Understanding Tabayyun: Examining the Role of Social Media in Disseminating Accurate Information about Halal Products among University Students

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Abstract
The prevalence of false information or "hoaxes" about halal products being spread through social media is on the rise. This type of misinformation has the potential to undermine the trust consumers place in the halal products available in the market. Incorrectly captioned or fake images, as well as unclear language, can all contribute to the spread of false information. That is why it is critical to practice the principle of "tabayyun" (verification) before sharing any information related to halal products. This study aimed to explore the understanding of the concept of *tabayyun*, the actions taken to share information about halal products, and the sources of information about halal products that respondents used. This preliminary study involved 190 students from Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS) and was conducted quantitatively. The findings indicate that students have a solid grasp of the concept of *tabayyun* and are conscious of the importance of sharing accurate information about halal products. Social media was identified as the primary source for obtaining information about halal products. Future research should investigate the impact of spreading false information

about halal products on consumer trust and its influence on the purchasing decisions for halal products.

Keywords: Tabayyun, Halal Products, Social Media, False Information

Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has brought about considerable change, revolutionizing the way people live their lives. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have played a vital role in disseminating information to the public. While this easy access to information has empowered individuals to tailor it to their preferences, it has also led to an influx of misinformation.

The impact of social media has extended to various aspects of life, including how users search for and obtain information about products and services. One industry that has been significantly affected is the halal products industry. According to the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, "halal" denotes things that are permissible under Islamic law, not prohibited by Shariah, allowed, or sanctioned. It is the opposite of "haram" (forbidden). For Muslims, halal is a fundamental part of their way of life, encompassing lawful conduct, hygiene, honesty, and self-discipline, and it applies to all aspects of life, from income to relationships.

The term "halal" derives from Arabic and is rooted in the Islamic concept of purity and cleanliness. It signifies the things and actions permissible for Muslims and is not limited to food and drink. Although it encompasses various aspects of life, Islamic dietary laws and the preparation of meat according to those laws are particularly associated with halal. The Quranic teachings state that all foods are halal except those specifically declared haram (unlawful or prohibited).

Malaysia, a diverse country with various ethnicities and religions, places significant emphasis on understanding halal and its products as an Islamic country. Halal products are not just limited to food products, but it also encompasses health products, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, services, and more (Ahmad Hidayat & Zulzaidi, 2012). Halal products are those that comply with the Islamic religious principles for their production, manufacturing, or provision. To obtain halal status, Shariah guidelines set by the religion must be followed. Several factors are considered to determine the halal status of a product, such as the ingredients used, production process, sources, and use of tools free from prohibited elements per Islamic teachings.

The halal industry is growing rapidly, both nationally and internationally. However, there is a concern that people tend to believe social media news without verifying the sources and accuracy, which goes against Islamic teachings. It is necessary to practice "tabayyun," meaning conducting thorough research before spreading any news.

In Malaysia, issues related to halal products include the authenticity of halal certificates, confusion about halal labels, quality and safety control, limited consumer understanding, globalization, inappropriate marketing, and the need for halal compliance (Ahmad Hidayat Buang & Zulzaidi, 2012) (Muhammad Firdaus, Mohd Fadhli, Nur Muizz & Aimi Fadzirul, 2021). Uncertainties in halal certification, identifying genuinely halal products, and the lack of quality control create doubts and challenges in ensuring the integrity of halal products in the market.

Problem Statement

False information used to spread through chain letters and emails, but with the advent of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, the dissemination of false information has become increasingly complex. A study conducted by Fox in 2018 found that

70% of false information on Twitter tends to be retweeted by users, compared to valid information. In Malaysia, people are more likely to believe information shared through WhatsApp, causing confusion and hindering the spread of accurate information. According to the SKMM report, a mere 20.3% of consumers are aware of the Sebenarnya.my portal, which was created by the government to combat the spread of fake news. Despite the government's efforts to provide channels for verification, 59.4% of consumers have not yet visited the portal, indicating a lack of awareness regarding the importance of verifying information.

