The Effect of Different Argument Quality and Religious Symbol to the Muslim Consumers’ Attitude and Intention Toward Halal Food Products

Abstract—Several previous studies have examined the determinants of Muslim consumers’ attitudes and intentions toward halal food products. However, until now there has not been much research that specifically discusses the influence of argument quality and religious symbol as a determinant of Muslim consumers’ attitudes and intentions toward halal food products. Moreover, research using an experimental method with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as the basic theory has never been done. Thus, this research aims to examine the influence of argument quality and religious symbol on the Muslim consumers’ attitudes and intentions on halal food products using experimental methods and ELM as the basic theory. This research model was tested on 150 Muslim consumers in Indonesia in the 19-41 years age range. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis was used to test the research hypothesis. It was found that there were significant differences in attitudes related to the presence and absence of halal logos on halal food products. However, the opposite effect is found on differences in the argument quality displayed by the seller on the description of halal food products. Finally, the results of the study also show that attitudes significantly influence the purchase intentions of Muslim consumers on halal food products.

Keywords—Experiential skill, Self-learning approach, outdoor learning, fieldwork

I. INTRODUCTION

The world’s Muslim population is expected to increase significantly, with 1.6 billion Muslims in 2010 to 2.2 billion Muslims by 2030. Furthermore, globally, Muslim populations are also expected to grow about twice that of the total non-Muslim population during two decades ahead since 2010, with an average annual growth rate of 1.5% for Muslims, compared with 0.7% for non-Muslims. If this trend continues, Muslims will make up 26.4% of the world’s total population of 8.3 billion by 2030, growing by 23.4% of the world’s estimated population in 2010 by 6.9 billion [1].

Not only in the global sphere, the increasing number of Muslim population also occurred in Indonesia. It is estimated that the Indonesian Muslim population will increase to 238,833,000 by 2030 while in 2010 the total Muslim population is only 204,847,000 [1]. The increasing number of Muslim population has an impact on increasing demand for halal food in Indonesia. In 2016, Indonesia's Muslim expenditures for halal food amounted to 1.697 million US dollars with Indonesia ranked first in the world [2]. Seeing a great market opportunity for halal food have encouraged the Indonesian government to improve and develop the halal food market economy.

The halal food market has emerged as one of the most lucrative and influential markets in Indonesia’s food business today. In addition to the growing Indonesian Muslim population, Indonesian Muslim increasingly realize that consuming halal food is not only limited to religious rules but also health reasons. Thus, it is not surprising that the term halal lifestyle has emerged among Indonesian Muslim societies. Halal lifestyles do not only affect the way companies promote raw materials and the processes they use in making halal food. Halal lifestyles helped make Indonesians more conscientious about the raw materials and processes used in halal food because according to Laurant and Kapferer [3] people who are heavily involved in certain objects (i.e., products, issues, advertisements, etc.), tend to actively seek and process related information for decision making.

In the information search process, consumers certainly see how sellers sell their products, one with the arguments they write on the product description. The argument quality written on the product description is a key determinant of consumer attitudes toward the topic communicated when one is deeply involved in incoming messages and in the context of persuasive messages [4]. Thus, one of the ways in which the producers prove that the raw materials and processes used in producing these products are halal is argument quality contained in the product description. In addition to the sellers’ argument quality, consumers also pay attention to religious symbols. In this case, the religious symbol attached to halal food is a halal logo. Bakar, Lee, and Rungie [5]...
suggest that the presence of religious symbols on product packaging positively influences how consumers choose products.

Technological advances have brought many new opportunities for Indonesian halal food companies to use online platforms, one of which is e-commerce in accessing wider markets and developing their brands. With the increasing number of e-commerce websites in Indonesia, more and more people in Indonesia are interested in buying goods online. However, there are some problems experienced by consumers when shopping online, such as unobtainable items, fraudulent risks, inappropriate quality of goods, and items that do not match what is ordered. The above problems can occur because the seller has not been able to explain the products they sell well when the seller decides to sell his products online. It also applies to halal food products, sellers often have not been able to explain well that the raw materials and processes made in the manufacture of food products they sell are all halal. Moreover, sellers often do not include halal certification logos on product descriptions even though the products they sell are halal certified. In fact, information related to raw materials and production processes and logo of halal certification is very important for consumers who want to buy halal food products online.

