

Acculturation of Halal Food to the American Food Culture through Immigration and Globalization: A Literature Review

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The purpose of this review of literature study is to examine the acculturation process of halal food to the American food culture. Further, is to determine the effects the acculturation of halal food on the consumer and food economy in the U.S. and globally. Irrespective of where a Muslim resides or travels to, consuming halal food is an obligatory religious dietary requirement for all Muslims worldwide. According to recent census estimates, there are nearly 3.3 million Muslims living in the U.S. This number represents nearly 1% of the total U.S. population. By 2050, this number will more than double. The U.S. is considered a melting pot of a mélange of many ethnic groups and is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse countries in the world. Through both Muslims immigration to the U.S. and trade globalization, halal food was introduced to the American food culture. Migrant Muslims have not brought only their Islamic religious traditions to the U.S., but also their traditional halal food preparation, including butchering of animals for consumption, their distinct cooking styles, and other Islamic dietary practices. This paper offers an analysis of the process of acculturation and the transition of halal food products to both the Muslim and non-Muslim American consumers. This paper further examines the impact of the burgeoning halal food economy on the U.S. food industry and its share of the growing global halal food economy. There is a need for further research to study the long-term socioeconomic and environmental sustainability impact on the growing the global Muslim populations living in low-income counties.

Keywords: Acculturation, Halal food, Food Culture, Islam in America, Muslim Immigrants, the United States, Globalization.

Introduction

Historically, Islam was established in 610 A.D. in the City of Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula, which is present-day Saudi Arabia. Currently, Muslims are the world's second-largest religious group. In 2015, the global Muslim population was approximately 1.8 billion, making Muslims constitute nearly 25% of the entire world population. The global Muslim population is projected to rise by about 35% in the next two decades, growing to 2.2 billion by 2030 (Lipka, 2017; Pew Research Centre, 2011a; Pew Research Center, 2009). Most historians believe that Islam was incipiently introduced to America in the early 14th century through Muslims who came originally from the Western African region of Senegambia Confederation. This confederation which ended in 1989 was comprised of Senegal and The Gambia. It has been also believed that the first group of Muslim immigrants to America were Moors of Arab and Berber descent from the North African region. The Moors crossed over the Western Mediterranean Sea to the Strait of Gibraltar onto the Iberian Peninsula located on the tip of the southwestern corner of Europe between Portugal, Spain, and France. The Moors were eventually expelled from Spain and made their long voyage sailing to the Caribbean islands, and finally made their way the Gulf of Mexico (Eltis, Engerman, Drescher, & Richardson, 2017; Kopish, 2016; Library of Congress, n. d.; National Museum of African American History and Culture n. d.; Williams, 2017; World Atlas, n. d.). Currently, in the United States, Islam constitutes the third largest religion with Christianity being the first and Judaism comes in second (Pew Research Center, 2015a). Among other religious obligations, one of the essential tenets of Islam is to consume only food that is prepared according to strictly prescribed Islamic standards called "halal food." Consuming halal food is a fundamental requirement of all practicing Muslims, as well as it is an expression of the Muslim identity and culture. Fischler (1988) suggests that food is a fundamental constituent of any cultural identity. A study by Koctürk-Runefors (1990) refers to the resilient connection between food and cultural identity as a "value" connection. Koctürk-Runefors (1990) further explains that some "value" foods that are deeply connected to a culture or an ethnic group can be more enduring and carry more "value" to that culture or ethnic group, therefore, it might be difficult to change or substitute over time. For Muslims globally, halal food is one of these "value" foods that bears a significant symbol for both their Muslim faith and Islamic identity.

