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Tawfik Salah Mohammed Al-Nahdi  
*School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia*

Md. Aminul Islam  
*Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia*

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## CASE STUDY

### Factors Influencing Malaysian Muslims To Patronage Halal Restaurants – Ambience As A Mediator

Tawfik Salah Mohammed Al-Nahdi  
School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang , Malaysia

Md. Aminul Islam  
Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia

#### Abstract

*The importance of Halal Restaurants is a serious concern for all Muslims. For the Malaysian, where majority of the population are Muslims, restaurants providing halal food is important as the religion requires that Islamic principals and beliefs be upheld in all transactions. For that reason, this study tries to investigate the factors influencing Malaysian Muslims to patronage restaurants that are guided by sharia'a. This study has examined the effect of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control towards the intention to patronage restaurants. Ambience was used as a mediator. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed among customers of Halal Restaurants in Penang. Based on 184 questionnaires collected the results show that there is a relationship between attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavior Control toward the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. It was found that Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavior Control have a significant and positive relationship with behavioral intention to patronage halal restaurants. Ambiance was found to have mediating effect on the relationship between attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control; and the customers' intention to patronage halal restaurants in Penang, Malaysia.*

**Keyword:** Halal Food, Restaurants, Ambience, Intention to Patronage

#### Introduction

The services sector is a key contributor to the GDP growth. This sector expanded at a faster pace of 9.6 percent during the first quarter of 2007. The wholesale and retail trade sub-sector, which constitutes the largest component in this sector, together with the accommodation and restaurant sub-sector rose from 8.1 to 9.1 percent in the first quarter of 2007. This was due to the 'Visit Malaysia Year 2007' campaign and the festive seasons in the first quarter. (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2007)

The impact of the Islamisation process has been increasing since 1970s; hence it has brought about a new phenomenon among Malaysian Muslims towards religion in general and the concept of halal, which is much debated, in particular. This is further accelerated by the speed of globalization, the advance revolution in science and technology, and the continuous change in product design, and the manufacturing processes. It is important for marketers and producers of consumer goods and services to understand the halal concept.

Besides, Malaysian consumers have become more religious or halal-food- concerned in terms of their consumption habits. In Malaysia, 60 percent of the population are Muslims. Their expenditure for halal products is more than RM 5 billion a year (Norzalila, 2004). The market for halal food products has been seen as a universally accepted products not targeted towards Muslim consumers. The food choice and consumption is strongly linked to religion, which has acted as a strong motive. As mentioned by Osman and Shahidan (2002), one of the ten megatrends Naisbitt has identified is religious reactivation of this millennium. Religious structure and rituals are important influencers for the guidance of the consumer behavior intention to purchase the food products. Osman and Shahidan (2002) state that the Malaysian government is concerned in the restoration of religious principles and values. As a result, the Malaysian Muslim population exhibits a high trend of preference of purchase halal products. The Malaysian government also supports the marketers and the producers to increase the export of livestock products particularly the meat.

The majority of Muslims in Malaysia consider the concept of halal as an ultimate factor to consumption. Due to the impact of globalization, many sorts of products brands and services either domestically or globally are now flooding the market. Many of the domestic brands are promoting themselves as “Islamic” brands via their Islamic packages and labels. This is also declared to their primary Muslim consumers by the halal standing of their products. On the service side, similar efforts are being done in the banking sector and in the insurance. Definitely, also in halal food sector (Osman and Shahidan , 2004). Besides the products and the brands available in the retail stores, the Malaysian consumers have also proposed a variety of direct selling brand choices like those in the personal care and cosmetic categories. Among the direct selling companies proposing such products are Amway, Avon, Cosway, and Nutrimetics; Osman and Shahidan (2004). The primary objective of the production process is to deliver, elevate and satisfy basic human needs; hence societal and welfare approach should be pursued instead of profit maximization” (Alburay, 2004). The purpose of this research is to study Muslim consumer intention to patronage halal restaurants. The attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control of Muslim consumer toward intention to patronage halal restaurants was studied in a sample of consumers.

