

Halal Food in New Zealand Restaurants: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) believes that New Zealand, as a major exporter and producer of halal slaughtered meat in the world, can become an attractive destination for Muslim travellers. However, research has also shown that Muslim travellers find it difficult searching for halal food in New Zealand, with many having to prepare their own meals while travelling in the country. This paper is based on a survey that was carried out to investigate the management and promotion of halal food in New Zealand restaurants. Data were collected using a questionnaire that was administered through face-to-face interviews. As the total population of halal restaurants in New Zealand was (and still is) unknown, the snowball sampling technique was used, which resulted with a sample of 99 restaurants. Results show that a huge percentage of the sample did not agree that the Muslim tourist market was significant to their business. Many were also reluctant to promote their halal food or put up the 'halal' sign in front of their shop.

Keywords: Halal food, Restaurants, Muslim travellers

INTRODUCTION

Foodways are constantly changing and responding to globalization. In "today's trans-national interconnectedness, the local cannot escape global implications, nor can the global manage without its local articulation" (Cwierka & Walraven, 2002, p.2). Within globalizing processes new forms of local cultural expressions and identities emerge. The development of hybrid cuisines, for example, has come to shape foodways in much of the urban, industrialized world, owing to the "wild dialectic of globalism within the local and localism within the global" (Hall & Mitchell, 2002, p.74). The processes of globalization, however, are nothing new

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in the world of food although the current phase is characterized by a new pace and scale of change (Lang, 1999; Hall & Mitchell, 2002). Advancement in transport and communication technologies, as well as the globalization of markets, trade and labour, have all contributed to changes, not only in the production and processing of food but also in the way that food is prepared, sold and consumed (Cwierka & Walraven, 2002).

In New Zealand specifically, globalization processes have also influenced foodways and food production. Trade deals with the Middle East have made New Zealand the largest exporter of halal slaughtered sheep meat in the world and a significant exporter of halal slaughtered beef (Calcinaï 2007). About 98% of lamb and sheep as well as 60% of cattle in New Zealand are slaughtered halal, in accordance with the *shariah* laws of Islam (New Zealand Islamic Meat Management 2009). Those who are surprised by these figures may be unaware that many companies that are producing halal food today are primarily not from Muslim countries. Currently, almost 90% of the world's halal food market is dominated by non-Muslims (Raja Adam, 2006). Major meat producers, for instance, tend to come from Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, India, the UK, and the USA, apart from New Zealand. The high number of halal meat produced in New Zealand is partly the result of companies finding it easier and more cost effective to shift their production processes to 100 percent halal.

From a perspective of economic survival, it is not hard to see why halal is an extremely crucial factor for New Zealand in its trade deals. The Middle East, among other Muslim countries, is today an essential market for exporters of New Zealand meat and dairy products (Buang, 2001). And the growth in halal food exports to the Middle East, which is significant for New Zealand, has served to emphasize the importance of Muslim customers' demands.

The demand for halal food and the high number of halal slaughtered meat in New Zealand has led Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) to believe that the country can become an attractive destination for Muslim travellers. Promoting New Zealand as a major producer of halal meat, however, can lead to an undesirable dilemma in tourism. Through export promotions, tourists are initially led to believe that it is easy to find halal food in New Zealand. However, once they arrive, the tourist will then be provided with the opportunity to judge first hand whether or not this image is valid.

In early 2002, research was carried out to investigate whether it was easy or difficult for Muslims to obtain halal food while travelling in New Zealand (Wan Hassan & Hall, 2003). Out of 371 Muslims (mainly domestic travellers) who participated in the survey, 82.2% said they observe halal guidelines and always search for halal food while travelling. A majority of them, nevertheless, felt that it was difficult to find halal food in the country, while a significant percentage (39.6%) maintained that they would always prepare their own meals while travelling in New Zealand (Wan Hassan & Hall, 2003).