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) developed a construct for cultural adaptation in which they defined the term acculturation as "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). In 1954, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) presented a modified articulation of the definition of acculturation that is more concise and has been frequently quoted in the social science literature. The modified definition by SSRC states that "acculturation may be defined as culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems" (p. 974). Indispensable requirements of effective acculturation are communication and adaptation of immigrants to a new culture, which they are regarded as the key fundamental development and a natural outcome of an effective acculturation process (Dorzhighushaeva, Dondukov & Dondukova, 2017; Lakey, 2003; Tarman & Dev, 2018). Whereas halal food has religious patrimony and connotation, it is also has been widely considered and accepted as a culture and economic phenomenon by many cultures globally. When applying the SSRC modified definition to the acculturation of halal food in the U.S., which is considered an autonomous cultural system that has amalgamated with the host American food cultural system, and the two cultural systems have become acculturated. Krishnendu (2016) suggests that establishing ethnic food restaurants and stores by immigrants living in a new country have been primarily used as a tool for achieving financial security and economic improvement. It also has been used as a way of sharing their cultural food traditions with the host country—and by doing so—immigrants are attempting to acculturate and contribute to the new host culture as well.

Halal food is described as the kind of food that is required not to encompass any constituent of food that Muslims are not permitted to consume as prescribed by the Quran (*Arabic*, القرآن) (the sacred text of Muslims). The guidelines that regulate the preparation and consumption of halal food are further clarified in detail by the Sunni traditions known as the (Hadith, "hadeeth", *Arabic*: حديث), which is relied on together with the Quran to expound on how Muslims should comply with these dietary regulations and put them into practice on a regular basis. The foods that are permissible under the Islamic dietary laws must meet the conditions of being clean, pure, safe, and wholesome to consume under specific protocols outlined in the Quran and explained in the Hadith. The Quran states "O you who have believed, eat from the pure things which we have provided you" (Holy Quran, Verse "Al-Baqarah" 2:172). In another verse, the Quran also avers, "O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth (that is) lawful and pure" (Holy Quran, Verse "Al-Baqarah" 2:168). As it can be observed from the above-quoted Quranic verses, there is a notable prodigious emphasis on consuming halal food that must meet at minimum two criteria, to be "pure" and "lawful." The term "haram" (*Arabic*: "حرام"), which means in Arabic forbidden or unlawful is the antithesis of the term "halal" (Halal Food Authority, 2016; Khattak, et al., 2011; Prepared Foods, 2010; Riaz & Chaudry, 2003). Riaz and Chaudry (2003) further describe that based on the laws and regulations of halal food, it is haram for food to be extracted or mixed with any semblance of porcine byproducts or contaminated with any other non-halal foods. For these reasons, the halal food that is allowed under the Islamic dietary laws must be stringently free of any trace of porcine derivatives, fat or blood from any prohibited to consume animals, and any quantity of alcohol. Furthermore, any animals and poultry sold in the market under the halal meat label must be slaughtered in conformity with certifiable strict religious guidelines are only permitted for consumption by Muslims (Junru, 2011; Kittler, Sucher, & Nahikian-Nelms, 2012; Newman, 1996).

In all Muslim majority countries and non-Muslim countries with significant minority Muslim populations, there are active halal food certification agencies and bodies that govern, safeguard, enforce, and issue certificates to halal food businesses in compliance with halal standard dietary laws and guidelines (Figures 1, 2, & 3).



Figure 1. Halal food certificate logo used by the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America as an accreditation issued to restaurants, halal meat butcher markets, and another

halal food products. Reprinted from the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America from <http://www.ifanca.org/Pages/index.aspx> (2015).



Figure 2. Halal food certificate logo used in the U.S. by the Halal Advisory Group issued as an accreditation to restaurants, halal meat butcher markets, and other halal food products. Reprinted from the *Halal Advisory Group* from <https://www.halaladvisory.ca/> (2014).



Figure 3. Halal food certificate logo used by the Malaysian Government as an accreditation to restaurants, halal meat butcher markets, and other halal food products. Reprinted from *Malaysia Halal Foods* from <http://www.malaysiahalalfoods.com/> (2017).

