

An Experts' Perspective Based on Consumers' Perception of Halal-Related Issue

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Abstract

Consumers interpreted halal definition differently. Many problems concern their degree of comprehension, as previous scholars discussed many variables that led to their perceptions. The beginning of the halal logo is one of the substantial parts of efforts to influence customer consideration while building their feelings of confidence towards purchase selection, making it important to discover. This qualitative research aims to illustrate a finding focused on customer views on halal-related issues. An in-depth interview session explained it analytically from the viewpoint of experts. Based on the discussion among eight halal experts in this region, the finding reveals six major concerns shown as an essential part of the study and were issues of "fake" logo, COC, religion, ingredients, lack of knowledge and Islamic clues. The outcomes of various issues lead to a conclusion that may attract the attention of authorities and appropriate feedback to advance the halal definition in this region.

Keywords: Consumers, experts, halal concepts, halal-related issues, perception

Introduction

The word "halal" is related to the concept of allowing or authorising consumables implied by Islamic laws and shariah. Due to its booming popularity on

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the global halal market, the halal logo indication was introduced to expand more confidence and trust during halal consumption. Additionally, the centre of rapid users has been declared to be convinced (Soraji et al . , 2017) and crucial as a risk mitigation technique in assuming product quality (Dimara and Skuras, 2003).

The halal certification mark is typically given based on consistent basic concepts and procedures as fine, safe and fit for consumption (H. Iberahim et. al, 2012). Most significantly, it remains not only to its comprehension, trustworthy characteristics and trust, but also to influence the choices and preferences of customers, while profoundly essential to Muslims for both religious and quality purposes (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008), (Gurnert, 2006).

In general, consuming halal is closely associated with the religious obligation and requirements as a Muslim stated in the Quran and hadith, which is why it is important to briefly discuss consumer issues while observing halal practises, commonly during their purchases. A analysis of the literature undertaken found several influential factors influencing their halal buying intention. Despite the efficiency of the halal certification process (Siti Mashitoh, 2013), other factors may include the religiousness and beliefs of customers, confidence and trust on halal labels, education levels, open access to halal knowledge, and the income levels (Sungkar, 2010).

A qualitative analysis technique used to produce the results, as it helps you to get a comprehensive view of your natural setting. An in-depth interviewing method



is more effective in collecting indigenous data to further investigate people (Kvale , 1996). It also provides useful data for interviewees to interact and share their thoughts and feelings (Berg, 2007: 96). In this study, the selection of sample size was based on the purposive sample which compromises the sampling by experts with expertise and experience with the interest of the research. In the qualitative process, purposeful sampling is typical because it provides efficient collection of rich information (Patton, 2002).

These fundamental concerns warrant further attention; it is therefore important that a study can discover its perceptions, particularly about the halal concepts and their related problems. The answers of experts have been gathered explicitly to provide a more succinct understanding and to highlight many issues that are focused on the views of consumers in Malaysia. Despite some attempts to address this issue, it still needs more in-depth evidence to highlight the potential of halal mechanism in this region. Consequently, the study must discover the views and understandings of Muslim consumers of halal issues relevant to the development of the halal industry in Malaysia.

Methodology

The in-depth interview was conducted among a variety of halal experts including those from the Religious Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), academics from Malaysia's public universities, Islamic council members and NGOs. The qualitative method for the sample size was used by selected

informants. It suggested the contributions to open-ended questions through interviews conducted orally and documented in order to obtain further understanding. The verbal data have been specifically transcribed and analysed by input from thematic processes and supporting documentation of the quality of literature. Details of the participants and their qualification bodies is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Details of Certification Bodies Involved

Name of a certification body	Description	Participant's Designation
Islamic Religious Affairs Department of Penang (JAKIM)	Halal Penang - State Authorization body	Chief Assistant Director
State Islamic Religious Department Pulau Pinang (JAIS)	MAINPP - State Authorization body	Yang Dipertua
Islamic Religious Affairs Department of Kedah (JAKIM)	Halal Kedah - State Authorization body	Chief Assistant Director
Islamic Religious Affairs Department of Perak (JAKIM)	Halal Perak - State Authorization body	Chief Assistant Director
School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University Science Malaysia	Sch. Pharmacy USM - Public body	Professor, Academician