The spread of false information also extends to halal products, which can be either food or non-food items. Though social media plays a significant role in disseminating information about halal products, it remains unclear how it influences consumers' perceptions and awareness. Further research is necessary to identify the sources of information on halal products obtained by consumers and how false information is disseminated.

To address this, a preliminary study was conducted on 190 students from Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS) to assess their understanding of the concept of *tabayyun* (verification) and their actions in receiving unclear information about halal products via the Internet. It is crucial to understand how consumers, especially students, can use social media wisely and critically in seeking, sharing, and verifying information about halal products. So the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the understanding of *tabayyun* concept among students.
2. To identify the awareness of *tabayyun* regarding halal products among students.

Further research is necessary to empower *tabayyun* in the context of the spread of information about halal products through social media. This will help understand how Generation Z, who rely heavily on the internet and social media, can use these platforms wisely and critically in shaping consumers' perceptions and behaviors related to halal products. This is particularly important for stakeholders like JAKIM, the halal certification body, to enhance consumer literacy and educate the public about halal information. Therefore, the objective of this study is to pinpoint the channels through which students acquire information regarding halal products, evaluate their comprehension of *tabayyun*, and determine their awareness of its importance in halal products.

Literature Review

Tabayyun refers to a method in which an individual examines, investigates, and verifies a piece of news or information received to determine whether it is from a credible or false source before taking action or making a decision on whether it is true or false news to be disseminated. While, research done by Fathoni et al. (2019) presents *tabayyun* as a psychological instrument that can aid students in processing and reacting to different types of information. The research utilized qualitative thematic analysis techniques, which involved conducting surveys, interviews, and analyzing social media data. The findings revealed that *tabayyun* is recognized as "the practice of verifying, evaluating, and elucidating information before disseminating it. There are four key components of *tabayyun*: critical thinking, self-regulation, receptiveness, and information-seeking conduct.

Tabayyun holds significant importance amongst the Muslim community and society as a whole. This is because it ensures that the information and news received is accurate, true, and not false. To achieve this, it is crucial to avoid hastily receiving information, accepting data from unauthorized sources, spreading news of unknown origin, and sharing information recklessly. One should also abstain from making malicious accusations and slandering others and instead, promote caution in receiving and disseminating news (Nor Musfirah & Nurul

Husna, 2022). It is vital to avoid causing harm, misunderstanding, hostility, and damaging the dignity of others, and preventing the persecution of others with false accusations or spreading false news. Furthermore, one must be mindful of not making mistakes that harm others or oneself, while remembering that every deed will be recorded and accounted for in the hereafter (Sri Roijah, 2020).

The use of the Internet among the Malaysian population has been steadily increasing each year. As of the end of 2020, a report from the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (SKMM) revealed that 88.7% of Malaysia's population are Internet users, showing an increase of 1.3% compared to 2018 (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). 50% of regular users spend 5 to 12 hours a day on the Internet. Their purposes for using the Internet are primarily for socializing, with 98.1% communicating via text, whether through WhatsApp, WeChat, or Telegram (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). However, Facebook remains the top choice of users, followed by YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. The report from the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2020) also indicates that users often share information about news (66.9%), followed by public service announcements (60.9%), entertainment, and humorous content (56.1%) (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020).

A study conducted by Hamzah et al. (2020) examined the impact of the spread of false information on social media on the community, with a case study involving students at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). The study found that social media is frequently abused by a minority of unethical individuals to disseminate false news and information that can have negative impacts on individuals, families, communities, and even the nation. Such false information often contains deceitful factors, incites racial sentiments, spreads defamation, and more. This is concerning because such information and news can have a negative impact on reception and usage. It proves that if the concept of *tabayyun* (verification) is not applied by the community in seeking information related to halal products, it will have a detrimental impact on others in society.

