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Cultivating export market oriented behavior in halal marketing

Addressing the issues and challenges in going global

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to highlight the development of global halal marketing by assessing its current status, challenges and issues within and measures taken to improve it. Strategic marketing conception from the perspective of export market orientation behaviors is offered to help foster industrial innovation to create a halal economy.

Design/methodology/approach – The development of a global halal market is first assessed and its current status is highlighted. The issues and challenges within are identified and explored, followed by a consideration of measures already taken to rectify and improve the situation. Strategic export market orientation behaviors perspective is offered to encourage industrial innovation within the complex global halal market, to ultimately establish a halal economy. This is done by going through the relevant scholarly discussions in various international conferences and available published literatures.

Findings – The paper identifies three major issues and challenges in global halal marketing and what has been done and can be done to rectify and improve the situation, particularly from the perspective of strategic export market orientation behaviors.

Research limitations/implications – The discussion is limited to its conceptual boundaries and in the long run requires empirical research to enhance its applicability.

Practical implications – The discussion offered in the paper is expected to be valuable for global halal marketers seeking strategic marketing design in undertaking the complex market structure and confronting the issues identified.

Originality/value – The paper discusses issues and challenges for halal marketing and how to address the issues through the perspective of strategic export market orientation behaviors, for an industrial innovation to form a halal economy.

Keywords Exports, Globalization, Marketing strategy, Islamic marketing, Halal marketing, Strategic export market orientation, Strategic marketing

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Marketing halal product has its own challenges to concerned parties. Supermarkets in the United Kingdom would find it harder to market their halal meat compared to local butchers, as found by Ahmed (2008). Wilson and Liu (2010, 2011) remarked on the challenges posed for marketers attempting to market ethical and authentic halal brands. Now that halal products are crossing borders, the challenges are becoming greater.



Consider marketing halal products to European Union for instance, where labeling requirement and packaging standard for products imported into the region could possibly present just a small challenge compared to political and cultural sensitivities to exporters, as reported by Hickman (2010), Kern (2012) and Willsher (2012). Exporters might also need to serve a Muslim community of varied Islamic school of thoughts in one particular foreign market, as notified by Tieman (2011) and presented through the case of Abraham Natural Produce in Wilson and Liu (2010). Within this sphere, intelligence on the export market is very pertinent to exporters. Yet as revealed by Chan (in Zain, 2012), ethnic marketers (such as halal marketers) made mistake by emphasizing too much on cultural dimension of ethnic marketing and ignoring that market intelligence of the ethnic is of equal importance.

Exporters of halal products must not only learn about their customer and competitors in the foreign market, but they also need to understand other factors such as the broader marketing cycle and supply chain involved in the export marketing, as well as the political sensitivities and cultural association that differentiate their export and domestic markets. In this space export market orientation (EMO) appears to be a practical solution for exporters, as it necessitates them to generate marketing intelligence pertaining to their export or foreign market, disseminate the intelligence throughout their organization and eventually respond appropriately to the intelligence.

At the current rate of global halal market development, it is interesting to understand the recognized issues and challenges met by the exporters, and what has been done thus far to deal with them. Realizing that intelligence of foreign market is of significance importance to exporters, this paper also attempt to explore how global halal marketing can be revived further through the use of EMO and its proactive and responsive behaviors.

1.1 The global halal market

The global halal market has recorded immense growth in the past few years, offering enormous opportunities for international business firms in various industries. It was estimated to be worth US\$2.3 trillion in mid-2010, comprising food and beverages (F&B), pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and personal care (*The Halal Journal*, 2010a). This estimate, however, did not include contributions from the Islamic banking sector, another emerging contributor to the halal industry. The long list of remarkable statistics regarding the halal industry would go on and on, but one point that can be extracted from all the statistics is that the potential is huge.

The growing potential of halal industry is driven by a few notable factors, as often discussed in the literature (Patton, 2007; Power and Abdullah, 2009; Power and Gatsiounis, 2007). This paper wishes to emphasize three factors in particular. First, the Muslim population around the globe is estimated at 1.8 billion, approximately 25 percent of the total world population, and is gradually increasing. Second, the increasing number of young and educated Muslims represents the leading edge of a new high-purchasing-power market segment. Third, there is a growing global awareness of and demand for halal products and services due to the emergence of Muslim communities across the globe resulting from migration activities and conversion.