International Institute For Halal Research And Training (Inhart), Int. Islamic University of Malaysia.	UIAM Inhart - Public body	Asst. Professor
Consumers' of Penang (CAP)	Non-Profit Government Organization	NGO, liaison person
Islamic Center, University Science Malaysia	Internal university's authorization	Chief Assistant Director

Results and Discussion

Through thematic procedures involves, the study summarized the findings from the interview process conducted to demonstrate the significant perspectives of halal-related issues from the experts. Table 2 presented below:

Table 2: Experts' findings on halal-related issues

Issues	Verbal Data	Initial Codes	Themes
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪—Numbers of fake logo cases reduced ▪—The word 'fake' familiar at ground ▪—Term 'unauthorized' much suitable 	Feedback on "fake" terms	Misunderstanding of "fake" halal logo usage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪— Many types of the fake logo in the market ▪— “Fake” term — usually discussed — in western countries ▪— The use of — “fake” — term rarely happen in Malaysia ▪— Apply unrecognized halal logo most suitable ▪— Illegal halal logo usage is frequently happen ▪— Apply halal logo without JAKIM acknowledgement 		
s 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪— Religious belief will become certainly important — in guiding peoples' purchase pattern — as one of the best options to reduce curiosity. ▪— As — a Muslim, — it has become a part of 	Religious influence	The religious factor most relevant



the religious principles and requirements in seeking haleness as been declared through hadith and Quran with the obligations allowed to do and not do

▪— Those having a religious knowledge will be much aware, particular and cautious during food selection, thus guides them to look for alternative or methods to check on products' status with responsible authority", and "they usually will reach authority by asking certain questions typically on product's status

s 3	<p>Issue</p> <p>▪— Many people are taking granted on the product' status, simultaneously on</p>	<p>Gives excuses, ignore product status, taking-granted</p>	<p>Consumers' attitude</p>
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the halal logo and its certification.

▪— Muslim

entrepreneurs

merely take granted on the product status and tend to give many excuses to the policy and procedures endorsed by the authorities

▪— Many

cases showing by the consumer, whose generally ignore the product's status, take granted to the information received, consume a product with fewer concerns of its haleness status, or perhaps at least the efforts to improve their understanding

4	Issue	▪— The revised Malaysia halal logo with the added text	Put logo preferences	Country of origin
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“Malaysia” and “Jakim”, not only helping in differentiating the fake with the genuine logo, furthermore increase the feelings of safety and guarantees to consume the product. Thus, when it comes to the international halal logo, consumers will likely to put preference such as the halal logo must be from a trusted authorized body which recognized by JAKIM, and must be categorized as Islamic countries

Issue	▪ The	Not	Lacking
5	ingredient details with scientific terms and terminologies are confusing, misrecognized and	enough info on the ingredient	knowledge on ingredients' info



	<p>unfamiliar. — At worst, there is no specific ingredient handbook to be used as a reference to — easily recognized — the applied ingredient terms in general; hence it's material authenticity, — its origins of natural and — chemical ingredients.</p>		
<p>s 6</p>	<p>▪ — Many products in the recent market apply the words “Halal guaranteed”, — or “Muslim made product”, or “Pure and Clean” at their package, or some other cases they are using an Islamic symbol such as mosques, — green colour, or applied Islamic text as brand's name such as “Ibrahim”.</p>	<p>Islamic clues usage</p>	<p>The attraction of Islamic clues</p>

■— Similar cases can found with the application of Quran phrases or sentences at food premises in Arabic form, or the word “Bismillah” which is generally can be practised with the approval of the authority.”

Discussion

Issue 1. The misunderstanding of the usage of “fake” term

Issue 1 in Table 2 above indicates the various words used to denote the status of the halal logo. The misunderstanding of the keywords used by "fake" halal logo or "unauthorized" halal logo shows comparisons between views and feedback from academics and researchers in the field of halal studies, compared to the experts' group which is usually or occupied by JAKIM and Islamic councils in particular. Experts reacted wisely to the word use by suggesting that the "fake" halal logo reflects the research, but it can be explained subjectively.