Research by Chaudry and Riaz (2014) estimates that, currently, there are close to 122 global and national halal food certification organizations. They encompass a decentralized and fragmented network of halal governance agencies at the international, national, and local levels with different certification standards and requirements. Among these agencies are government-administered, locally-governed, non-profit non-governmental organization (NGO), and private for-profit agencies and business that operate independently to standardize and issue halal certificates in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, France, the Netherlands, and the Philippines. In the U.S., there are multiple similar agencies among them the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (Figure 1), the Halal Advisory Group (Figure 2), and the Islamic Society of the Washington Area. Worldwide, Malaysia (Figure 3) and Indonesia are considered the foremost authorities in halal food industry standards, especially halal meat. Malaysia and Indonesia have the most advanced and robust halal product certification systems in the world. Halal food certification procedures are intended to safeguard the Muslim and non-Muslim consumer from

deception and mislabeling of halal products. Halal consumers are more inclined to search for food products that are authentically certified and labeled as halal because it helps them to clearly distinguish the acceptability of halal food products for consumption. Halal food is designed to protect Muslim consumers from fraud and mislabeling (Prepared Foods, 2010; Riaz, 2010). Islamic jurisprudence and the Holy Quran command Muslims to refrain from consuming specified items of prohibited foods and beverages. The highest on the list of the forbidden foods are any pork and pork byproducts, any quantity of alcoholic beverages, consuming meat from beasts or certain dead animals such as horses, dogs, donkeys, and blood of any animal are included on the list of impermissible foods (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2012; Gillette, 2000; Junru, 2011). The Arabic-English translation of the complete meaning from a Quranic verse states "He (God) has forbidden unto you (for life) the carrion, blood, flesh of the swine, and that over which is invoked the name of any other than the name of God. Similarly, the strangled and dead animals through beating, the dead animals through falling from a height, and that which has been killed by (the goring of) horns, and the devoured of wild beasts, unless you they have been purified (by slaughtering) through proper, lawful way, while yet there is life in it, and that which has been sacrificed unto idols. And (forbidden is it) that ye swear by the divine arrows. This is an abomination" (Holy Quran, Verse "Al-Ma'idah", 5: 3) (Stacey, 2011).

In recent years, as the Muslim population has been rapidly increasing globally, the demand for halal food and nonfood products has been growing exponentially as well. This increasing demand is not only in non-Muslim countries such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Europe, but also in Southeast Asia, the Arab Middle East, and Arab North Africa. One of several supporting indicators of the acculturation of halal food process and the growing demand for halal food products in the U.S. is a halal meat production and distribution corporation called Midamar headquartered in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Midamar was originally founded in 1974 as a family-run meat development and sales company. Because of the growing demand for halal meat, in the 1980s, Midamar has become a major international producer and exporter of halal products, especially meat and poultry to the international and domestic markets. Midamar was one of the leading North American food companies to anticipate the market potential for the growing demand for the U.S.D.A inspected halal meat products by both the U.S. and global consumers. Other key suppliers of the halal food to markets in the U.S. are Al-Safa Halal, American Halal Company, Crescent Foods, and Nema Food. (Midamar, 2017; Technavio; 2017). A recent market research report projects that the halal food market in the U.S. to grow at a compound annual growth rate of more than 3% during the forecast period of 2017-2021. The report also describes halal food retail and food services as the two major rising consumer sectors. The halal food retail sector represented more than 64% of the market share in 2016. According to this report, the three key market engines that are propelling the growth of the halal food market by the consumer in the US are (1) halal food is a symbol of healthy and clean food (2) increasing sale volumes through many burgeoning retail markets (3) the rapidly growing Muslim population through immigration and high births/population rate. The report further shows that the global halal food sales in the U.S., including meat, poultry, and seafood have reached around \$15.37 billion in 2016 (Business Wire, 2017; Cession PR Newswire, 2017; Technavio, 2017).