Indeed, until now not much research that examines the influence of the quality of sellers' arguments and halal logo on consumer attitudes and intentions in buying halal food products. Therefore, there is a great opportunity to examine further the influence of persuasive arguments made by the seller or commonly referred to as the argument quality and the presence of religious symbols or halal logos as a communication strategy of the seller to the consumer towards the formation of attitudes and intentions of consumers in buying products halal food online in e-commerce. In analyzing the influence of the quality of seller's argument and religious symbol on consumer's buying attitude and intention, this research uses the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) theory. ELM is the most popular and most widely cited model in cognitive psychology and consumer research [6]. Furthermore, ELM offers a theoretical approach to understanding and evaluating the effects of persuasion, advertising type, and their purpose to ensure consumer purchase intentions [7]. ELM helps researchers evaluate the observations of advertisements to help them hypothesize, understand, and respond to emotional and cognitive appeal [8].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)
The theoretical framework that can be used to understand how a person processes persuasive messages is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). ELM was first coined by Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman [9]. ELM is a theory derived from social psychology that describes how an attitude can be changed and developed [10]. In more detail, this model describes two information processing routes that can cause changes in the individual's attitudes, namely the central and peripheral routes. The difference between the two lies in the amount of information processing or commonly called the elaboration level. Thus, when elaboration is high, one will experience a central path of persuasion, but when elaboration is low, one will experience peripheral routes [11].

The central route requires one to deliberately and critically evaluate contents a message. In other words, attitude changes that occur through the central route are determined by the issue-related argument in a message. If the argument in the message is very strong, the beliefs and attitudes toward the topic communicated will change well [12]. The argument quality of a product has been identified as the dominant criterion in the persuasion and communication literature [13] [14]. As a central cues, the argument quality of a product can determine a person's attitude to the message through careful consideration of the information presented. Messages with higher argument quality will tend to produce better responses [15].

On the other hand, peripheral routes involve only limited cognitive effort. Changes in one's attitude will depend only on the simple gestures contained in the message [16]. The reason why someone uses simple cues may be because they do not want to pour too much cognitive effort into digesting messages or they cannot digest a message [11].

Dotson and Hyatt [17] argue that religious symbols can be peripheral cues in advertising. In line with that, Wilson and Liu [18] say that halal certification in an advertisement will help advertisers to get the attention of Muslim consumers to be able to generate a good attitude towards advertising from Muslim consumers. Thus, it can be argued that Muslim consumers' attitudes toward an advertisement can be influenced by the existence of halal certification as the peripheral path of attitude-shaping.

The relationship between argument quality and consumer attitudes

Although the internet is considered as one of the innovative marketing channels, problems related to the predictions of seller behavior and the truth of information related to product quality are still a big debate [19]. Moreover, the difficulty of seeing and holding the product directly and the limits to communicate with the seller increasingly makes consumers feel that the demonstration of online shopping is low.

Referring to the phenomenon, there is a very famous slogan, 'content is a king', which illustrates that the argument quality of a product in e-commerce is very important [20]. The information that will be displayed on the website will determine the success of the website in establishing consumer attitudes. Kalakota and Whinston [21] argue that the adequacy of product information on the website is a primary consideration of the consumer because the higher argument quality of a product indicates a decrease in uncertainty, which results in a positive outcome. Thus, the hypothesis to be tested is:

H1: Consumer attitudes toward halal food product will be higher when the argument quality of a product is stronger than the argument quality of a product is weak in a description of halal food products.

The relationship between religious symbols and consumer attitudes

Consumers will always need reassurance that the products they consume reflect themselves [22]. It is no exception for Muslim consumers. Muslim consumers always want
certainty about the products they consume must be in accordance with what has been described in the Qur’an and Sunnah [23]. For Muslim consumers, a halal logo implies a guarantee that the product contains nothing unlawful, ethically and legally produced. Thus, along with the presence of a halal logo on the website, Muslim consumers feel safer in consuming and using the product. Feeling secure in consuming and using these products can ultimately build trust, significantly reduce consumer perceptions of risk, and increase customer loyalty to the product. Thus, the hypothesis to be tested is:

H2: Consumer attitudes toward halal food product will be higher if there is a halal logo compared with no halal logo on a description of halal food products

The relationship between consumer attitudes and consumer purchase intentions

Attitude is a long-term evaluation of a person’s likes or dislikes and a tendency to act on some object or idea [24]. Attitudes play an important role in determining the choice and intentions of one's behavior [25] because attitudes reflect one's evaluation of an object [26] or evaluative judgments [27] and this creates a belief [28]. In other words, consumers who have a more positive attitude tend to have a greater intention to buy a product. Therefore, the hypothesis to be tested is:

H3: Consumer attitudes toward halal food products have a positive effect on consumers' intention to buy halal food products

III. METHOD

This study used an experimental study and each participant received different treatment (between-subject). The factorial design is 2 (argument quality: high vs. low) x 2 (religious symbol: with vs. without). In an attempt to support this experimental study, a scenario was made that the respondents were Muslim and wanted to buy a halal food product at a fictitious e-commerce website "Zupermarket.com". Food product used in this study is a snack (jelly candy) with a fictitious brand "AKUKU". Selected snacks in scenario development are based on surveys conducted by MyWebGrocer. MyWebGrocer mentions that Indonesian use e-commerce sites as a medium to buy snacks [29]. Moreover, e-commerce websites and brands are deliberately fictive in order to avoid the familiarity of the respondents.

Given that all participants will receive different scenarios, to ensure that the argument quality stimulus is developed as expected, participants are given eight questions adapted from research done by Kim and Niehm [30] using a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) up to 5 (strongly agree). The same scale is also used to check the manipulations developed on religious symbol variables with five questions adapted from Awan, Siddiquei, and Haider [31].

The eight questions were adopted from Khalek and Ismail [32] to measure consumer attitudes on halal food products by using a five-point Likert scale, of which point 1 shows strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. Consumers' intentions on purchasing halal food products were measured by seven items also adopted from Khalek and Ismail research using a five-point Likert scale, of which point 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree.

In addition, researchers used two variables as covariates, namely website familiarity on the site and brand familiarity. Familiarity on the site was adapted from Li [33] and measured using four questions with a five-point Likert scale, of which point 1 shows strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. Brand's familiarity adopts three questions used by Kent and Allen [34] using 7 semantic differentials: familiar/unfamiliar, experienced/inexperienced, knowing/unknowing. The use of different scales (Likert and semantic differential, scale 5 and scale 7) was done as a way to reduce the effects of self-generated validity [35] based on suggestions from Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff [36].

This research uses two stages: First, the pre-test is done by the researcher to know whether the stimulus developed along with the question items can be understood and have the expected effect which is followed by 60 participants. After the expected results are appropriate, the researchers conducted a major experiment by disseminating 4 different stimuli to 150 participants. Participants in this study are Indonesian citizens who incidentally are Y and Z genes (aged 19 to 41 years) and are Muslim. The characteristics are as follows: Most of the participants are women (63%), the majority are between 19-31 years (99%). Out of a total of 150 participants, 112 (75%) had incomes of less than R$ 3,200,000 in a month, while the rest had more than that. By region of origin, participants from western Indonesia (Sumatera, Java) were 58 people (39%), middle part (Kalimantan, Bali, NTT, NTB) of 48 people (32%), and eastern part (Sulawesi, Maluku, Irian/Papua) as many as 44 people (29%). All participants have been shopping online, with the majority of participants (83%) doing online shopping activities one to two times a month.
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to test the validity and reliability of the items used, the researchers used factor and reliability analysis. The results show that the items used to measure attitudes toward halal food products have Cronbach's Alpha of 0.920, the intention to buy halal food products of 0.862, the familiarity of the site by 0.940, and the brand familiarity of 0.884 with all loading factors above 0.700. For check manipulation, eight items of argument quality questions have Cronbach's Alpha of 0.936, while five items of religious symbols have Cronbach's Alpha of 0.885. Using a t-test, it was shown that the participants could differentiate the strong argument quality ($X^2=3.92$) with the weak argument quality ($X^2=3.20$) significantly ($p<0.05$). The same is true of the significantly different manipulation of religious symbols ($p<0.05$), with religious symbols having an average value of 3.82, while without religious symbols having an average value of 2.21.