Roshadah (2019) suggested that there are two forms of halal logo problems. First, by introducing JAKIM 's approved halal logo, although the manufacturer is not an official certificate holder – this can be considered as fake halal logo use. Meanwhile, the other issue is that they endorsed their halal logo version by making

certain adjustments or changing the halal logo not as approved by JAKIM, which can be uncertified halal logo use. However, it can be assumed that the latest fake halal logo in the recent market applies, and the numbers are decreasing.

Experts found most instances of illegal halal logo use by adding the halal logo without JAKIM 's acknowledgment. Some described it as placing the most suitable and appropriate unrecognised halal logo. In fact, this issue is reported in many cases. However, much of the feedback on their arguments that the word used is meaningless for use in Malaysia (Malik, 2019), which also happens in non-Islamic countries like the US, etc. Experts argued that information distribution problems, failed to hit suppliers, or maybe neglect information due to pursuing sale objectives and marketing strategy, may be a factor.

The fussiness process in obtaining certification, long time to receive the certificate, inability to meet knowledge and financial constraints, is highlighted mainly as excuses (Faizal, 2019). Nevertheless, the Halal logo problem misused is officially declared in the Halal guideline and covered by Trade Definition 1975 (Roshadah, 2019). There is also a major concern highlighted by the experts about amending the halal logo JAKIM with the added text of "Malaysia" and "JAKIM," which helps to distinguish Malaysia's genuine halal logo with the other international halal logo.

Zyad (2019) clarified that, with the growing number of imported goods and products recently, the process of recognising the foreign halal logo, which JAKIM

recognises, has made it much easier to minimise doubts and buy disputes and identify halal logo misused. Furthermore, the authority 's approved halal logo indication helps raise public awareness. Syed Shah Alam (2011) agreed that social pressure influenced consumers' decisions to consume halal, thus boosting their interests, desires, and needs, particularly for halal food products.

Relevantly, most consumers rely on the halal logo to obtain confidence, more precisely, before making any buying decision. Therefore, the problem of genuine halal certification must be crucially enhanced in satisfying their customers. Syed Shah Alam (2011) ruled, mindset, social standard, and perceived control has sense to buy or eat halal food. This implied the implication that the purpose of buying halal food compromised before making a purchase.

Issues 2. The religious factor is the most relevant

The religious issue falls in no two, as presented in Table 2 above. Religious provides a foundation for one's subjective belief system (Ysseldyk et al., 2010) and behavioural intention (Soliman and Wilson, 2017). As mentioned by Muhamad et al., (2016), consumers with more excellent religious knowledge remarkably influence in the marketplace, abiding by religious teachings to engage in the marketplace behaviours (Muhamad and Mizerski, 2013) thus affecting the intention of buying halal products (Shah Alam and Mohamad Sayuti, 2011). Nevertheless, religion able to shape a person's thinking and attitude based on the value they uphold (Borzooei et al., 2013); hence, this raises the intention of using the halal logo during the purchasing process (Nazlida et al., 2017).

These shreds of evidence backed the findings of 2019 as experts revealed the effect of religious insights to promote consumer awareness and behaviour towards the halal logo, thereby facilitating the determination of halal food shaping and eating habits. As a Muslim, it has become part of the religious values and requirements to pursue haleness as stated by hadith and Quran with the duties permitted to do and not, said Zyad (2019). Religion's influence will thus likely grow as a reference and guideline for a Muslim, as Islam has established basic guidelines and principles for the consumption of goods and services (Norhayati Zakaria and Abdul Taib, 2010). Moreover, it concerns a fundamental strength to be achieved when dealing with a halal problem. It also reinforces the concept of halal itself as closely associated with demonstrating hygiene, safety, and quality aspects, consistent with Islamic values, laws, and principles.

Consumption of the halal logo is a behaviour of faith (Nalida et al. 2017). As Faizal (2019) has eloquently mentioned, those who have a religious knowledge are very conscious, particularly, and careful during food selection. This scenario would direct them to pursue alternatives or methods to verify the status of goods with the competent authority. They will usually hit authority by asking some questions about the status of the product in the form of email, formal letter, website review or telephone calls, to get clarification and explanations. Religiousness is the most significant cultural factors and effects on consumer behaviour (Delenar, 1994), including the eating behaviour of consumers and the buying behaviour of food (Fam et al . 2004).