Globalization has played a significant role in the acculturation of halal food not only in the U.S. but also worldwide. In the last three decades, the halal food industry has become one of the fastest growing global consumer markets in the world. Excluding the banking and financing sectors, currently, the aggregate global halal industry productivity, including halal food; nonfood products; and other related services such as tourism and hospitality has been valued at about \$2.3 trillion (Africa Islamic Economic Foundation, 2013; Bodied, 2007; Thomson Reuters, 2017). Several studies have examined the trends of future worldwide population growth forecast that by 2030, the global Muslim population is expected to constitute nearly (26%) of the total world's population with a projected total population of nearly 2.2 billion Muslims (Lipka & Hackett, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2011; World Atlas, 2017). Lipka and Hackett (2017) estimate that the world's Muslim population is expected to grow by 32% in the forthcoming decades. In 2015, there were close to 1.8 billion Muslims, and by 2060 this number is forecast to increase up to 3 billion. Lipka and Hackett (2017) further explain that, in 2015, Muslims comprised nearly 24.1% of the total global population, and 45 years later, Muslims are expected to encompass more than (31.1%). A relevant projection by Deutsche Welle (2011) predicts that the current global Muslim population is expected to increase by two-fold in a few decades compared with their non-Muslim counterparts. Several recent global Muslim population growth analyses suggest that four in ten of the most populous Muslim countries in the world that are the leaders in contributing to the rapid population growth are in the Southwest and Southeast Asia, and Asia-Pacific Regions. Chiefly among them are Indonesia (209.1 million) (one in every eight Muslims in the world lives in Indonesia), Pakistan (176.2 million), India (167.4

million), and Bangladesh (134.4 million) (Pew Research Center, 2015b; World Atlas, 2017). Because of this rapid expansion of the global Muslim population, coupled with the demand for halal products has not been only for foodstuffs, but also for nonfood goods and services. This rising demand has been fueled by the increasing purchasing power of the current global Muslim population that is on the threshold of reaching nearly 2 billion. Subsequently, the halal food and non-food industries have been estimated to grow at an annual rate of nearly 20%. One of the major drivers for the halal market expansion is that the purchases of halal products are not exclusive to the Muslim consumers only. One of the explanations for this relatively recent phenomenon is that halal food and non-food markets have been increasingly attracting and gaining a greater acceptance among the non-Muslim consumers who often associate the word “halal” with a positive brand representation. Consumers associate halal food and nonfood products with being natural, pure, ethical, healthy, and hygienic (Bodied, 2007). Currently, in the U.S., the Muslim population represents only 3.3 million (1%) of the total U.S. population of nearly 326 million (99%) (Figure 4). It has been projected that the Muslim population in the U.S. will increase by more than twofold by 2050 (Mohamed, 2016). Consequently, with this population upsurge, the consumption and expenditure of the halal products have been estimated to increase by about 50% driven by the retail segment of the halal food market with a volume of nearly 26.81 billion (Business Wire, 2017).