Given the need to have a better understanding of the way that halal food is managed and promoted in the hospitality industry, a study was carried out on restaurants, cafes, food courts and takeaway outlets serving halal food in New Zealand. This paper will discuss the significance of the study undertaken and provide an overview of the halal food laws observed by Muslims. A discussion of the research results will then be made before the paper concludes with some recommendations for the future development of halal food in New Zealand.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

While the issue of halal food is important for Muslims, academic literature and research regarding halal food in the hospitality industry is almost non-existent. At present, there is not a single article on halal food in hospitality books and journals written in the English language. Academic articles on halal food are extremely sparse and the little that has been written mainly come from academic areas such as agriculture and consumer studies (Bonne & Verbeke, 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Bonne *et al.*, 2007), food science and technology (Riaz and Chaudry, 2003), nutrition and dietetics (Lawrence & Rozmus, 2001), sociology (Bergeaud-Blackler, 2004, 2007), marketing (Ahmed, 2008) and cultural anthropology (James, 2004).

In all the academic literature available, however, no one has addressed the importance of halal food in hospitality and tourism in the same way that the significance of kosher food, for example, has been addressed. There is also no academic literature examining the complexities of managing halal food in the food service industry. At present, even schools of culinary arts and hospitality pay little or no attention at all to the cultural and religious dimensions of food. The majority of cookery books (e.g. Zaouali, 2007; Jamal, 2003; Bařan, 2002; Salloum & Peters, 1997; Morse, 1998) that display the recipes of certain Muslim cuisines would similarly not even address the meaning of halal. Occasionally, however, when cookery books do give a description of halal food production, the information provided may either be too simplistic or would be flawed with inaccuracies.

Considering the dearth of information available on halal food in Muslim cultures, this study of halal food in hospitality and tourism is therefore significant as it seeks to reduce the ignorance prevailing in the industry towards food laws observed by a growing consumer segment, not only in the East but also in the West.

INCREASING POPULATION OF MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

The Western world is becoming home to growing Muslim communities, especially in Western Europe where their numbers have tripled in the past three decades (Osno, 2004). In New Zealand, it is estimated that Muslims have increased by over 100 percent since 2001 (Musa, 2006). The rapid growth of Muslims living in the

West is mainly due to the massive influx of workers and migrants from the Middle East and former colonial territories in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean region. There is today an estimated 10.7 to 13.6 million Muslims living in Western Europe, with France being home to the largest community of Muslims there (Islamic Population, 2009). Although Muslims are still a small minority in Europe, demographers predict that their number will increase significantly within the next few decades, up to 10 per cent of the European Union's population as early as 2020 (Masci, 2005).

The growing Muslim population is changing parts of Europe's landscape, especially in urban areas where immigrants traditionally congregate. Some European cities already have sizable Muslim communities. Muslims now "make up at least 25 percent of the populations in Marseille and Rotterdam, 20 per cent of Malmö (Sweden), 15 percent in Brussels and Birmingham, and 10 per cent or more in London, Paris and Copenhagen" (Masci, 2005, p.4). Due to the fact that they are having three times as many children as non-Muslim Europeans, the most common name for baby boys in Brussels today is 'Mohammed' (Walker, 2005).

The burgeoning population of Muslims in the West emphasizes the significance of this study which examines halal food in the hospitality industry. Westerners, although generally familiar with the Jewish kosher diet, still know little about the requirements of halal slaughter or the food restrictions observed by Muslims. Nevertheless, the need to be aware about halal food has never been more crucial for businesses dealing with food and tourism, considering the population of Muslims worldwide.

Globally, there are between 1.5 to 1.8 billion Muslims who form about a quarter or at least a fifth of the world's population (Islamic Population, 2009). Islam is today the second largest religion in the world after Christianity (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009) and it is also growing faster numerically than any other major world religions (World Network of Religious Futurists, 2006; Huntington, 1996). It is predicted that Islam will surpass Christianity as the world's main religion by 2023 CE (Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2001). Huntington (1996) also believed that *by the year 2025, Islam will have 5% more adherents than will Christianity.*

GROWTH OF INBOUND MUSLIM TRAVELLERS

The growth of the world's Muslim population, however, is not the only factor contributing to the significance of this study. The potential for New Zealand to receive more inbound Muslim tourists also brings the need for increased awareness concerning halal food in hospitality and tourism. New Zealand has, in recent years, been targeting countries with significant Muslim population, such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, for inbound tourism. Travellers from the Arabian Gulf who are among the highest spending travellers in the world are welcomed in New Zealand because they undertake long-haul travel in the months of June, July and

August when the number of international visitor arrivals in New Zealand is lowest (Meikle, 2001).