### **Literature review**

According to The Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (2004), Malaysia has been receiving huge number of tourists and businessmen from all over the world, from 1999 and 2003, tourists from Muslim Middle East countries to Malaysia rose from about 20,000 to more than 800,000. This number is increasing. That big number of visitors opens a big and high competing market to provide different meals for different customers which are served by different rules Islamic and non Islamic. However, in Islamic countries such as Malaysia, which consists of three different races, the majority of people are Muslims. Therefore, the restaurants provide its customers with goods and services, which are compatible with shria’a. This means that Malaysia serves only halal food and halal beverages for customers irrespective of Muslim and non-Muslim customers. Many studies have been done for halal food. In 2004, the TPB model was used to explore the intention to purchase halal food. However, not many studies have been done before by using TPB model to measure the intention toward patronizing halal restaurants in Malaysia.

### **Halal food**

“Akta Perihal Dagangan Halal”, 1975, defined Halal as "an Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted". Halal is a universal term that applies to all facets, meat products,

makeup, personal care products, food ingredients, and food contact material. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah commands Muslims and all of man kind to eat of halal things. The following four verses are among the many verses of the Qur'an that convey this message:

- (a) Mankind Eat of which is lawful and wholesome in the earth, and follow not footsteps of the devil. Lo! He is an open enemy for (2:168)
- (b) Ye who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith we have provided you, and render hanks to Allah if it is (indeed) He whom ye worship (2:172)

The Holy Quran, Commentary and Translated by Abdallh Yusuf Ali.

### **Halal food products**

From Islamic point of view, the concept of product has to be viewed in a comprehensive manner. It is of utmost importance to marketers that the product and the production process itself are halal. Any 'product' which is haram has no use at all from an Islamic perspective. To manage product decision, it is necessary for managers to understand the manifestation of product. Product must have been processed in a manner that is permissible and the product should be such that it is totally free from harmful consequences (AL-Buraey,2003). In addition, Muslims are supposed to follow many of dietary instructions to advance their bodies. The halal dietary laws show which kinds of foods are "lawful" or permitted. These laws can be found in the Holy Quran and in the Sunna of Prophet Muhammad practices. Halal Food should fulfill the following requirements. It must be clear from any material considered to be permitted according to sharia'a. In addition, it must be prepared, processed, transported or stored by using any tool or utility that was fulfilling sharia'a.

### **Criteria of the halal food**

General Guidelines for Criteria of the Halal was issued by the Secretariat of the World Health Organization (WHO) Food Standard Programme (2001). Food must fulfill these requirements to be halal and be able to be consumed and marketed for Muslims.

#### *Lawful Food*

The term halal may be used for foods which are considered lawful. Under the Islamic Law, all sources of food are lawful except the following sources, including their products and derivatives which are considered unlawful:

#### *Food of Animal Origin*

Boars and bacon, Monkeys, dogs and snake; wild animals which kill and hunt other animals for food with fangs and claws such as lions, tigers and other similar animals; birds of prey with claws such as eagles and other similar birds; pests such as rats, centipedes, scorpions and other similar animals; animals prohibited to be killed in Islam i.e., ants and bees; animals which are considered repulsive generally like lice, mosquitoes and other similar animals; animals that live both on land and in water such as frogs, crocodiles and other similar animals; mules and domestic donkeys; all poisonous and hazardous aquatic animals; any other animals not slaughtered according to Islamic Law; and blood.

### *Food of Plant Source*

Stimulating and harmful plants are haram except where the Stimulator or harm can be eliminated during processing.

### *Beverages*

Intoxicating drinks, and all forms of stimulating and harmful drinks.

### *Additional Labeling Requirements*

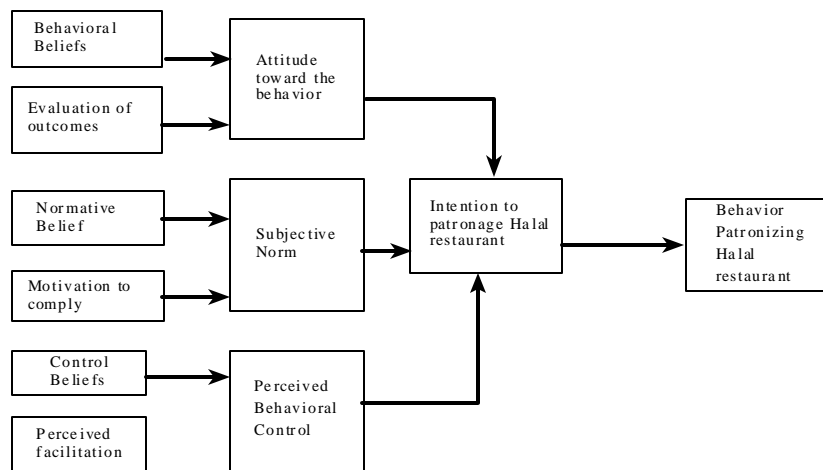
When food is promoted as halal, the word halal or any terms to show that food is halal should appear on the label of the product.