The lucrative prospects offered by the halal industry should accordingly attract many concerned parties. Surprisingly, until recently this audience remains largely untapped by global brands (Tumkur, 2010). What are the underlying issues and challenges that

contribute to this underserved market? What has and must be done to rectify the vacuum? What lies beyond the challenges for those who managed to overcome them?

1.2 Export market oriented behavior

The most common method for firms to go global is by exporting goods or services (Leonidou *et al.*, 2007). This is because exporting is recognized as the safest means of entering the international market as it involves fewer risks, lower costs and less resource commitment compared to other options such as foreign direct investments, international joint ventures and licensing (Katsikeas *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, the magnitude of export's contribution to international business is irrefutable, even at the globalization's current stage of development. It is not surprising, then, that export has often been the subject of intense academic studies as recorded in the literature (Diamantopoulos and Kakkos, 2007; Griffith *et al.*, 2008).

The attention given to export has, among other things, given rise to the international market orientation theory, also commonly referred to as EMO (Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995). Sousa *et al.* (2008) noted that EMO has become an important indicator of export performance. EMO has also been recognized as the most significant dimension of international business competence (Knight and Kim, 2009). Hence, EMO is germane to any discussion of global marketing phenomena.

EMO developed as an extension of the market orientation theory. EMO is comprised of two types of behaviors, namely proactive EMO and responsive EMO (Abd-Razak and Abdul-Talib, 2009). Proactive EMO refers to EMO behavior that focuses on latent potentials intelligence in the export or foreign (international) market. Responsive EMO behavior on the other hand focuses on the expressed potentials intelligence in the said market. With this attention to both expressed and latent potentials, EMO is a useful premise for understanding global halal marketing issues and challenges.

2. Issues and challenges in going global

Whenever the subject of global halal marketing is discussed nowadays, the common issues dominating the discussion are the opportunities available in the industry and the challenges confronting them. The available statistics speak volumes of the opportunities lying ahead for these parties, but businesses must also be prepared to cope with the challenges presented. Global brands (suppliers, producers, retailers) have begun to realize the opportunities offered by the halal industry and are aggressively striving to meet its needs. This has not been so apparent before, at least in the previous decade (*Gulf News*, 2010; Tumkur, 2010). A number of barriers have been recognized through the current available literature works. This paper specifically addresses three of the most notable barriers for exporters; the harmonization of standards, information scarcity, and industrial innovation challenges.

2.1 Standards harmonization

Certification of halal products has become a major issue often discussed at international conferences, including the World Halal Forum (WHF) in its past six annual conventions. As one of WHF's goals is to develop a world-class halal standard that covers the entire value chain, many of its concerns revolved around the varied halal standards in use in the market. With the growing number of halal consumers anxious about the legitimacy of their purchases, many exporters realized the need for

authentic halal certification of the products and services offered to this market segment. This has led to the emergence of diverse halal standards around the globe. The ISO/IEC Guide 2: 1996 refers to a standard as:

[...] a document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics, for activities or results aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context (Muhammad, 2009).

One pressing issue is that the diversity of standards creates confusion within the market, especially in the matter of authenticity. Different opinions among Muslim clerics on a number of issues further complicate matters, as they result in different practices and hence different standards applied in different markets. Rarick *et al.* (2011) as one instance cite Australian authorities certifying meats from animals stunned before slaughter as halal, while the practice is considered haram in some other countries. This raises questions such as whether this halal standard is as authentic as the standard used in the local market (if available), and whether it complies with the sharia law as applied in the local community.

Another impediment to a unified halal standard is the difference in recognizing acceptable sharia practices across varied industries (e.g. banking vs pharmaceutical) and products categories. For example, if Malaysian banking industry is certified as halal, Malaysian pharmaceutical industry cannot be certified as halal too simply because it is of Malaysian origin. Or, if Brazilian livestock is certified as halal, Turkish livestock cannot be considered as halal either simply because it is of livestock industry. Varying halal specifications are involved in varying industries, which require different expertise to be recognized and fulfilled. Consequently, a specific model must be established to address all issues pertaining to halal characteristic of an industry, regardless of its source of origin, as an instance. The situation does not permit a single set of standard to be used across industries and product categories. Therefore, different models of standard seem to be a practical option to enable the use of a rigorous authentic standard that specifically address a specific industry and product category.