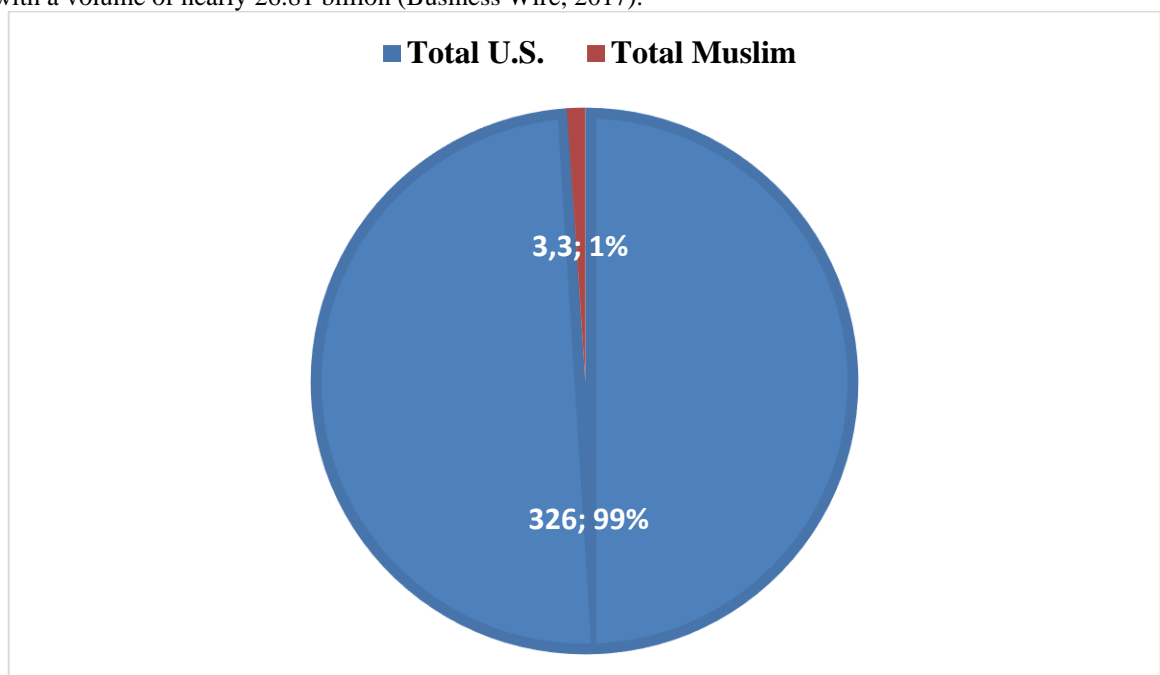


Figure 4. Population ratio of the total U.S. population (326 million) compared to the total U.S. Muslim Population (3.3 million) on January 6, 2016. Data from Mohamed (2016).

Research by Green and Gammon (2016) suggests that halal food sales are rising not only among the fast-growing U.S. Muslim population but also among the young non-Muslim American millennials who have embraced halal food as a healthier dietary alternative to fast food. For that reason, since 2010, the sales of halal food have increased by 30%. Currently, halal food business in the U.S. has reached a trading volume of nearly \$20 billion. This trading volume represents close to 70% upsurge from the 1999 halal food business productivity. Similarly, the number of halal food restaurants and related stores has been growing at a fast pace. Presently, many U.S.-based businesses either produce or distribute halal food and nonfood products. Because of the expansion and increasing public demand, some U.S. states have passed state laws to regulate the use of halal labels and issuance of halal certifications to ensure both safety and compliance with the halal food rules and standards (Diabetes Care and Education, 2009; Milne, 2006). Because of the increasing U.S. and global interest in halal food, the halal food trade certification logos have been used in the U.S. and worldwide as a symbol for authenticity, safety, and quality assurance that represents a high-value food preference (Figures 1, 2, & 3).

Halal food market research results indicate there is a trend of steadily growing global demand for halal products. In 1999, the total expenditure of Muslims in the U.S. on halal food products was valued at \$12 billion, of which nearly \$3 billion was spent on meat and poultry alone (Riaz, 1999). A report by the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (2010) indicate that since 2005, the halal-certified ingredients and food products increase by 80%. The report further maintains that this increased interest for U.S. halal products in the last 10 years is an indication of the overall projected \$170 billion purchasing power of the American-Muslim consumers. The American-Muslim purchasing robustness for halal food items alone is expected to exceed \$20 billion annually. A similar halal food market research by Prepared Foods (2010) purports that in 2010, the U.S. halal food market was valued at \$17.6 billion annually, which represents \$5 billion increase in nearly one decade. Further, Global halal market research suggests that the greatest share of halal food production and distribution is dominated by non-Muslim countries with small Muslim minorities. Global trade data of halal meat show that Brazil is the largest producer and exporter of halal meat products netting \$4.73 billion yearly, followed by India (a Hindu-majority country) with \$2.11 billion, and Australia reaching \$1.63 billion. With lesser market shares, Argentina, New Zealand, and the U.S. are other non-Muslim countries that produce and export halal meat globally. Those non-Muslim countries dominate close to 90% of the global halal meat trade. In contrast, the major halal meat, both beef, and poultry importers are Muslim-majority countries, including Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Algeria, and Egypt. As a relevant case in point, the Muslims consumers in Malaysia spend an average of 14% of their household food budget on halal meat alone. Malaysia imports nearly 60% of its halal meat needs from non-Muslim countries such as India, Australia, and New Zealand (Africa Islamic Economic Foundation, 2013; Thomson Reuters, 2017).