Bonne et al . (2007) stated that the effect of religion on the consumption of halal depends on the religion itself through which people perceive and adopt the teachings of their religion. This means that consumer preferences are closely linked to the importance of the faith in which they reside (Assadi, 2003). Azira (2019) claimed that religious belief is unquestionably necessary to direct the purchasing behaviour of people, as one of the best options to reduce curiosity. The booming cases of unknown ingredients trigger food labelling to take large amounts of time to obtain confidence to ensure that there are no doubts. The more religious it is, the longer it spends on it (Jusmaliani and H.Nasution, 2009).

Issues 3. Consumers' attitude

During finding selection, as seen in Table 2 above, most experts expressed similar opinions and views to summarise the attitude of Muslim consumers. Based on their experiences dealing with numerous numbers, they came up with an idea that many of them are taking granted on the product 's status, simultaneously on the halal logo and its certification. D.H. Diana. Damited. et al . (2017) reported some consumers grant a halal or halal logo without challenging its validity. Experts said non-Muslim entrepreneurs have compromised the value of getting certified halal logo. At the same time, they said it was part of the strategic plans to enter the market, potentially benefiting.

In addition, non-Muslim entrepreneurs see Halal as an ongoing revenue, greater understanding of certification and attempts to reach customers. Meanwhile, Muslim entrepreneurs merely grant product status and appear to give several

exceptions to the authorities' approved policies and procedures (Roshadah, 2019). Faizal (2019) stated, sometimes requesting assistance during the processes and sometimes refusing to submit the certification. Hadijah (2019) added, the same cases of attitudes displayed by a customer who typically ignores the status of the product, embraces the information obtained, consumes a product with less reservations about its haleness status, or at least attempts to enhance its understanding. Although the halal logo 's reputation can be viewed differently, this has meant their recognition level, which is necessary to boost.

Issues 4. Country of origin

Consumers therefore interpreted the halal logo differently. Furthermore, though there is a difference in confidence and trust in halal certification logos from different countries (Leong and Muhamad, 2014; Rios et al . , 2014), the right Halal certification logo and the approved Halal logo must contain appropriate knowledge and facts. As shown in Table 2 above, the experts' findings show that it is necessary for the country of origin to ensure that the product is halal on the halal logo, which deliberately clears the status of the product.

According to (Zyad, 2019), Malay's halal logo with additional texts "Malaysia" and "Jakim" helps not only distinguish the fake by the original logo, but also improves the safety feeling and guarantees that the product will be consumed. It must, meanwhile, derive from a trustworthy authorization from a body that is recognised as a particular choice by JAKIM and must be identified as an Islamic country when it comes to the international halal logo. This is because the

international halal logo is very distinct and generally comes from unknown councils or authorities.

A customer would usually believe, however, that Muslim population countries are likely to have high strength in implementing and adopting Islamic practises. It will also boost customer trust when depending on them and their goods. As benefits, labelling details on the product packaging influences market preferences and trends of their goods. The term "Made in" information determines the product's haleness (Muhamad and Dahari, 2010), and it's also helpful to find credibility by inferring the information given.

Previous study suggested that the halal logo has an influence from its country of origin, evaluating the reputation and trustworthiness of consumers. Highlighted by Zyad (2019), ample information obtained on halal issues via social media would contribute to awareness , especially about countries of origin. Consumers can therefore use their interpretation of a logo's country of origin to assess the consistency and level of certification (Leong and Muhamad, 2014). Consequently, it would be necessary when buying.

Issues 5. Lacking knowledge of ingredients' information

The knowledge on ingredients typically represented in the product package has a sense to be used in the purchasing process by the customer. Its function as a food label provides appropriate information on the certifying status of product in general. As Kreuter (1997) and Wandel (1997) have pointed out, the food and nutrition behaviour of consumers who have a high preference for healthy and safe

food is modified because of their strong interest. The labelling of ingredients thus plays an important role in communication in the delivery of the quality of the product, in particular the nutrient feedback on food labels.

Unfortunately, as seen in Table 2 above, customers did not see the quality of the ingredients enough. Experts also said that the ingredient descriptions are complicated, misidentified and unfamiliar with scientific terminology and terminologies. At the worst, there is no clear product guideline for promptly defining the words for the product used; therefore, it is substance authenticity, and therefore its source from natural and chemical ingredients (Zhari, 2019). The Asian Food Information Center (AFIC) supports consumers who admit their low level of awareness about food ingredients in scientific form. It posed more major concerns about enhancing the current methods for ensuring that this knowledge is well-understood, comprehensible, and accurate.