The formation of an internationally-recognized body to set standards for the global halal market is expected to provide the necessary enforcement and harmonization. At the WHF 2010, the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), an affiliated group under the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and the International Halal Integrity (IHI) Alliance introduced the ICCI-IHI Alliance Halal Standard, which presented four modules of halal standards: logistics, food services, slaughtering and processing, and animal welfare (*The Halal Journal*, 2010b). This has transformed the need for different models to cover different industries and product categories and thereby resolved the issue. Drafts of four other modules were also introduced in the forum; these have been released for public review and are expected to be finalized and introduced next year. These other four modules are laboratory and testing, animal feed, cosmetics and toiletries, and food processing (*The Halal Journal*, 2010b). This development is positively viewed by industry stakeholders as a catalyst to the global halal market, and IHI Alliance is increasingly recognized as the body authorized to regulate global halal standards.

Industry players are anticipated to comply with the modules prepared. Assuming they do so, the harmonization of halal standards worldwide is ensured. Widespread reluctance to comply with the modules, however, would affect the recognition of the ICCI-IHI Alliance

Halal Standard at the global level, prolonging the standards harmonization issue that has long impeded the industry. Expectation is also growing that a specific standard module regarding Islamic finance will be developed. This is because the current focus of the global halal market is on the Islamic finance industry, as evidenced by its selection as the theme for the seventh WHF next year.

2.2 Scarcity of information

Another pressing issue constraining the global halal market is the scarcity of information available to industry stakeholders or potential entrants. Intelligence is very limited for the industry in its early development. Not all suppliers, for example, are aware of the opportunities available in the market. Even consumers themselves are often unaware of the existence of halal and non-halal products in categories like cosmetics and personal care (*Gulf News*, 2010). Because of the lack of information, sales in these categories were low. Consequently, global brands assumed Muslims were rather conservative and would not value their products and services (Tumkur, 2010). Tumkur (2010) also cited the focus of global brands on emerging economies like China and India, whose Muslim populations are rather small, as affecting the lack of attention to the Muslim segment of the market. These factors have caused the segment to be ignored, and hence the market remains largely unexplored.

With the emigration of Muslims across borders, and an increasing demand by the younger, more educated and richer Muslim population for halal products and services, a new niche has been created. Added with the fact that the media exposure of Muslim communities around the world has been greatly intensified following 9/11, more and more intelligence pertaining to this market segment is being generated. The growing number of Muslim populations in countries around the world is an appealing reason for global brands to pay specific interest to this unique market. For instance, the global F&B industry was valued at US\$5.7 trillion in 2008 and is expected to exceed US\$7 trillion in 2014 (IMAP, 2010). The halal F&B industry is worth US\$1.4 trillion (*The Halal Journal*, 2010a), or nearly 25 percent – a sizeable portion – of the F&B industry. The uniqueness of the halal market means that the potential for growth is enormous.

With this much market share up for grabs, intelligence on the market segment becomes a necessity. The emergence of consulting organizations catering specifically to halal market intelligence, such as KasehDia and Noor, is a testimony to the rising demand for such intelligence. These consulting groups help global brands reach their market segment by providing accurate information. The organizations also contribute to the increasing awareness of the market's needs and wants, and systematically provide information to the whole market structure. This does not only involve suppliers, but the information also flows down to the end-user. Consequently, the situation generates awareness among consumers of the existence of halal products and lines offered by renowned global brands such as Nestlé and Unilever. This consumer awareness was previously lacking (*Gulf News*, 2010). With this development, it is likely that the industry will continue to thrive globally.

2.3 Innovation within the industry

Following the removal of barriers to the industry as discussed previously, the market structure is expected to react accordingly. In his address during the fifth WHF in 2010, the Malaysian Prime Minister called for the formation of a “halal economy”, in which

the value-based cross-industry economy is rooted in trust, integrity and fairness (*The Halal Journal*, 2010a). With the standards harmonization issue considered resolved and intelligence sharing giving rise to market linkages between suppliers, competitors and consumers to form a clearer structure, the industry can advance to the next stage of maturity. This is consistent with Porter and Miller (1985) and Porter (2008), who explained that a well-structured industry attracts profits and competition. The call for a halal economy is considered a timely development in driving the market to an advanced level.