### **Theory of planned behavior**

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is concerned with studying and predicting whether a person intends to do something. Therefore, we need to know the following points:

- i) whether the person is in favor of doing it ('attitude');
- ii) how much the person feels social pressure to do it ('subjective norm');
- iii) whether the person feels in control of the action in question ('perceived behavioral

Control'). By changing these three independent variables, we can increase the possibility that the person will intend to perform a specific action and thus increases the chance of the person actually doing it. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) introduces a model about how human action is guided. It predicts the incidence of a specific behavior provided that the behavior is intentional. The model is depicted in Figure 1 and shows the three variables which the theory consist of and will predict the intention to perform a behavior. (Ajzen, 1991)



**Figure 1: The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)**

### **Attitude**

Attitude is first component studied to interpret human behavior. It is the person's favor or disfavor toward an action. Attitude is defined as psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Previous studies founded that there is a strong and steady relationship between attitude and repurchase intention. (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Expected circumstance influencer that goes off to change the purchase intention. (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Customers have the intention to compare the perceived service with the expected service. If customers felt that service under expectation, they would be dissatisfied. However, if customers feelings were equal to or exceeds their own expectations, they will be satisfied. Accordingly, they intended to use the provider again (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

### **Subjective norm**

Subjective norm is the second component of Theory of Planned Behavior. It results from how the person perceives the pressure put on him to perform or not to perform the behavior. Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) mentioned that subjective norm is a function of normative beliefs. Attitude of others influences the purchase intention and purchase decision. Attitude of others means to which limit the attitude of others affect the customer's purchase decision and choosing particular product among different products. The first component of the theory is the strength of others' negative attitude toward customer's different choice. The second part; however, is the customer's motivation to comply with others' attitude. When others are close to customer and have high negativism toward the product, customers will be more likely to adjust his purchase intention. And customer's purchase intention will increase if others' have others' preference to the same product (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

### **Perceived behavioral control**

Perceived behavior control is the third component in theory of planned behavior. Perceived behavior control is defined as the extent to which the person has control over internal and external factors that facilitate or constrain the behavior performance. It consist of two components control beliefs and self- efficacy. Control beliefs are person beliefs toward factors available which facilitate or prevent performing a behavior (Ajzen, 2001). Perceived facilitation, however, is about the condition where a person perceives himself able to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Customer's buying decisions are motivated by personal features. These features include the age level, the job and economic conditions (control beliefs); personality and self-concept (self-efficacy); and life style and values. Many of these features have a very direct effect on consumer to perform the behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

### **Intention**

Intention is an indication of a person's willingness to perform the behavior, and it is immediate antecedent of behavior. Intention is the dependent variable which predicted by independent variable namely attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioral Control. Intention varies from time to time and the time interval increases, the lower is the correlation between intention and action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Davis et al (1989) and Taylor & Todd (1995) they found in their studies that intention is strong predictor of behavior.

## **Ambiance**

Ambiance is an external moderator in TPB model to patronage halal restaurants. Ambiance as a moderator has not been examined before, but many studies found that external ambiance has an impact on attitude towards patronage. Retail patronage is strongly affected by store image (Erdem et al., 1999; Samli, 1998). Pettijohn, and Luke (1997) found, in fast food restaurants, that ambiance was unimportant. But, quality, cleanliness, and value were found to be the three most important influencers. The retail store atmosphere has also been shown to have a positive influence on consumers' patronage intentions (Van Kehove & Music has been shown to affect consumers' responses to retail environments, typically in a positive manner (e.g., Baker, Grewal, & Levy, 1992). Hui et al. (1997) note that "playing music in the (service) environment is like adding a favorable feature to a product, and the outcome is a more positive evaluation of the environment." In the Islamic manner, the environment must be guided by shria'a " showing various parts of women in an alluring manner, forbidden practices such as witching and jugglery; private parts of human body; or dissolute images are all unacceptable in Islam"(AL-Buraey, 2004).