Apart from the Middle East, New Zealand has also been targeting other countries with significant Muslim population such as Malaysia, India and Singapore for inbound tourism (Tourism New Zealand 2008). There is consequently potential for New Zealand to receive more inbound Muslim tourists in the future. The implication is that tourism marketers and the hospitality industry will need to be aware of the cultural sensitivities and inhibitions of Muslims, especially with regards to food. This requires understanding some of the basic teachings of Islam concerning food and food production.

HALAL FOOD

Halal and *Haram* are the two major terms used in Islamic dietary laws. While *halal* means “permitted, allowed, authorized, approved, sanctioned, lawful, legal, legitimate or licit” for Muslim consumption, *haram*, on the other hand, means “not permitted, not allowed, unauthorized, unapproved, unsanctioned, unlawful, illegal, illegitimate or illicit” (El Mouelhy, 1997).

Twaigery and Spillman (1989) list out several criteria that must be met before food products can be certified as halal. Firstly, the product must be free from any substance or ingredient taken or extracted from a haram animal or ingredient. Halal products are made from naturally halal animals, such as cattle, goat, sheep and chicken that are slaughtered according to Islamic rights. Next, halal products should also be “processed, produced, manufactured and/or stored by using utensils, equipments and/or machineries that have been cleansed according to Islamic law” (Twaigery and Spillman, 1989, p.89). The main idea behind this is that manufactured products should be free of contamination and must not come into contact with haram substances during its preparation, production and/or storage. Halal ingredients, in addition, should also not be mixed with objectionable or haram ingredients like enzymes and emulsifiers of porcine origin or other non-halal animals. Unlike kosher, any other groups of food, like cheese and meat, may be combined together, as long as no haram or prohibited foods are included in the mixture.

Islam places a very strong emphasis on cleanliness in everything, especially in the context of food and drink. In Islam, eating is regarded as a matter of worship, like prayer and other religious activities. So, just as Muslims perform the ablution as a means of cleansing themselves before their daily prayers, they must also ensure that the food they consume is clean and prepared in the correct manner, starting with the avoidance of items that are prohibited in Islamic dietary laws. The Koran clearly prohibits Muslims from consuming the following categories of food: carrion, flowing blood, pork, animals that have been slaughtered with the invocation of a name other than the name of God, and alcohol.

PROHIBITED FOODS IN THE KORAN

Carrion or dead animals that are killed by strangulation, by a blow, by a fall, by being gored, or that are partly eaten by wild animals are forbidden as food for Muslims. The eating of carrion is prohibited because eating the flesh of a 'dead animal' is regarded as contrary to human dignity and is unhealthy "because the decaying process leads to the formation of chemicals which are harmful to humans" (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004, p.12). Islam prescribes that the halal animal should first be slaughtered before its consumption, in order to get rid of the blood. The Islamic method of slaughtering an animal is to cut its throat to enable as much blood to run out and not congeal in the veins. The incision is "made in the neck just below the glottis, cutting the throat and oesophagus, the jugular vein and the carotid artery" (Erbil 2001, p.1). It is important to note that this should be done *without* cutting the spinal cord or severing the head from the body. The animal must also be completely dead before the skinning and dismembering of its body takes place (Sami'ullah, 2001).

Flowing blood, which is similar to the Jewish as well as "the Noachian, Levitical and early Christian prohibitions of blood as a food" is also prohibited (Mickler, 2000, p.2). According to Erbil (2001), blood carries organisms that are responsible for diseases, although their clinical symptoms may not be present when they are still in the animal's healthy living body. Separated from its body, however, these disease-carrying organisms are harmful.

Pork is prohibited as it "serves as a vector for pathogenic worms to enter the human body" (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004, p.12). The pig is an omnivorous animal and by nature, it is also a scavenger (Thompson 1996). Many diseases are carried from swine to man, particularly parasite infestations like those of the *Trichinella spiralis*, *Echinococcus granulosus* as well as the *Taenia Solium* tapeworm (Sakr, 1994). Muslims in general are convinced that there is a good reason for the prohibition of pork and would regard its consumption as undesirable.

Animals that have been slaughtered with the invocation of a name other than the name of God are prohibited apart from carrion, blood and pork. This type of food is associated with the practice of idolatry that Islam strictly opposes to. This prohibition also addresses the issue of halal slaughtering. In Islam, pronouncing the name of God is a required condition while slaughtering an animal.