Table 1. Two-Way ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Consumer Attitudes toward Halal Food Product</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Effect</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agument Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- High (HA)</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>2.631</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low (LA)</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Symbol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With (DS)</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>11.786</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Without (TS)</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Effect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HA DS</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.617</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HA TS</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- LA DS</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- LA TS</td>
<td>3.67</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Covariates</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Familiarity on the Site</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brand Familiarity</td>
<td>3.350</td>
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<td>0.069</td>
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</table>

Table 2. Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>t-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity on the Site</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Familiarity</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>0.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Attitudes toward Halal Food Product</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>3.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F-value</td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.561</td>
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</table>

The researchers used a two-way ANOVA and regression to test the proposed hypothesis. The first hypothesis states that consumer attitudes toward halal food product will be higher when the argument quality of a product is stronger than the argument quality of a product is weak in a description of halal food products. The results show that the average attitude value will be higher when the argument quality is strong ($X^2=3.91$) compared with when the argument quality is weak ($X^2=3.70$), but the difference between them is not significant ($F= 2.631$, $p>0.05$); so $H1$ is rejected. The second hypothesis states that consumer attitudes toward halal food product will be higher if there is a halal logo compared with no halal logo on a description of halal food products. The results show that consumers have a higher positive attitude when there is a religious symbol ($X^2=4.02$) than when there is no religious symbol ($X^2=3.58$) on a description of halal food products, with significant differences ($F= 11.786$, $p<0.05$), so $H2$ is accepted.

The third hypothesis states that consumer attitudes toward halal food products have a positive effect on consumers' intention to buy halal food products. The analysis shows that consumer attitudes toward halal food products have a significant positive effect with the intention of buying halal food products, as evidenced by the results of $R^2$ and $F$-values are 0.090 and 4.785 respectively at 95% confidence level ($p<0.05$) with beta value is 0.293 at t-value 3.169 ($p<0.05$); so $H3$ is also accepted.

Discussion

The first question to be answered in this study is how the consumer response to the argument quality displayed by manufacturers in consuming halal food products? The analysis shows that strong argument quality does not make consumer attitudes toward halal food products significantly different from the quality of weak argument. These results are in line with research done by Grunert, Wills, and Fernández-Celemín [37] in six product categories in five countries in Europe, only 12% of consumers are observing detailed product information on the back of the packaging to guide their choice. Moreover, research findings from Benn, Webb, Chang, and Reidy [38] indicate that consumers tend to see product images rather than observing detailed product information.

The second question that encourages this research is how consumers respond to religious symbols displayed by manufacturers in consuming halal food products? The results of this study indicate that when producers display religious symbols in the description of halal food products, then consumer attitudes toward halal food products will be higher than there is no religious symbol on the description of halal food products. Surely this is in line with the results of research done by Dotson and Hyatt [17], someone involved with information containing religious symbols will have a good attitude and buying intention. In addition, the results of this study also confirmed the results of research conducted by Shafie and Othman [39] on consumers in Malaysia. The results of these studies show that the halal logo plays a role in consumer purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, this study also shows a positive influence between consumer attitudes and intentions in consuming halal food products. These results reinforce the statement of attitudes plays an important role in determining the choice and intentions of one's behavior [25].

V. CONCLUSION

This research can help marketers and industry players in taking decisions to address the competition among halal food products. The insignificant differences in consumer attitudes toward the strong and weak of arguments quality and the
significant differences in consumer attitudes toward with and without halal logo suggest that Indonesian Muslim societies tend to view product images rather than observing detailed product information. This is certainly well-founded. Indonesia as a country with a majority society embraced Islam has made its people tend to trust the halalness of all products sold in Indonesia, considering there is a special institution in charge of overseeing and evaluating the food products sold in Indonesia. Thus, what halal food producers can do is to clarify and carefully determine the position of the halal logo they will display on their product descriptions. A halal logo must be clearly visible and easy to find by consumers until the presence of halal logo is expected to form a positive attitude of consumers because the true halal logo can be peripheral cues for consumers in the attitudes formation.

In addition to the implications for marketers, this study also has academic implications as follows: First, this research enriches the past research that tries to delve deeper into the buying behavior of halal food products of Indonesian Muslim consumers. Secondly, previous research which has been largely conducted outside Indonesia with a socio-cultural background that is different from the research context in Indonesia. Hopefully, the results of this study can enrich the repertoire of knowledge related to the efforts that need to be done.

Although this research has been designed as well as possible, there are still some disadvantages. First, this study only uses a certain age range and does not cover all areas in Indonesia. The internal validity of the results of this study is well suited, but external validity is still lacking. For that, further research needs to expand the sample of respondents to be used so that external validity can be improved. Second, the object used only food products especially snacks. For further research, the products used can be added with other products to determine whether the response from consumers will be different depending on the involvement they have for the product. Third, only Muslim consumers are used as research objects. Of course, it would be interesting if further research could compare the response of Muslim and non-Muslim consumers to halal food products. Finally, it is necessary to add covariates considering there will be many other factors that can affect consumer attitudes and intentions in consuming halal food products.

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