Awareness of fake news is a key factor that motivates people to practice *tabayyun* before sharing any news. As shown in a study conducted by Norahida Mohamed, Safiah Abdul Razak, Siti Nora'aeshah Zakaria, and Juwairiah Hassan in 2021 regarding the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was found that 35.8% of the public investigate the source of Covid-19-related news on social media, 82.4% ensure the authenticity of Covid-19 news before sharing it, and 68.8% exhibit *tabayyun* behavior towards Covid-19 news (KUIPSAS, 2021). However, it is also essential to examine how aware users, especially students, are regarding *tabayyun* in the context of halal products.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach with a survey research design. A questionnaire serves as the primary instrument for data collection in this preliminary study. Respondent selection involves the non-random sampling of new media users among students aged 20 and above who meet the criteria as a youth. Non-random sampling is used because this study is descriptive in nature. A 5-point Likert scale is utilized to analyze respondents' agreement in receiving information via social media. The use of the 5-point Likert scale is employed to facilitate data analysis and ensure that respondents select answers objectively. The discussion of the research findings is descriptive, involving percentages and minimum scores. The report for questionnaire items is arranged based on the highest to lowest minimum scores.

The questionnaire used comprises four sections that respondents need to complete: Part A: Demographic Information, Part B: Understanding of the concept of *tabayyun,* and Part C: Actions of students in disseminating information about halal products. The questionnaire items are based on statements from previous research. To ensure the suitability of these questions for this study, a validation process was carried out.

Research Findings
Demographic Information of Respondents
        The following is a breakdown of the demographics of the respondents who participated in the study. Table 1 illustrates that out of the 190 respondents, 65.3% were female, and 34.7% were male. The majority of participants were in their final semesters, specifically Semesters 5 and 6, totaling 57.8%. Meanwhile, 25.7% of participants were in Semesters 3 and 4, 12.6% were in Semesters 7 and 8, and only 3.6% were in Semesters 1 and 2. The demographics also included information about the sources of information on halal products.

The researcher identified four sources of information: family members, friends, social media, and observation. Data collected from family members accounted for 12.1%, representing 23 respondents. The next most significant source was friends, which contributed 43.2%, representing 82 respondents. Social media was the largest source, contributing 82.6% of the data, representing 157 respondents. Lastly, information obtained through observation accounted for 31.6% of the data, representing 60 respondents.

Table 1: Demography Distribution of Respondents (n=190)

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	34.7%
	Female	124	65.3%
Age	20-23	107	56.3%
	24 and above	83	43.7%
Semester	Sem 1 – Sem 2	7	3.6%
	Sem 3 – Sem 4	49	25.7%
	Sem 5 – Sem 6	110	57.8%
	Sem 7 – Sem 8	24	12.6%
Sources of information on halal products	Family members	23	12.1%
	Friends	82	43.2%
	Social Media	157	82.6%
	Observation	60	31.6%

Sources of Halal Product Information Obtained by Students
        Based on the data presented in Table 2, it can be observed that a significant proportion of the respondents (62.1%) relied on social media as their primary source of information about various products. This finding highlights the immense value of social media platforms in providing diverse inputs and information that can be utilized in daily life. Moreover, Siti Rokiah et al. (2017) emphasized that social media platforms offer a unique space for public discussions, as they are not influenced by any governmental or authoritative bodies. This freedom allows for critical discussions, information sharing, and effective communication with the public.

Table 2: Sources Of Information On Halal Products

Sources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
JAKIM	115	60.5
Facebook	91	47.9
Other social media	118	62.1
Magazine	35	18.4
Brochure	33	17.4
Poster	31	16.3
Newspaper	68	35.8
Television	102	53.7
Websites	117	61.6

Interestingly, the study also revealed that the second most popular source of information was JAKIM, with 60.5% of respondents seeking information from authoritative sources. This suggests that while social media is a valuable source of information, individuals also rely on credible sources, such as JAKIM, to obtain accurate and trustworthy information about halal products. Relying on such sources can ensure the authenticity and reliability of the information obtained.