Alcohol, whether in food or beverages, is clearly forbidden in the Koran. Islam takes an uncompromising stand in the prohibition of intoxicants and stipulates that whatever intoxicates people in large amounts is haram and forbidden in any amount, even in minute quantities. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was once asked about certain drinks made from honey, corn or barley that were fermented until they became alcoholic. In response, the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied succinctly: "Every intoxicant is *khamr* and every *khamr* is Haram" (Al Qaradawi, 1995, p.72). *Khamr* includes not only alcohol but also other drugs

that can numb the senses and interfere with the normal working of the mind (Al Qaradawi, 1995).

OTHER PROHIBITED FOODS

All the five categories of forbidden food discussed above are those that have been clearly mentioned in the Koran. There are, however, other prohibitions that have arisen either according to the *fiqh* (teachings of Islamic jurists) or based on the *hadeeth* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) (peace be upon him) and his *sunnah* (tradition). These prohibitions include all beasts of prey and birds of prey, such as dogs, lions, tigers, owls, eagles and other carnivores. This is in accordance with a *hadeeth* in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) “forbade the eating of any wild animals with a canine tooth and of any bird with talons” (Al Qaradawi, 1995, p.53). Forbidden animals also include amphibians like frogs, crocodiles, and turtles; undesirable insects such as worms, flies, and cockroaches; as well as vermin or poisonous animals like rats, snakes, centipedes and scorpions (El Mouelhy, 1997, Mickler, 2000). In addition, Muslims are also forbidden from eating the “meat that has been cut from a live animal such as limbs, tails... ” (El Mouelhy, 1997). This is based on a *hadeeth* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) condemning those who carried out this barbaric practice during the period of *Jahiliyyah* (Al Qaradawi, 1995). The Prophet (peace be upon him) also confirmed the unlawfulness or haram of such meat in saying: “Any part cut off a living animal is dead flesh” (Al Qaradawi, 1995, p.58).

THE EXEMPTION OF SEAFOOD AND LOCUSTS

According to Islamic law, fish and other sea creatures are exempted from the category of ‘dead animals’ (Al Qaradawi, 1995). Fish and other seafood can therefore be eaten without the requirement of slaughtering and bleeding (Al Qaradawi, 1995). Human beings are permitted to catch seafood in any manner they like, using methods that are as humane as possible (Al Qaradawi, 1995). It also matters not whether seafood comes out of the water dead or alive, as a whole or in pieces, and if caught by a Muslim or a non-Muslim (Al Qaradawi, 1995).

Generally, all seafood is halal. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are some disagreements among Islamic schools of thought concerning animals like shrimps, crabs and lobsters as they live both inside and outside water (Mickler, 2000). While jurists of the Shafie school of thought regard crustaceans and molluscs as halal, other Islamic schools of thought, including Hambali, Hanafi and Maliki, have a more conservative view of these sea creatures.

In addition to seafood, locusts are also exempted from the category of ‘dead animals’. Ibn Abu Awfa related: “We went with the Prophet (peace be upon him)

on seven expeditions and we ate locusts with him” (Al Qaradawi, 1995, p.48). Muslims are thus permitted to eat dead locusts and like seafood, the issue of slaughtering does not arise.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected using a questionnaire that was administered through face-to-face interviews. Considering the limits of the questionnaire as a data collection instrument, other qualitative methods such as fieldwork observation and in-depth interviews were also used in exploring the phenomenon under study. The involvement of interviews and field observations provided additional insights and explanation for why certain patterns of answering occurred in large numbers in the questionnaire. Having questionnaires administered through face-to-face interviews was also appropriate in this study given the diverse ethnic backgrounds of participants and the language barrier that some of them faced with English as a medium of communication.

The locations that were chosen for sample selection were Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. These cities were chosen because of their high Muslim population and also because they are major tourist destinations in the country. As the total population of halal restaurants in New Zealand was unknown, the *snowball sampling* technique was chosen. The sample was thus identified and selected from various sources of information including direct, face-to-face contact with restaurant managers, halal meat suppliers and the local Muslims. The researcher was fortunate that in each of the city she visited, she had Muslim friends who would introduce her to the other people they knew in the Muslim community. As she got to know more people who informed her of the names and locations of restaurants serving halal food, the research sample grew. Additionally, halal restaurants listed on websites, as well as the Yellow and White Pages were also contacted for interviews. The fieldwork and data collection period took place from 3rd January 2006 to 15th March 2006 and data collected from questionnaires was then keyed into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for further analysis.