## **Prior studies on halal products**

Many studies have been done to investigate customers' intention toward Islamic products like halal food and Islamic banks products. These two examples were mentioned to validate using of TPB in this research to investigate the intention of customers' toward patronizing halal restaurants by using TPB. Bonne, Vermeir, Bergeaud-Blackler & Verbeke (2007), studied on the determinants of Halal Meat Consumption in France. In this study, the model consists of TPB, habit was additional independent variable and two moderators: self identify (Muslim) and dietary acculturation examined the relationship if attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control are good explainers or influencer to consume halal meat among Muslims in France. Consumers, who consider themselves less as being a Muslim, believe that their consumption decision is a matter of personal conviction. Research published in 2007. Norzalila (2004), in her study used Theory of Planned Behavior to test the relationship between attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control toward intention to purchase halal food. The research conducted in Penang 2004. In this research, the results showed there is a positive relationship between attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control toward intention to purchase halal food among Malaysian in Penang, subjective norm is greater influencer than attitude to intention to purchase halal among Malaysian in Penang. Jahya, (2004), researched on the Relationship between attitude, subjective norm toward intention to patronage Islamic bank products and facilities is examined by using Theory of Planned Behavior among people in Penang. The researcher found that attitude and subjective norm are good predictors of the intention to patronage Islamic bank products and facilities among Malaysian in Penang.

## **Theoretical framework and research methodology**

Based on the literature review above the theoretical framework was constructed for this study which is depicted in figure 2.

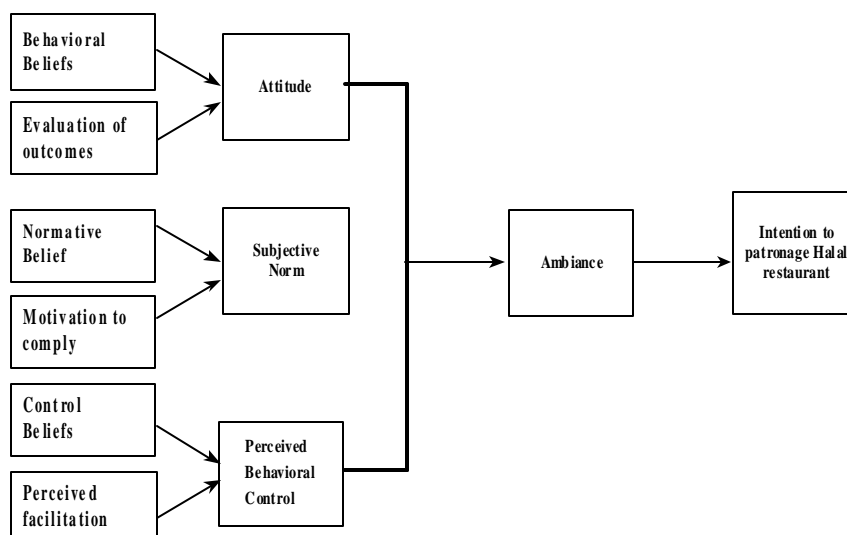


Figure2: Schematic diagram of the theoretical Framework

Intention to patronage halal restaurants is the dependent variable and independent variables are: attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. Ambiance is the mediating variable.

### Research hypotheses

The study intended to see the relationship between attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. In addition to that the mediating effect on the relationship between attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control; and intention to patronage halal restaurant is also analysed.

From the above theoretical framework, the following hypotheses were derived:

- H1: The more positive is attitude the greater is the consumer behavior intention to patronage halal restaurants.
- H2: The more positive is subjective norm the greater is the consumer behavior intention to patronage halal restaurants.
- H3: The more positive is perceived behavioral control the greater is the consumer behavior intention to patronage halal restaurants.
- H4: Ambiance mediates the effect of independent variables (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) towards intention to patronage Halal Restaurants.