Globally, China, which is a non-Muslim country with a small Muslim minority of nearly 1.6 % of the total Chinese population (Haub, 2011) has the most ambitious halal food production and exportation strategy. By the time the “One Belt, One Road Initiative (BRI)” has been fully implemented, China will be positioned to become the dominant producer and exporter of global halal products to the international markets. In September 2013, China launched a large-scale economic initiative called “One Belt, One Road”. This initiative is aimed at reviving the ancient overland and maritime Silk Road trade routes that once transported silk fabric, spices, and a variety of other goods in both westbound and eastbound directions (Figure 5). By building a modern variant of the ancient Silk Road, China is poised to dominate the halal food and non-food products global trade. One of the economic strategies of the \$1 trillion modernization of the ancient Silk Road trade routes is to improve the logistical infrastructure of new overland road and rail networks traversing through Central Asia and beyond. This strategy will enable China to increase its halal products output for global export to other countries, especially the Muslim Middle Eastern countries with a robust purchasing power of over 400 million people. China’s export strategy includes South and Southeast Asian nations with Muslim populations of about 700 million consumers. In 2015, China reached a bilateral trade agreement called the Sino-Malaysian Halal Food and Muslim Supplies Certification and Industry Cooperation to trade in halal food products, especially halal meat. To accommodate the expansion in global halal food production and trade exchange, China has created a new massive infrastructure to support its global halal food trade strategy, including halal food and nonfood supplies, manufacturing, and logistic centers such as the Wuzhong Halal Industrial Park located in the Hui Muslim Autonomous Region of Ningxia, which hitherto has attracted 218 national halal food manufacturing and trading corporations. Globally, China is projected to invest nearly \$150 billion a year in the 68 countries that have signed up to join the BRI trading consortium of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road. Most of these 68 countries are Muslim-majority countries in South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East were once major trading partners with China when the ancient Silk Road was operational between around 130 BCE-1453 CE (Figure 5) (Dubow, 2017; Halawa, Ai, & Ma; 2017; Mark, 2014; Parker, 2017; Wee Sile, 2015).



Figure 5. The Ancient Silk Road map showing the overland and maritime trade routes that China is revitalizing into a modern version to export halal products. The overland routes are depicted in orange lines, whereas the maritime routes depicted in blue lines. Source: Reprinted from *Ancient World History* from <http://earlyworldhistory.blogspot.com/2012/02/silk-road.html> (2012).

Research by McCracken (1986) suggests that there is a strong connection between the stable value of cultural identity and a consumer's behavior that relocates constantly with the consumer from one place to another. This theory may explain the Muslim consumer's behavior toward their habitual halal food consumption as a cultural identity value that relocates with them from one country to another even if it is a non-Muslim country such as the Muslims who immigrated from diverse countries to the U.S. Several studies have also shown similar findings. A study examined the association between self-identity, halal meat consumption, and dietary acculturation in the Chinese Muslims reveals that the religious identity associated with the consumption of halal meat can potentially encourage a decision-making process that can be more complex for the Muslim consumer to make. This study also maintains that there is a positive attitude toward the "behavioral intention" to consume halal meat. The authors further argue that halal meat market promotional policies can be influenced by acculturation-related strategies of how the halal meat is marketed and distributed. This positive perception by the halal meat consumers is anticipated to increase marketing campaigns targeting the growing halal meat, and in general, halal food consumers not only in China but globally as well (Zafar, Al-Kwafi, Saiti, & Bin-Othman, 2014). In a different but related study in France, similar results have been reached where French Muslim respondents reported an overall positive personal attitude about consuming halal meat. They also reported being influenced by their peers and their perceived control over making decisions regarding consuming halal meat, which can also serve as a predictor of the intention to purchase and consume halal meat (Bonne, Vermeir, Bergeaud-Blackler, & Verbeke, 2007).