RESULTS: KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the research methods employed, a sample of 99 halal restaurants and food service establishments was acquired. 68.7% (n=68) of all the managers surveyed were owners. Managers surveyed had a mean of 9.9 years experience in the hospitality industry and the greatest number of years in the industry was recorded by a fast food restaurant manager, who had 35 years experience. Out of 106 restaurant owners, 54.7% (n=58) were Muslims while the rest belonged to various religious and non-religious groups. Table 1 shows that Hindus (13.2%, n=14) and Christians (12.3%, n=13) represented the majority of non-Muslim restaurant owners.

Table 1 Restaurant owners by religion

Religious Group	Frequency	Percentage
Muslim	58	54.7
Hindu	14	13.2
Christian	13	12.3
No Religion	7	6.6
Sikh	6	5.7
Buddhist	4	3.8
Object to Answering	3	2.8
Jewish	1	0.9
Total	106	100

Restaurant owners comprised of twenty-two different ethnic groups (please refer to Table 2 for original breakdown of ethnic groups). The majority of restaurant owners were Indians (35.8%, n=38) followed by the Middle Eastern group (32.9%, n=35) who were Arab, Iranian, Turk, Algerian, Kurd and Israeli. Other restaurant owners were mainly South and Southeast Asians, apart from a Korean, an African and a Latin American. Additionally, there were three New Zealand Europeans, along with three 'Other European' participants who were English, Scottish and Australian respectively.

Although 92.9% (n=92) of managers selected 'takeaways' to describe their business operation, not all of them were strictly takeaway or fast food outlets. This is because the question concerning 'type of restaurant or food service outlet' was a multiple response question, which enabled managers to tick more than one response category. Thus, while 92.9% (n=92) of the sample offered take-out services, only 50.5% (n=50) were actually selling 'fast food'. The growing availability of takeaway meals from restaurants illustrates a current trend in the food service industry. Nearly all restaurants now promote takeaway options to satisfy the increasing demand for high quality meals with short to no time preparation.

Interestingly, while all the restaurants surveyed produced halal food, almost a third (32.3%, n=32) were licensed or BYO restaurants. BYO stands for 'bring your own', which means that customers are allowed to bring their own drinks or alcoholic beverages. On the other hand, in fully licensed restaurants drinks must be bought at the respective restaurant which would be fully licensed to sell alcohol. Although the halal claim of licensed or BYO restaurants would be regarded as dubious or doubtful by some Muslims, many restaurant owners said that for business survival, they found it necessary to sell alcohol because the majority of their customers in New Zealand were Westerners.

Table 2 Restaurant owners by ethnic group

Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percentage
Indian	38	35.8
Arab	13	12.3
Iranian	10	9.4
Turk	9	8.5
Bangladeshi	6	5.7
Pakistani	5	4.7
Afghan	5	4.7
Chinese	4	3.8
New Zealand European	3	3.0
Other European	3	3.0
Algerian	1	0.9
Kurd	1	0.9
Israeli	1	0.9
Indonesian	1	0.9
Malay	1	0.9
Burmese	1	0.9
Cambodian	1	0.9
Korean	1	0.9
African	1	0.9
Latin American	1	0.9
Total	106	100

The food served by the sample represented various world cuisines especially the Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines (please refer to Table 3 for a breakdown of foods and styles of cuisines). The most popular food served in restaurants surveyed (41.4%, n=41) was the kebab or souvlaki. While there are many varieties of kebab styles, the generic term 'kebab' in New Zealand usually refers to the Doner, Shawarma, Iskender, Kofte and Shish kebab varieties. In Christchurch particularly, kebabs are also known as 'Souvlaki'.