The anticipated next challenge for the global halal market will be industrial innovation – whether the industry can continue creating new value and new satisfaction (Drucker and Maciariello, 2004). To confront the challenge of creating a halal economy, the whole market structure will need to respond by becoming more innovative than ever. The establishment of the ICCI-IHI Alliance Halal Standard is viewed as taking a holistic approach by addressing all activities in the supply chain (*The Halal Journal*, 2010b). This has therefore encouraged all parties along the supply chain to consider improving their organizations' structures and operations in order to stay competitive in the industry for the long run.

Lee (2004) emphasized that the best supply chains are not only fast and cost effective, but they also employ agility, adaptability and alignment. In other words, they are aware of changes or shifts in the market structure, are able to adjust accordingly, and share common interests with the rest of their partners in the supply chain. Creation of such a supply chain could foster industrial innovation for the global halal market (Rigby *et al.*, 2009). To enable these changes to take place, EMO is a viable option.

Market orientation components are found to have positive effects on innovation (Grinstein, 2008). In a global industry, positive innovation consequences are expected to arise from EMO, which has been acknowledged as a significant component of international business competence (Knight and Kim, 2009). There are three components of EMO, namely the generation and dissemination of, and responsiveness to export or foreign market intelligence (Cadogan *et al.*, 2002). EMO is comprised of two types of behaviors:

- (1) proactive EMO which focus on latent potentials intelligence; and
- (2) responsive EMO which focus on expressed potentials intelligence (Abd-Razak and Abdul-Talib, 2009, 2010).

Figure 1 shows the relationship between EMO components and behaviors in a market structure (i.e. industry).

By utilizing the right behavior at the right time, exporters should be able to continue delivering values to their export market and at the same time promotes innovation within the industry. Islamic finance industry is a contemporary example on how conventional banks and financial institutions such as HSBC realized the expressed need for Muslims across the globe to have a financial system that adhere to sharia law and provide Islamic financial options for their customers. As the service began to attract non-Muslim consumers bankers realized that this is a latent potential for them to provide a service once thought irrelevant to other market segment (El Qorchi, 2005). The same phenomenon is not only occurring in financial sector. F&B industry also

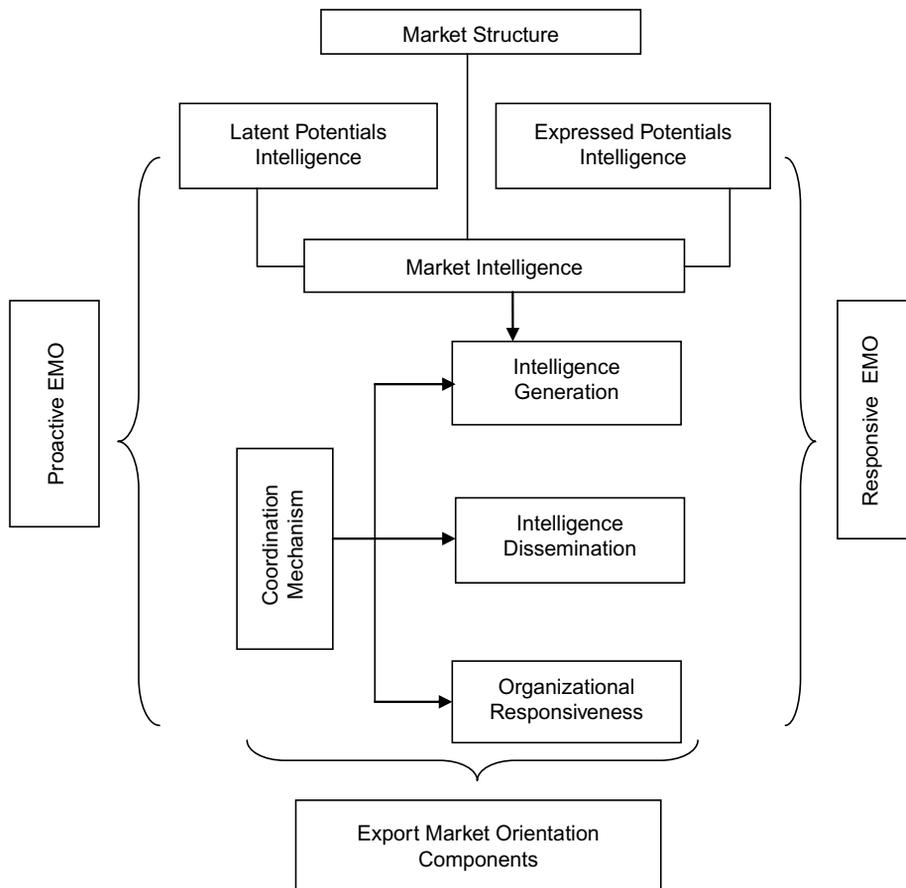


Figure 1.
Relationship between
EMO components and
behaviors within a market
structure

attract non-Muslim consumers as halal standard is often associated with high hygienic elements throughout the supply chain (Hashim and Othman, 2011).

