high level of subjective knowledge is associated with high level of positive attitude towards halal certified food products. This implies that people with high level of subjective knowledge will evaluate halal certified food products more favourably. Similarly, high level of subjective knowledge is associated with high level of subjective norms. This implies that people with high level of subjective knowledge will feel more social pressure to purchase halal certified products.

6.6 Theoretical Implications

This research endeavoured to investigate the Indian Muslim consumers’ purchase intention of halal certified packaged food products. The study provides further understandings into consumer behaviour regarding the potential of halal certified products in India by examining the influence of selected variables on purchase intention. The independent variables were attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control (PBC control and PBC self-efficacy), religiosity and subjective knowledge of halal and the dependent variable was purchase intention. Thus this research added religiosity and subjective knowledge to the model of “theory of planned behaviour”
Although there are some studies which have investigated the purchase intention of halal products no prior study has been conducted in India in the context of halal purchase intention. However, there is one published study by Khan and Azam (2016) which was conducted as a pilot study for the purpose of the present study.

Further, this study also examined the indirect effect of religiosity and subjective knowledge of halal. In other words, the mediating role of independent variables in the theory of planned behaviour was also checked. Both religiosity and subjective knowledge have a significant indirect effect and insignificant direct effect. However, as far as total effect is considered the only construct religiosity among the two has a significant total effect on purchase intention.

Thus the present study has empirically checked the role of religiosity and subjective knowledge as the antecedent variable to purchase intention and also as antecedents to the independent variable (attitude, subjective knowledge and perceived behavioural control) of the theory of planned behaviour. In this manner, the mediating role of TPB variables (attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) was also checked. This addition of variables is in line with the suggestions by the original author of the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1988, 1991, 2002). He said that there can be added contextual variables to the study, however, the TPB variables will moderate the relationship between intention and newly added variables. Consequently, the results of this study also corroborate of what was expected by Ajzen (2002).

To sum up, the present research has valuable insights for academicians researching in the area of halal branding and Islamic marketing in specific and behavioural intention researchers in general. This study also established that theory of planned behaviour is a suitable model for study behavioural intention in general and halal purchase intention in particular. Last but not least the model is successfully extended by adding religiosity and subjective knowledge as additional independent variables.
6.7 Managerial Implications

This study offers important insights related to Halal certified packaged food products for entrepreneurs and retailers. As mentioned earlier the broad findings suggest that Muslim consumers generally had a positive attitude towards halal certified packaged food and attitude had a significant and positive influence on intention to purchase halal food in the present study. The above proposition has considerable implication for marketers.

The construct of attitude was measured using four belief items (practical, beneficial, necessary and helpful) which would suggest that consumers who perceive halal certification as practical, beneficial, necessary and helpful would engage in the purchase of halal certified packaged food products more often than others who do not. For managers, attitudinal beliefs studies in the present study would make an important aspect of promotional messages to market halal products. For managers developing positive attitudes will be most important tasks. Marketers should highlight that halal certification is not a fancy thing or just a buzzword but can be the most practical choice for Muslim consumers’ of packaged food products as it assures the haleness of the products. For highlighting the beneficial aspect of the attitude marketers may communicate that halal certified packaged foods are purer and benign options for Muslim consumers which could help them in avoiding haram products. Another two important aspects which marketers should emphasize while communicating halal certified products are necessity and helpfulness.

Marketers should communicate that due to radical change in food processing the origin of ingredients is not traceable in most packaged food products. Many of ingredients may not be halal. Thus, it has been becoming more and more difficult to recognise halalness of packaged food products and halal certification has become a necessity nowadays. The final suggestion for developing positive attitudes is to present the benevolent nature of halal certified brands and to communicate that halal certification is a helpful device for Muslim consumers to identify pure products.