Following the kebab or souvlaki, the second most popular food or cuisine served in 35.4% (n=35) of the sample were Indian food. This is not surprising given that the largest number of Muslims, approximately 439 million in the world today, live in the Indian subcontinent (Islamic Population 2009). The third most popular style of food served by the sample was vegetarian food. The popularity of vegetarian food in many Western countries is believed to have been driven by increased public awareness of heart disease, cancer and other illnesses (Folkes & Wysocki, 2001). Though once considered strange, eccentric or unhealthy, vegetarianism has caught on. In the USA, results of a survey in 2000 showed that "approximately 2.5% of the American adult population claimed to be vegetarian and half of adult Americans chose vegetarian dishes when dining out" (Kato, 2005, p.17).

Overall, survey results indicate that Middle Eastern food was predominantly marketed as 'Turkish' food. Some restaurant owners explained that this was because

New Zealand customers were more likely to identify kebabs as being Turkish rather than Persian or Middle Eastern. Apart from kebabs, fast food items such as burgers, flame-grilled or fried chicken, as well as pizza were the next most popular foods served by the sample. Malaysian and Chinese food were also among the ten most popular foods or cuisines served in restaurants surveyed. Interestingly, much of the Chinese food in Auckland was promoted as ‘Chinese-Indian’ which were Chinese recipes that had been adapted to the palates of Indian customers who liked their food ‘hot and spicy’. A large number of restaurant owners selling Chinese food were Indian, while three out of four restaurant owners who were ethnic Chinese were immigrants from Malaysia.

Table 3 Food or style of cuisine served in restaurants

Food or Style of Cuisine	Frequency	Percentage of Restaurants (N=99)
Kebab/Souvlaki	41	41.4
Indian	35	35.4
Vegetarian	34	34.3
Middle Eastern	27	27.3
Turkish	23	23.2
Burgers	23	23.2
Chicken	20	20.2
Pizza	13	13.1
Malaysian	11	11.1
Chinese	9	9.1
Mediterranean	8	8.1
Fish & Chips	7	7.1
Fish & Seafood Speciality	6	6.1
Thai	4	4.0
Continental	3	3.0
Italian	3	3.0
English	2	2.0
Mexican	2	2.0
North African	2	2.0
Bakery Foods	2	2.0
Persian	1	1.0
Indonesian	1	1.0
Singaporean	1	1.0
South American	1	1.0
Greek	1	1.0
Total	280	282.8

In terms of location, the majority of restaurants surveyed were located in high tourist traffic areas. 86.9% (n=86) were near a visitor accommodation such as hotels, motels, backpackers, as well as Bed and Breakfast accommodations. Additionally, 70.7% (n=70) were near a tourist attraction while 61.6% (n=61) were located either

in or near a shopping mall. Sample demographics also show that the businesses surveyed were on average micro enterprises (0-5 employees). The number of full time employees ranged from 1 to 12 but averaged 2.86, while the number of part time employees ranged from 0 to 12 but averaged 2.51. In addition, the number of seats per establishment averaged 37.55 but ranged from 0 for the takeaway category to 300 seats for the fully licensed restaurant group.

Strangely, nearly a quarter of the sample disagreed that the Muslim market was significant to their business even though six out of ten of the respondents had Muslim customers dining in or purchasing food from their restaurants on a daily basis, while slightly more than a quarter received Muslim customers weekly. Table 4 further shows that 37.3% (n=37) of the sample also disagreed that the Muslim tourist market was significant to their business although, as mentioned earlier, many of them were located in areas with high tourist traffic. However, as Table 5 indicates, almost a third felt that Muslim tourists dined in or purchased food from their restaurant only on a monthly basis, while 22.2% (n=22) were not even sure how frequent Muslim tourists visited their restaurant as they say it was often hard for them to tell who among their customers were Muslim or tourists.

Table 4 Would you agree that the muslim tourist market is significant to your business?

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	56	56.6
Not sure	6	6.1
Disagree	37	37.3
Total	99	100

Table 5 How often do Muslim tourists dine-in or purchase food from your restaurant?

	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	14	14.1
Weekly	23	23.2
Monthly	32	32.3
Yearly	7	7.1
I'm not sure	22	22.2
Never	1	1.0
Total	99	100

With regard to halal food promotion, about a third of respondents did not at all inform customers about the availability of halal food in their restaurant. Additionally, less than half of the sample put up the halal sign in front of their shop. During fieldwork, it was observed that many restaurants also had very small halal signage that cannot easily be seen from the street. Travellers however depend on labels, signage and advertisements in selecting restaurants or food outlets.