Methods

This study employed a review of literature methodology that it is applied to systematically review, synthesizes, and examine the reported results from a multitude of relevant previously published studies on the acculturation of halal food in the U.S. and globally. The review and examination of the reported results by scholarly journal articles, printed books, published theses, and written and electronic articles were assembled from trusted sources. These results were systematically reviewed and analyzed to identify the commonly occurring role and effects of globalization and immigration in the acculturation process of halal food in the U.S. and its economic impact on the halal food products industry and halal market economy in the U.S. and globally.

Findings

Data collected from this review of the literature study indicated that attributable to the role of immigration and globalization, over the span of the last two decades, halal food and non-food industries have been experiencing significant growth in the U.S. and globally. This growth including the production, trade volume, and consumption of halal products by both Muslims and non-Muslim consumers. As a certifiable global high-quality brand, halal food trade has been able to break through beyond religious, cultural, and geographic parameters. Halal food products, especially meat, chicken, and seafood are the driving engines behind this growth. One of the major contributors to the increased consumption of halal food products has been fueled by the rapidly growing global Muslim populations in the U.S., Middle Eastern, Southwest and Southeast Asia, and Asia-Pacific Regions. Chiefly among them are Indonesia 209.1 million, Pakistan 176.2 million, India 167.4 million, Bangladesh 134.4 million, and the Arab Middle Eastern Countries combined with 400 million (Lipka, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2011a; Pew Research Center, 2009; Tolba, 2018). Immigration and globalization have contributed to a rapid expansion of the U.S. and global Muslim population, which promoted an increased demand for halal products not only for foodstuffs, but also for nonfood goods and services that has been propelled by the increasing purchasing power of the current combined U.S. and global Muslim population of nearly to 1.6 billion with an estimated \$2.1 trillion annually. Findings have shown that there has been a growing halal food consumption by non-Muslims particularly in the U.S. One of the explanations for this relatively recent but burgeoning phenomenon is that halal food market has been exceedingly attracting and gaining a greater acceptance among the global non-Muslim consumers, especially the young American millennials who have embraced halal food as a healthier dietary alternative to the ubiquitous fast food and processed food products. Further, non-Muslim consumers are likely to associate halal food and non-food products with being hygienic, ethical, natural, and pure. Non-Muslim consumers often identify the word “halal” as a representation of a positive and wholesome food brand (Africa Islamic Economic Foundation, 2013; Bodied, 2007; Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, 2010; Riaz, 1999). The findings further indicated globalization has made a significant impact on the halal food and lifestyle sectors expenditure that was estimated to be valued at \$ 1.9 trillion in 2015. With a projected global Muslim population of close to 2.2 billion by 2030, the enormous economic project called “One Belt, One Road” or the “modern-day Silk Road” has the potential of placing China as a global frontrunner commanding the greatest portion of the halal market economy worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2011; Thomson Reuters, 2017; Wee Sile, 201).

Discussions

This paper examined the development of the acculturation process of halal food to the American food culture. Together with Islam, halal food was introduced to America in the 14th century by the early Western African Muslim immigrants (Eltis et al., 2017; Library of Congress, n. d.; National Museum of African American History and Culture, n. d.; Williams, 2017). Through a systematic review and analysis of the current literature, I have arrived at five_key findings. The first, the terms halal “lawful” and haram “unlawful” do not enjoy a well-defined understanding of the literal and practical meanings, especially among the populations of the non-Muslim countries. The term halal has often been associated only with a religious context, and not in terms of the health and economic benefits it provides. The second, the international and national halal certification systems, especially halal food are fragmented and incoherent providing different levels of halal standards and regulations, which may lead to a challenging compliance and confusion among consumers. The third, there is a lack of a centralized database for halal products certification and regulation that all certifying agencies can depend on as a consistent source for information. The fourth, because of the absence of a centralized halal food database, the halal products industry and consumerism are under-researched areas in both the global and American social science and marketing research communities. The fifth, this study was designed to provide a systematic inquiry of the scarcely available data addressing this increasingly growing culturally and economically significant subject in the U.S. Additionally, the paper aims to engage the reader in further discussions, engender more interest, and encourage critical thinking regarding the phenomenon of the acculturation of halal in the U.S. and globally. The historical and numerical data presented in this paper show that the acculturation process of halal food in the U.S. has begun on an indiscernible scale and gradual evolution. However, in due course, the acculturation of halal food has become more established and recognizable both culturally and economically. The support for this argument has been strengthened by the historical fact that halal food has endured being in the non-Muslim U.S. for approximately seven centuries. As this paper has presented, the acculturation of halal food in the U.S. has not only endured for several centuries, but also has been