Furthermore, it can be noted that websites accounted for 61.6% of the respondents as a source of information about halal products. Websites offer a range of conveniences to the public, facilitating easy access to information related to the sources of halal food products, in addition to social media and authoritative sources. Overall, the findings suggest that individuals utilize multiple sources of information when seeking knowledge about halal products, highlighting the need for a diverse and comprehensive approach to information dissemination.

Understanding of the Concept of Tabayyun

According to the findings presented in Table 3, it is evident that the participants of the survey possess a strong understanding of the significance of sharing only verified news. The respondents demonstrated a mean score of 4.64, which signifies their ability to distinguish between accurate and potentially misleading information. They also emphasized the importance of verifying news obtained from social media before sharing it with others, with a mean score of 4.59. These results showcase their critical thinking skills and highlight their ability to discern and evaluate information appropriately.

It is crucial to note that the practice of tabayyun, which is highly emphasized in Islam, plays a vital role in dealing with information from uncertain sources. The participants acknowledged the significance of exercising caution and avoiding hasty conclusions, which was evident from the mean score of 4.58 that they gave for the power of accurate information. They understand that verifying the authenticity of information is essential to prevent the spread of false information.

Table 3: Understanding the Concept of Tabayyun

Statements	Percentage (%)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Only news that has been verified for its accuracy can be disseminated	0.5	1.1	3.2	24.2	71.1	4.64	0.65

News received through social media should be investigated first	0.5	0.5	4.2	28.4	66.3	4.59	0.65
Accurate information can make us someone capable of acting on a strong foundation of truth.	0.5	0.5	3.7	31.1	64.2	4.58	0.64
Tabayyun can prevent the spread of the danger of slander that can threaten the safety of society.	0.5	0.5	5.8	27.4	65.8	4.57	0.68
Spreading information without investigating it first is wrong	1.6	1.6	3.7	27.9	65.3	4.54	0.78
Not all information that we obtain can be disseminated	1.6	0	6.3	30	62.1	4.51	0.75
Failure to practice *tabayyun* will result in calamity for the community.	0.5	0.5	5.3	34.4	59.3	4.51	0.67
Tabayyun can prevent the spread of the danger of slander that can threaten national security.	1.1	1.1	7.4	27.4	63.2	4.51	0.77
Failure to practice *tabayyun* will result in calamity to oneself	0.5	0.5	7.4	33.7	57.9	4.47	0.70
Creating fake news is a sign of hypocrisy (munafiq), and such actions are sinful.	2.1	2.1	7.9	25.3	62.6	4.44	0.89
I not only read the headlines of information, but also read its content	0.5	0	7.9	48.9	42.6	4.33	0.67
Accurate information can make us someone who complies with religious requirements.	0.5	0	22.6	29.5	47.4	4.23	0.83
						4.50	**0.73**

Furthermore, the respondents recognized the dangers of spreading news that is unclear, untrue, or inauthentic. They acknowledged that such practices can have disastrous consequences for society, which was reflected in the mean score of 4.51 that they gave for failure to practice tabayyun. This understanding is critical because it emphasizes the need to prevent the spread of slander, which poses a threat to the safety of society, as 65.8% of the respondents acknowledged.

In conclusion, the survey participants have demonstrated a strong grasp of the importance of verifying information before sharing it with others. They have also acknowledged the significance of practicing tabayyun, which is essential in preventing the spread of false information. These findings are crucial in promoting critical thinking and discernment among individuals, which are critical skills in today's information age.

Awareness of Tabayyun Regarding Halal Products

According to Table 4, students have shown a high level of awareness when it comes to consuming halal food products. They ensure that the products they purchase have the proper halal certificate/logo from JAKIM (mean score = 4.54). Following this, they also commit to not spreading any non-verified information (mean score = 4.49) and make an effort to investigate the product information before sharing it (mean score = 4.47). The practice of *tabayyun* varies depending on educational backgrounds, thinking levels, communication experiences, and thinking patterns.