Hence, as Abd Latif et al . (2015) said, should be a user-friendly tool with simple terminology for improved usage and realistic usage. The information will serve as an effort to get out of the fake problem. According to Zhari (2019), halal apps named "verifyhalal" are helpful to prove the information 's authenticity. Recognition of ingredients and their detail, however, must be highlighted as a basic understanding of halal issues. All experts agree on the recommendation to use the authority 's approach when presenting ingredient details. However, further research must be performed jointly by both parties to ensure accuracy of knowledge and its originality would be well received and embraced.

Issues 6. The attraction of Islamic clues

Halal logo Malaysia is clearly endorsed to indicate the product's haleness, consistent with Islamic laws and values. Using the halal logo is not only viewed as a religious issue, but is also interconnected in the sense of sustainability , environmental protection, food safety and animal welfare (Baizura Badrudin et al. 2012).

Unfortunately, as seen in Table 2 above, entrepreneurs have exploited Halal 's concept itself. Based on the observation, many recent consumer companies use a particular mark or language in their product packaging to remind the status of their product. For example, those products with the absence of halal certification have applied the words "Halal guaranteed," or "Muslim-made product," or "Pure and Clean" to their packaging, or some other cases they use an Islamic emblem such as mosques, green colour, or Islamic text added as a brand name such as "Ibrahim" to highlight their haleness. It is referred to as one of the marketing techniques for generally informing that Muslim peoples can consume their goods, creating an attraction for product sales purposes (Faizal, 2019).

There is a clause in the Trade Description 2011 on language implementation which means the haleness of goods, which should be stressed and strictly followed by the entrepreneurs. Faizal (2019) introduced similar cases that can usually be used with permission of the authority, while applying Quran phrases or sentences to food premises in Arabic or the term "Bismillah." In whatever strategies, the issues of stressing the significance of the status of the product in line with Islamic sentiments

indicate the degree of sensitivity by entrepreneurs in drawing customer attention to their marketing strategy. Entrepreneurs must use reliable, profitable and consumer market strategy; all strategies must also be compatible with Islamic principles and concerns (S.M.Sharif and Nurul Akma, 2014).

Thread-literary pieces have shown some excellent views of non-Muslim consumers who are informed and warning, about their preferences for Islamic labels. The level of awareness in the demand for halal is growing and represents the power of consumers. This has led to high demands on the halal label, which suppose that the indication of the halal logo addresses the minds of customers and boosts their purchasing intentions respectively (Faizal, 2019).

The study examined consumer perceptions of halal problems that are closely related to halal transactions. As the intention of the study has been illustrated, a conceptual model formed as Figure 1 below. In the interview process, the main issues arised were a "fake" Halal logo phrase, the religious issue, the COC, the lack of ingredient information and the attraction of Islamic clues. These crucial questions were highlighted by experts as necessary to convey customer awareness and understanding.

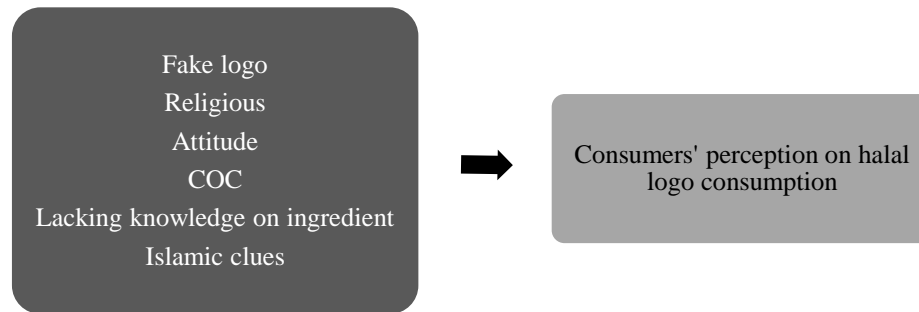


Figure 1: Conceptual model on halal-related issues from experts' perspective

Not only is the consumers' view of halal problems reflected by the discovery of these problems, but they also succeeding in providing an effective and productive solution for the authorities. The strategy to improve the credibility of the halal industry must be able to sacrifice the awareness and acceptance of consumers. This study therefore seeks to provide a profound knowledge of these issues and hence few ideas can be emphasised and attention is needed, as follows:

- i. The dispute with the word "fake" halal logo has a different interpretation, but it must be clarified subjectively. While there has been little exposure to this topic in the literature, experts have indicated that use of the word should be coordinated with the intention of consumption. Many conditions, particularly in the daily routine of customers, should be refined to apply the term correctly. Moreover, in order to fairly

prevent misunderstanding and educate the public about the facts behind the storey, the authorities must be more accountable. While disputes have sufficiently affected the understanding of customers, the purpose and position of this signal will sooner or later be changed fully. Many previous scholars showed the repetition of this word in their extensively used publications, quotes, papers, articles etc. Few of them are Zakaria et al . (2017), Shafiq et al . (2015), Che Ahmad (2012), Zailani et al.(2010), Mohd et al . (2008). Experts argue that they disagree with the usage of this word by looking at recent cases and situations, which are arbitrary and subjective and need further clarification. It is very important to have a realistic plan and strategy to resolve disputes. More precisely, the administrative bodies and public entities should be vigilant to share the right facts and evidence to clear up this mess.

ii. While discussing the halal-related problem, which is impactful and challenging, the issues of taking granted and lacking knowledge of consumers appear as common dilemma. It may leave customers with lasting uncertainty and doubts, causing purchase conflicts. The labelling declared informative failed to reach its target consumers. Halal product advertising should be increased on the media to reinforce advertising's role in promoting halal products to Muslims (SS Saabar and SB Ibrahim, 2014). Therefore, the government, with the

cooperation of NGOs, should have more campaigns on halal products, take serious measures to inform the public on halal products, and increase and implement more needed campaigns (Z. Zakaria et al. 2017).

iii. Sophisticated interest must emerge directly from family institution. Parents and family guidance play an important role in educating their children about Halal guidelines and certification, hence the need to educate about the value of Halal food consumption (Z. Zakaria, 2017). Supported by Z. Zakaria and Mohd Nasir (2018), family members must influence and consistently provide guidance on halal food because educating their family members, particularly the younger ones, is the task of a Muslim family. Zakaria and Mohd Nasir (2018) also mentioned, to teach a better understanding of halal food, the Malaysian Ministry of Education should take the required steps to increase knowledge and awareness of halal food in the current Islamic studies subject, particularly for young Muslims at school level. That's because halal food material is not taught in Malaysian education scenario. Religious awareness will soon be improved, slightly affecting their attitudes and behaviour, leaving serious implications on their halal buying intent.

Conclusion



The results from this study and published data support this conclusion, and crucially, the quality of the halal awareness campaign in Malaysia needs to be improved. The study has set out to explore consumers' perceptions of halal-related issues based on experts' perspectives, has been achieved; however, there are an overwhelming need and scope need to be highlighted. The critical contribution of this work is the solution it provides to the idea of delivering the information and updates on halal-related issues, also reveal several gaps and shortcomings, which must be sufficiently acknowledged and identified. From the managerial views, the collaboration within halal agencies in this country firmly required to take serious initiative in delivering halal awareness and its sufficient contents. There is a suggestion to conduct rigorous auditing and inspections which follow halal standards and procedures that will also be crucial to enhance the credibility of halal certification by JAKIM. In the context of halal awareness, this study has specifically revealed empirical evidence on the consumers' perceptions and their feedbacks while responding to halal-related issues exclusively. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to modify the methodology described here to gain numerical data as a finding; thus, more detail analysis can be demonstrated. Most importantly, the experts in their valuable thoughts and views have successfully contributed into increment to the literature in a similar scope of the study, hence expected to be meaningful for academician and researchers for their further particular fields or research engagement.



Acknowledgement

The gratitude goes to the respective experts, comprising of government and private sectors with ample availability during interview procedures. Thank you.

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ACADEMIC BIENNIAL REFEREED JOURNAL
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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA



e-ISSN: 2600-8394

VOL. 5. No. 3

Aug (1443-2021)

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Zakaria Z, Abdul Majid M D, Ahmad Z, Jusoh Z, Zakaria N Z (2017).
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