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Examination of Domestic Tourists' Awareness and Attitude Towards Halal Food According to Demographic Variable: The Gaziantep Example

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Abstract

Religion and belief which are among the intangible cultural elements play an essential role in shaping consumer behavior. Among these behaviors, individuals' increasing religious sensitivity within the context of eating and drinking in particular necessitates the food they consume to be in concordance with religious values. From this point of view, it is envisioned that individuals' demographic characteristics will cause differences in food consumption demands in accordance with their religiousness values. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of demographic variables in the awareness towards halal food consumption and attitude towards halal food. Moreover, another purpose of the study is to guide those who provide marketing services for halal food and the partners taking part in determining tourism strategies. Research data has been collected from 495 local tourists who had visited the city of Gaziantep and had an eating and drinking experience in this city via questionnaire technique between December 2022 and January 2023 by using the quantitative research method in accordance with the determined purpose. Data obtained from the questionnaires were examined using a statistics program. In the analysis of the obtained data, exploratory factor analysis, t-test and ANOVA tests were implemented. As one of the findings which became prominent with the research result, it has been concluded that halal food awareness has a statistically significant difference pursuant to the age variable of the demographic variables. In the light of these, this study contributes to relevant literature from various aspects and offers suggestions for future studies along with practitioners.

Keywords: halal food, domestic tourist, attitude level, awareness level

Introduction

There are many factors having influence on consumers' purchasing decision. Especially lifestyle, culture, diet, health, and religious belief play a determining role in the preferences related to food (Nakyinsige et al., 2013; Koluman, 2009; Kurtođlu & Çiçek, 2013). Religion is one of the factors playing a significant role in the constitution of people's daily lives, attitudes, behaviors, and preferences (Öztürk et al., 2015). Religion, being determinative in ensuring the continuation of life, has an effect on consumers' attitudes and behaviors as well (Ördek, 2017). Religion is determinative in the food consumption of Muslims and food preferences are made based on halal

and haram guidelines especially at the beginning of the purchasing process (Güzel & Kartal, 2017; Boğan & Arıca, 2019; Şeyhanlıoğlu & Zengin, 2022). While both are Arabic words, the concept of halal signifies concordant with religious principles, permitted or lawful and haram is used for those which are forbidden to do, use and consume religiously (Köleoğlu et al., 2016). In this context, foods which are permitted to consume religiously in matters related to eating and drinking are named as halal food. Accordingly, individuals' level of sensitivity towards halal food consumption increases as their level of religiousness increase (Derin et al., 2019; Tayar & Doğan, 2019). Relevant information indicates that religious belief system plays a significant role on the consumers' purchasing behaviors.

There are certain restrictions on maintaining life based on Islam's principles of belief. Foremost among these, the concept of halal food is of great importance. Halal food refers to being concordant with Islamic rules throughout the whole process beginning from farm which is the initial production process to table and ensuring the conformity of the sensitivities of those who are believing in this religion (Batu, 2012b; Derin & Türk, 2016). In this context, the demand towards Halal certified foodstuff increases day by day (Kızılgın & Özkan, 2014). In respect to halal products, focus has been gravitated towards paying regard to the sensitivity required for all the process stages such as raw material, additives, food processing excipient, food constituents, processing methods (Genç & Yardımcıoğlu, 2017; Ünalın, 2017).

In Muslim societies, sunnah of Qur'an and Prophet Mohammed is adopted for the classification of foods whether they are halal or haram. According to these two sources which are based upon in terms of addressing the needs, in order to regard a food as halal, it must not be produced from the animals which the religion of Islam prohibited, the slaughtering method of the animals must be permissible with the religious terms, additives must not be prohibited by Islam, its production and packaging must be in conformity with the Islamic principles and it must not be in contact with the foods which Islam does not recognize as halal (Fischer, 2016; Topal & Şahin, 2019). The mentality of haram develops in case of imposing restrictions related to the consumption of relevant foods.

Marketing strategies shapes according to the behaviors and preferences of consumers. Especially, religion is among the essential factors in the development of consumers' purchasing behaviors in terms of international marketing decisions (Abdul et al., 2009; Othman & Hashim, 2010; Arıca, 2019; Syed et al., 2022). Religion's mentality of halal on consumption is used as a marketing element day by day in other industries along with food industry (Halim et al., 2014; Henderson, 2015). The positive perception towards halal food market is favored among non-Muslims along with Muslim consumers due to its positive impact such as being safe, hygienic, and quality (Torlak, 2012).

Nowadays, Islamic population constitutes the second largest religions group in the world. It has been stated that the population of Muslims are almost more than two billion (Pew Research Center, 2023). In this respect, halal food market has a great potential for Muslims who have notable population (Özdemir & Yaylı, 2014). More clearly, it has been considered that individuals' attitudes towards food consumptions differs positively or negatively depending on their belief system.