To develop a global halal market supply chain that is not only fast and cost-effective but also agile, adaptive and aligned, the implementation of EMO components and behaviors at each point of the supply chain is essential. Considering the global halal market supply chain as a complete model of a market structure (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000), EMO ensures that the intelligence generated from the industry is disseminated across the organization and appropriate responses are produced. This chain reaction creates awareness of changes in the supply chain (market) and allows organizations involved to adjust to the changes and respond accordingly, while the intelligence imparted encourage the parties involved to share common interests with each other (e.g. delivering products or services that meet high halal standards). As a result, the triple-A supply chain applauded by Lee (2004) is attainable, fostering industrial innovation and consequently encouraging a halal economy to evolve.

As exemplified in Figure 1, EMO is comprised of proactive and responsive behaviors. Proactive EMO focuses on latent, unseen or unrealized potentials in the

market structure, while responsive EMO focuses on expressed potentials in the market structure. A positive relationship between EMO behaviors and innovation is not a foreign concept. Zhang and Duan (2010) report a positive total effect of proactive and responsive market orientation on product innovation performance. This is consistent with Chesbrough (2006), for example, in which intelligence from various facets (internal and external ideas and paths) promotes industrial innovation via open innovation. The ability to recognize the latent and expressed potentials in the market is therefore considered a viable option in working towards industrial innovation in a halal economy. Figure 2 exemplifies the working model for global halal market industrial innovation from an EMO behavior standpoint.

The working model shown in Figure 2 is a process repeated at each point in the supply chain. Since EMO involves both customer and competitor orientation (Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995) it occurs at each point in the chain, where each point has its own customer and competitor. However, being in a global industry nowadays does not limit orientation towards only the customer and competitor; it also involves the influence of the greater market structure – foreign regulators, suppliers, retailers and the like. This has made EMO a more complex function for businesses today. Figuring out and understanding the latent and expressed potentials within this complex structure and delivering the valued potentials effectively are essential in ensuring industrial innovation within the global halal market and ultimately the creation of a halal economy.

3. Conclusion and future directions

The central issue discussed in this paper is the development of the underserved global halal market. We do this in order to understand the issues and challenges that must give way for the better serving of halal industry to take place. The current status of the market, the reasons for the underserving of it, and the steps taken to remedy the problems were examined. Further discussion centered on the challenge of creating a halal economy through industrial innovation via EMO behaviors.

Finally, the discussion is intended to prepare a milestone for the possible direction of the industry in the future. This is accomplished by assessing the current status of the industry through existing literature and reports. In the long run, empirical studies need to be conducted to understand the actual conditions in the industry. Doing so would not only allow practical assessment of whether this article made its points accurately, but more importantly would increase understanding of why and how halal market growth is achieved or constrained, and what can be done to rectify the situation.

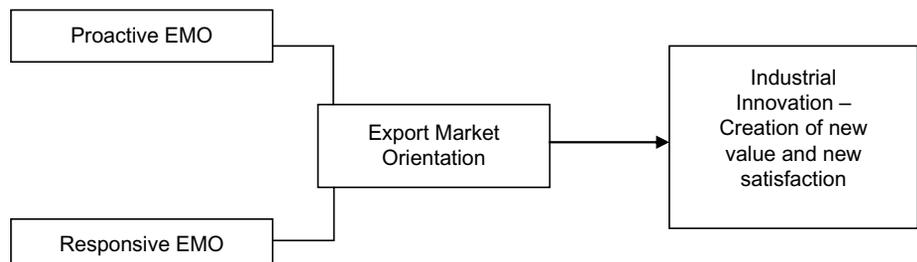


Figure 2.
Global halal market
industrial innovation
through EMO

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