Table 4: Students' Awareness of Tabayyun regarding Halal Products Information

Statements	Percentage (%)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
I will ensure that food products have the halal certification/logo from JAKIM before consuming/purchasing them	0.0	0.5	7.4	30.0	62.1	4.54	0.66
I will not spread information about products that are not verified.	0.0	1.6	5.8	34.2	58.4	4.49	0.68
Will you investigate information about a product before sharing it?	0.5	0.5	5.3	38.4	55.3	4.47	0.67
I don't easily believe in viral food products	0.5	1.1	7.9	40	50.5	4.39	0.72
I will refer to the official website of a brand or product to determine the halal status of the food.	0.5	3.2	12.6	32.6	51.1	4.31	0.85
I will refer to the official website of a brand to check the halal status of the premises	0.0	2.1	12.6	39.5	45.8	4.29	0.77
I never disseminate information without first verifying its source	0.5	1.6	15.3	36.8	45.8	4.26	0.81
I will ask and refer to experts for information that is not known. For example: the Mufti of the Federal Territories, JAKIM, the National Food Safety and Nutrition Council (MKMPK).	0.5	2.1	26.3	41.1	30	3.98	0.84
I will report to the authorities if the information about the product being disseminated is not correct.	1.1	3.7	23.7	47.4	24.2	3.9	0.85
						4.29	0.76

Research by Nuramaliya and Rosmawati (2021) showed that educational background plays a crucial role in the practice of *tabayyun* when it comes to receiving and disseminating information on social media. Individuals with an educational background tend to practice tabayyun well and are cautious in accepting information, referring to reliable and credible sources before sharing it. It is not surprising that students at USAS are interested in practicing tabayyun regarding the information they receive. They also agree to verify the truth of information before sharing it with others. Therefore, it can be concluded that educational background plays a vital role in individuals' practice of *tabayyun* when it comes to receiving and disseminating information through social media.

Conclusion

Islam places great emphasis on the importance of tabayyun - the practice of seeking and conveying truthful information within the community. Its goal is to create a community free from slander, misunderstandings, and suspicion among its members. When it comes to halal products, practicing tabayyun is crucial in safeguarding their integrity and quality. It

helps to prevent the spread of false or invalid information about halal products over the internet, which can confuse the community and undermine trust in valid halal certification. Recent research has found that students can play a vital role in disseminating information about halal products and building trust within the community. An understanding of tabayyun can help prevent the spread of incorrect or inaccurate information about halal issues. Social media is a primary source of information about halal products, making it essential to provide students with access to accurate information. Given social media's potential to influence consumer views and decisions, public service message campaigns should educate the public on how to use these platforms effectively.

To cultivate a responsible generation of netizens, it is vital to intensify public service message campaigns that reduce the spread of false information. Educational programs and awareness campaigns within the Muslim community can increase understanding of the importance of practicing tabayyun in relation to halal products. Halal literacy education and an understanding of tabayyun can equip the community with the knowledge and skills needed to make wise and responsible decisions when selecting and verifying halal products.

The connection between tabayyun and halal products promotes a comprehensive approach to determining the halal status of products. It can also foster a visionary and morally upright community that adheres to halal principles in their daily lives. This study provides preliminary insights into student understanding and actions regarding halal product information dissemination. Its implications can serve as a foundation for further research in broader contexts, including research involving larger samples and other user groups or communities. The study explores the role of students and social media in disseminating information about halal products. This contributes to our understanding of how social media functions as a source of information and influence in contemporary society, especially within religious communities.

In the context of the halal industry, the research underscores the importance of ensuring the integrity and quality of halal products. It provides insights into how misinformation or lack of understanding can affect consumer confidence, which is crucial for the growth and sustainability of the halal market. Also, by highlighting the role of students in disseminating information about halal products, the study addresses the engagement and empowerment of youth within the Muslim community. This context-specific contribution reflects the changing dynamics of community involvement and leadership.

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