Some managers explained that they did not put up the halal sign because they were afraid of being associated with Muslims or reports in the media linking Muslims to acts of terrorism. Given the current political climate, all managers surveyed were asked if they agreed that non-Muslim customers would be reluctant to enter restaurants displaying the halal sign. More than seven out of ten respondents disagreed. One restaurant owner with a halal sign in front of her shop said, "We are not afraid of putting off non-Muslims because to be honest most of them don't care or don't know (what halal is). I don't think politics is an issue and whoever says this is just hiding behind the true considerations of cost". During interviews, several managers confirmed that it was not always economical or easy to provide halal food. Apart from higher costs, sourcing halal meat can also be a hassle. Some meat suppliers also run out of halal meat from time to time and restaurants are then forced to purchase meat that is non-halal in order to keep the business running. For these reasons, some participants felt that it was better for their restaurant to not be advertised as 'halal'.

Only 10.1% (n=10) of the sample in this survey were issued with a FIANZ (Federation of Islamic Association of New Zealand) halal certificate. FIANZ is currently the only organisation issuing halal certificates to restaurants in the country. While 38.4% (n=38) of participants believed that having a halal certificate would enhance the trust and confidence of their Muslim customers, more than half of them said they would not consider applying for the FIANZ halal certificate. 46.5% (n=46) were not even aware that the FIANZ halal certificate existed for restaurants in New Zealand. Nevertheless, some managers have observed that among their Muslim customers, it is tourists who often demand to see the restaurant's halal certificate. In many cases, tourists were also the ones who commonly turn away from establishments that were not certified by a recognized Islamic authority.

CONCLUSIONS

New Zealand Muslim consumers are today in urgent need of halal statutory or legislative regulations as well as stronger guidelines pertaining to the issue of halal food ("FIANZ Requests," 2001). Currently, any individual or business proprietor in New Zealand will not be liable in the court of law should they falsely and fraudulently use the claim of halal. Manufacturers and business operators in New Zealand can freely claim their products or restaurants to be halal without having to seek any form of endorsement or verification.

To address the issue of halal food, the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ) has written to the Minister of Consumer Affairs asking for the Ministry to "consider investigating some means of officially defining halal food in order to protect Muslim consumers" ("FIANZ Requests," 2001, p.9). Nevertheless, regulating halal food in New Zealand has been difficult because many New Zealanders have argued that the word 'halal' cannot be patented since it is open

to so many definitions and religious interpretations. Yet, at international level halal food standards and guidelines have already been established by Codex Alimentarius, an institution recognised by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These standards that were established by Codex Alimentarius today give consistency to the label halal so that Muslim consumers who are becoming increasingly sceptical and even mistrustful would be attracted to purchase halal products that are certified.

Apart from statutory regulations, there is also a need to establish and implement an effective halal certification system that is standard throughout New Zealand. Halal certificates require a written contract with the companies to ensure that all ingredients are guaranteed halal and will not be changed without being checked by the certifying agency. At present, no clear guidelines for halal food production have been provided for the food services industry. Additionally, the two organizations that issue halal certificates in New Zealand mainly do so for meat and manufactured foods. Although one has expanded its services to include the halal certification of restaurants, its main focus at present remains on certifying halal slaughtered meat, especially lamb and beef. The halal certification of restaurants is undoubtedly a huge task and sufficient personnel and funding will be needed to cope with the massive workload envisaged by such a system. Halal, being a religious issue would be more demanding since any mistake or lapse on the part of the people implementing the system would have dire consequences.

The results from the survey discussed in this paper indicate that many businesses in the hospitality industry are still unaware about halal food and its significance to Muslim customers. Awareness, however, is one of the prerequisites to having more 'authentic' halal food outlets in New Zealand. Businesses need to realise that because of the significant link between food and relationships in many cultures, halal food not only attracts Muslim customers but also their non Muslim friends and relatives. Muslim consumers and Islamic organisations, such as FIANZ, play an important role in developing halal awareness in the industry. They should make requests and provide information, as well as support restaurants and outlets selling halal food. The more that Muslim consumers in New Zealand demand for halal products, the more likely it is that the industry will provide them with halal food. Through education and communication, both the industries and consumers can learn to understand and benefit from one another.

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