Further subjective norms (referred as perceived social pressure) were also significant in predicting purchase intention of halal certified packaged food products. Subjective norms were measured using three normative belief items (friends, co-workers and overall important people) which would suggest that consumers who perceive social
pressure from the social referent would engage in the purchase of halal certified packaged food products more often than others who do not. Therefore this study suggests that marketers should consider mentioned normative referents while designing the marketing campaigns for halal certified packaged food products.

Further, the study also indicates an important link between religiosity and attitude with respect to the purchase intention of halal certified food products. This means that more religious person would have a more positive attitude (refers to the positive or favourable evaluation) towards the halal certified food products. In fact, during personal interviews, many individuals were very keen about the possibility of halal certified products in India. Religious knowledge about halal which is referred as subjective knowledge in the study also determines the attitude of individuals towards halal certified food products. Moreover, the results of the study revealed that attitude is the most significant determinant of purchase intention of halal certified food products among all other antecedents. Thus the findings of this research also suggest that creating a favourable attitude toward the purchase of halal certified food products may be an essential consideration for marketers to boost consumers’ purchase intentions. The results suggest this study suggests that while developing effective marketing strategies marketers should two consider the two aspects of the religion of Muslim community. First is the religiosity and second is the perception of religious knowledge related to the halal and haram.

Therefore, while selecting the first target market, Muslim consumers high on religiosity can be first targeted as a test market. For the initials ad campaigns markets nearby big mosques can be considered for promoting halal certified products. Mosques can be seen as by and large where a large number of Muslims (with a higher level of religiosity). We can safely assume that on average a large number of religious Muslims can be approached by promoting halal certified products nearby big mosques.
6.8 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

6.8.1 Limitations

There can be many inherent limitations which should be considered for a holistic appreciation and objective interpretation of the finding of the present research.

1. First, the sample was the derived from only six districts of Uttar Pradesh through a non-random sampling method thus limiting the generalisation of the finding. The sample may not be considered quite representative of the Muslim population in India. The sample was more biased towards younger and educated respondents. Further, the sample was derived from districts hence only urban people could participate in the study.

2. Another limitation is the cross section nature of the study. The data was gathered from the respondents only once in a snapshot. It is important to remind that this was an attitudinal study based on the theory of planned behaviour. There may be a change in the variables of TPB from one point of time to another point in time. Some researchers have conducted longitudinal studies using the theory of planned behaviour. However, the scope of the present study was limited to cross-sectional data only.

3. No specific product was chosen for the study rather respondents were asked about their perception of halal certified food products in general. However, there were some basic considerations for not choosing a specific product or category choosing a specific product in future may help in more exact response from the individuals.

4. The presence of halal certified products is almost negligible in India. Respondents do not have exposure to actual halal products in India which may have created challenges for the respondents to appropriately fill the questionnaire. However, in the beginning of the questionnaires, the respondents were briefed about the halal certification. The definition of halal certified packaged food products along with relevant example was provided in the introduction part of the questionnaire.
5. Only the level of intention was measured in the present study. The actual purchase dimension was not measured. This was done due to practical reasons as the presence of halal products negligible and elicited responses for actual purchase would not have to yield appropriate answers.

6.8.2 Future Research

This research has used the theory of as underpinning model by adding two variables religiosity and subjective knowledge of halal. Several recommendations can be made for the future researchers studying halal purchase behaviour.

1. Apart from religiosity and subjective knowledge of halal other variables should be added to the theory of planned behaviour e.g. religious identity, spirituality, trust, habit, halal brand, halal logo, halal certificate and halal ingredients etc.

2. In the present study, only the generic halal category was investigated future researchers may conduct a study on a specific product category like halal certified chocolate, halal certified noodles etc. Future researchers may also study halal certified cosmetics products.

3. Only Muslim consumers were studied in the present research It would be important to know how consumers from other religion would accept (or reject) the idea of halal certification.

4. The future researchers may study halal marketing using a qualitative framework within a TPB framework or using other qualitative methods such as focus group, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis, etc.