### Research approach

This study is correlation in nature as it emphasizes on relationships between the attitude, subjective norms and behavioral control; and customers intention to patronage



halal restaurants in Malaysia. Its objective is to examine the relative importance of the independent variable as factors that influence the consumer intention to patronage halal restaurants. An attempt is made whether to study the impact of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control have in over the entire model including ambiance as a mediator for the relation between independent and dependent variable. The selected site for this study is Penang Island in Malaysia. The reason for choosing this site is due to the relevance of its population to this study. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire, one for each consumer. This method of distribution had also been conducted in Cook et al. (2002), Norzalila (2004) and Jahya (2004). The population of this study consists of all adults from the age of 18 and above, who are consumers, irrespective of whether they have concern or not about the intention to patronizing halal restaurant. Each individual was asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire survey. The questionnaire is constructed and modified based on sample questionnaires developed by Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980), cook et al. (2000), Norzalila (2004) and Jahya (2004). Questionnaires were sent to 250 respondents as it was expected to receive a response rate of 25% as has been proven in previous studies. To determine the sample size, the researcher used a general rule, which is a minimum number of respondents should be at least five times as many variables to be analyzed, and the more acceptable size would have a ten-to-one ratio(Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black,1998). The technique of sampling used in this study was non probability convenience sampling method because it was viable alternative and due to the constraint of time, speed, cost and convenience in order to obtain enough respondents.

### **Survey results**

#### **Profile of respondents**

The profile of respondent shows that majority of the respondents is aged between 26 to 33 years old, which represents around 39.7 percent. 60.3percent of respondent are males, around 55.4 percent of the respondents are single, majority are Post graduate which represent 37.5 percent. Malays are major respondents with 131 respondent which represents 71.2 percent. Students are 85 of the respondents with 46.2 percent. There are 53 respondents with income more that 5001 and this represent 28.8 percent of the respondents.

#### **Factor analysis**

This examination for independent variables revealed a combined total variance explained of 61%. The KMO measures of sampling adequacy stand at 0.755. Summarized factor loadings and cross factor loadings for independent variables that were extracted from the rotated component matrix. Here we have attitude which consist of behavior beliefs and evaluation of out comes. Subjective norms which consists of normative beliefs and motivation to comply. Perceived behavior control which consists of control beliefs and perceived facilitations. Eleven questions were introduced to measure the mediating variable. Then five questions were eliminated due to loading. This examination revealed a combined total variance explained of 64.34%. The KMO measures of sampling adequacy stand at .865.

#### **Reliability analysis**

Reliability Analysis was conducted to ensure the consistency or stability of the items (Sekeran, 2003). The Cronbachs alpha test was used to analyze the reliability of the instrument. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the reliability acceptance level

0.70. In this section main independent variables attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavior controls were included in reliability analysis. The Cronbach's alpha value for Behavioral Beliefs = .6818, Evaluation of Outcomes =.7758, Normative Belief =.7179, Motivation to Comply = .7717, Control Beliefs = .7122, Perceived facilitation = .7635, Behavioral intention =.8084, Ambiance = .8862.

**Hypotheses testing**

Multiple Regression was conducted to test the direct relationship between independent variable (Attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavior controls) and dependent variable intention to patronage Halal Restaurants and variations explained by these independent variables towards the intention to patronage halal restaurant in Penang.

H1: the more positive is attitude towards behavior, the greater is the consumer behavior intention to patronage halal restaurants.

Table 4.1 shows the results between attitude and intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. Based on the results, attitude was significant  $p < .05$  with Standardized Coefficients Beta =.117 and have positive effect on Halal Restaurants. Thus, H1 is accepted.

H2: the more positive is subjective norm towards behavior, the greater is the consumer behavior intention to patronage halal restaurants

Table 4.1 shows the results of the degree of the effect of subjective norm toward intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. Based on the results, subjective norm was significant  $p < .05$  with Standardized Coefficients Beta =.212 and have positive effect on intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. Thus, H2 is accepted.

Variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta
Attitude	0.163*
Subjective norm	0.168*
Perceived behavioral control	0.471***
F	39.065
Significance	0.000
R Square	0.398
Durbin-Watson Test	1.680

\* $p < .05$ , and \*\* $p < .01$

Table 4.1: Results of Regression Analysis.