flourishing economically not only in the U.S. but globally as well (Business Wire, 2017; Green & Gammon, 2016; Technavio; 2017; Thomson Reuters, 2017).

Based on the data presented in this paper, it can be concluded that there have been six major factors that have contributed to the effective acculturation of halal food in the U.S. The first, the immigration of the early Muslims who came from Western Africa in the 14th century, as well as the ensuing Muslims immigrants from other parts of the world who have transported Islam and halal food to the U.S. The second, the high birth-rate of American-Muslims, which has given rise to the expansion of the total Muslim population (Business Wire, 2017; Lipka, 2017; Technavio; 2017). As has been discussed in the Introduction section, this robust Muslim population growth has generated further demand for halal food and halal nonfood products, as well as creating more purchasing power that has been estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars (Prepared Foods; 2010; Riaz, 1999). The third, the rise of the globalization of the halal products industry and trade dominated by non-Muslim countries lead by Brazil, China, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, and the U.S., albeit on a smaller but growing scale, and is projected to grow exponentially in the upcoming few decades (Africa Islamic Economic Foundation, 2013; Thomson Reuters, 2017). The fourth, the reputation that halal food brand has been established as a hygienic, natural, strictly regulated, ethical, and an unadulterated food source (Bodied, 2007). This fourth factor alone has attracted millions of young American non-Muslim consumers to prefer consuming halal food as a much healthier alternative to fast food. The fifth, in the non-Muslim U.S., halal food has not attempted to compete with nor supersede the well-established traditional American food. In fact, in addition to the traditional American food, halal food provides an extra choice for the consumer who is looking for a different food source. The sixth, the open-mindedness and pragmatism of the American consumer that has facilitated their acceptance of halal food, which is not based on a religious obligation like what Muslims do but based on what halal food can provide as a trustworthy brand-name food, quality assurance, cleanness, and a healthier choice for the ubiquitous tertiary processed food products and fast food.

Conclusions

Muslim immigration to the U.S. and trade globalization have been playing a seminal role in the acculturation and assimilation of halal food and nonfood products to the American food culture. The considerable growth of the halal foodstuffs industry in the last two decades has made significant contributions to the economic development in many global markets, including in the U.S. This growth supports the hypothesis that the halal food acculturation to the U.S. food culture has been shown to be effective and thriving. As the data presented in this paper suggest the halal food industry has made measurably significant monetary contributions to the U.S. and global halal food economy, which has been projected to grow rapidly as both the U.S. and global Muslim populations are projected to increase at higher rates than their counterpart non-Muslim population. Furthermore, the halal food acculturation has made a quantifiable impact on the purchasing behavior of a considerable proportion of the American Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. However, further investigations in this field of research are still needed and recommended to shed additional light and infuse more substantive scholarly articles to the current exiguous evidence-based literature in this vital research area. One topic of interest for future research to recommend is studying the effects of halal products industry, especially halal food on the long-term food security and sustainability of the food environment, as a great majority of the growing global Muslim populations living in low-income countries. Future research in this area would advance the relevant body of knowledge and contributes to further the understanding of the environmental and socioeconomic impact of this rather under-researched field of inquiry. To conclude, I hope that this paper would stimulate future interest in conducting further studies in the U.S. and globally.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author of this manuscript declares that he has no conflict of interest concerning its contents, drafting, publication, or application.

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