H3: the more positive is attitude towards behavior, the greater is the consumer behavior intention to patronage halal restaurants

Table 4.1 shows the results between perceived behavioral control and intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. Based on the results, perceived behavioral control was significant  $p < .00$  with Standardized Coefficients Beta = .473 and have positive effect on Halal Restaurants. Thus, H3 is accepted.

Table 4.2 presents the results of hierarchical regression on the mediating effect of ambiance on the relationship between attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral

control; and customers intention to patronage halal restaurants.

Selected variables	Model 1 (beta)	Model 2 (beta)
Attitude	.163*	.076
Subjective norm	.168*	.090
Perceived behavioral contro	1.471*	*.357**
Ambiance	-	.365**
R Square	.398	.488
Adjusted R Square	.388	.476
Sig. F	.000	.000
DurbinWatson index	1.680	1.680

\*p<.05, and \*\*p<.01

Table 4.1: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis.

Based on the hierarchical regression results, when ambiance was included as a mediating variable with the original model, there is a significant change in R square value (R square change = .089). This indicates that there is a mediating effect of ambiance on the relationship between attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control; and the customers' intention to patronage halal restaurants in Penang. Ambiance becomes the most significance factor in determining the customers' intention to patronage halal restaurants.

### Theoretical implications

Theory of Planned Behavior could facilitate in predicting the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. In this study, it was shown that the TBP model could explain 40.8% percent of the variance in the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. Statistically the model was significant and the result indicated that the model is useful in predicting intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. This is consistent with other studies using the TPB model (Bredahl et al. 2000; Norzalila, 2004).

A critical finding of this study is that beta weight of perceived behavioral control is larger than the beta weight of attitude component and subjective norm. This illustrate that the perceived behavioral control component is a better predictor of intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. In the analysis of the perceived behavioral control, it was determined that control beliefs and perceived facilitation were dominant references. This result supported by Bredahl (1999) in the study of intention to purchase genetically modified foods.


The hierarchical regression was used to test the affect of the mediating variable on the relationship between the independents toward dependent variables. Based on the results obtained showed that ambiance positively influences customer towards intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. So customers with high income are going to be more selective between restaurants.

### Managerial implications

The TPB model has played important role in explaining consumer intention to patronage Halal Restaurants and it has gone deeply to explain the underling beliefs that enhance the intention. The beta value of every independent variable had also helped us to specify the more predictor variable. About which more effective variable, we identify the variable which is more effective, in order to make Halal Restaurant owners marketers know

this information and be able to build and develop more effective and efficient strategy. As discussed earlier, it was found that Perceived behavioral control has more influence than attitude and subjective norm intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. This result supported by Bredahl (1999) in the study of intention to purchase genetically modified foods. Therefore, the owners and marketers of Halal Restaurants must focus on and emphasize that the relevant perceived behavioral control influences are in favor of the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. For that, more advertising and promoting restaurants to explain for customers that Halal Restaurants are following sharia'a principals. Service organizations in Malaysia are growing gradually, and due to globalization and tourism, therefore, in order to be competitive in very competitive market, these patronage Halal Restaurants should focus on perceived behavioral control. Then, it will be a source of competitive advantage for Halal Restaurants.

### Conclusion

The study has explained the ability of the TPB in explaining the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants and whether religiosity and ambiance moderate the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants. It was shown that the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants was influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control components with the perceived behavioral control component being more influential. Ambiance mediates the relationship between independents and dependent variables selected for this study. In conclusion, it is assumed that the outcomes of this study have contributed some valuable information for researchers, customers, marketers and Halal Restaurants owners. It is expected that the result of the survey will provide information on the intention to patronage Halal Restaurants and which variables affecting customers' intention. Therefore findings of this study will serve future reference on the study of Halal Restaurants. 

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To go from good to great requires transcending the curse of competence. It requires the discipline to say, “Just because we are good at it - just because we’re making and generating growth-doesn’t necessarily mean we can become the best at it.” The good -to-great companies understood that doing what you are good at will only make you good, focusing solely on what you can potentially do better than any other organization is the only path to greatness.

**Jim Collins, *Good To Great***