It has been assumed that there are certain gaps in the existing literature related to halal food consumption and a considerable part of the studies conducted review halal food certification

(Akbulut et al., 2019; Awan et al., 2015; Aziz & Vui, 2012). Therefore, while the majority of the existing studies examine the aspect of halal food certification, there are more limited studies on the attitude, behavior, and awareness towards halal food (Avcı & Köroğlu, 2021). Furthermore, the impact of religion on consumer behavior (Harrell & Carter, 1986), awareness related to halal food consumption (Omar et al., 2012), halal food industry (Batu & Regenstein, 2014) is examined. In this study, it has been aimed to reveal the awareness related to halal food consumption and the attitude towards halal food. As a result of literature review, it is thought that the studies conducted in Turkey in this field are limited and that this study will have a significant contribution to the literature. The study consists of three parts while the first part includes conceptual framework and literature review related to religiousness and halal consumption, second part contains research method and findings, and the last part covers conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

The concept of halal is rooted in Qur'an, and this is supported by Prophet Mohammed's sunnah. Halal is used for products which are not inconvenient both to be used and consumed (Qureshi et al., 2012). Turkish Language Association has defined the concept of halal as *not conflicting with religious rules, not being prohibited religiously, anti-haram* (TDK, 2023). When considering from the food industry perspective, halal food is defined as; not containing any ingredients which are prohibited according to Islamic rules, prepared, transported and stored in places or by devices that are disinfected from these ingredients, the product which does not have a direct contact during the preparation, processing, transportation and storage phase with any food that are produced apart from these conditions (Çallı, 2014).

Halal foods refer to foods that are permitted to be consumed by the religion of Islam and lawful. More clearly, it is indicated as preparing and consuming the foodstuff in accordance with religious (Islamic) rules throughout the whole process starting from the production to consumption phase (Batu, 2012a; Kahraman, 2012; Elgün, 2017; Batu, 2022). According to Islam, the concept of halal must not be contemplated within the context of eating and drinking as it exists in almost every stage of human life in addition. Among the relevant stages, social justice, animal welfare, safety and sustainable environment are included (Baharuddin et al., 2015). In other words, the specialties of the halal food must be preserved according to Islamic rules until it arrives to the table both as a raw material and a final product (Çukadar, 2017; Tieman & Ghazali, 2014).

When it comes to halal food in the context of the food industry, these are products which have been prepared with ingredients that are not prohibited by religious beliefs, in manufacturing facilities that comply with religious principles and have been protected from contacts within the specified time through appropriate processing, transportation, and storage (Yıldırım, 2011). The positive perception of halal food stems from the attention paid to aspects such as quality, food safety, cleanliness, hygiene, and health (Keleş, 2015; Türker, 2016; Türker, 2020).

According to the Islamic faith, a believer must pay attention to their way of living in respect to the concepts of halal and haram. It is explicitly stated in the Qur'an that certain foods such as alcohol, pork, blood, and carrion should be avoided (Qur'an, Maide 3). Based on all of this information, it is possible to define halal food as any food product that will be consumed by individuals who have adopted a way of life that adheres to the limits of faith, and that has been obtained in accordance

with Islamic rules throughout the entire process from production to consumption, is hygienic, healthy, and has not been harmed in terms of its halal status.

Food products that are obtained by paying attention to Islamic prohibitions and kept away from various contaminants, and produced in a clean and safe manner, vary according to consumers' religiosity levels (Atasever & Alişarlı, 2020; Ratanamaneichat & Rakkarn, 2013). Furthermore, individuals with high levels of religiosity tend to prefer halal foods and pay attention to the labels of these foods –especially within the framework of gastronomic tourism, religious tourists participating in tourism activities expect the animal, plant, and chemical properties of the foods used in the preparation of both the accommodation facilities and the food and beverages served in these facilities to comply with Islamic principles (Boğan & Arica, 2019). In this context, it is also desired that production areas and equipment used in production are not contaminated with prohibited foods according to Islamic rules (GIMDES, 2023; Ratanamaneichat & Rakkarn, 2013).

Considering the place of the religious population in the world population, halal food marketing is gaining importance day by day. In order to sustain life in the way required by their religious beliefs, individuals can access and consume halal food products in these markets through the halal food certification (Batu, 2012a). Owing to halal food certification, foods that are not deemed appropriate according to religious rules and suspicious foods can be easily distinguished.

Awareness plays a determining role among the factors that shape consumers' consumption behavior. In the halal food market, providing accurate information and descriptions regarding health, environment, cleanliness, safety, and faith and thereby offering the possibility of safe procurement depend on the levels of awareness (Akgündüz, 2012). In this context, educating consumers supports the development of a positive perception towards halal food while also encouraging them to avoid non-halal food (El-Bassiouny, 2016; Shariff & Abd Lah, 2014). Furthermore, behavioral beliefs refer to the set of beliefs on whether a behavior will result in positive or negative outcomes. A belief that a behavior will lead to positive results will affect attitudes towards the behavior and lead to a positive intention towards that behavior (Çekiç, 2021).

Attitude has a positive impact on an individual's intention towards purchasing and performing a certain behavior accordingly (Ajzen, 1991; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011). Belief system and consequently, the development of behavior towards halal food is influenced by attitude. The presence of a strong attitude is essential for the establishment of behavior among religious individuals (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010; Khalek, 2014; White Baker et al., 2007). Particularly, the attitude towards halal food increases among religious individuals for both preserving health and having a decent mental state (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004).

Many studies have revealed that individuals' levels of religiosity are highly influential on their purchasing behaviors (Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Lindridge, 2005; Delener, 1990; Çubukçuoğlu & Haşiloğlu, 2012). Similarly, a study on Muslim consumers in Germany found that their attitudes and intentions toward purchasing halal foods were positive (Demirağ et al., 2020), while a study conducted in the United States showed that religiosity levels increased the consumption of halal food and emphasized the importance of such foods (Mumuni et al., 2018). A study conducted in Thailand suggested that the contents of food labels did not have a significant impact on the purchasing intentions of young consumers toward halal food (Maichum et al., 2017). In other respects, a study in Malaysia revealed a significant relationship between participants' religion and

the logos on food packaging (Abdul et al., 2009). Similarly, a study conducted with Muslim consumers in Malaysia found that individuals with higher religious devotion had a greater tendency to purchase halal foods (Parvin Hosseini et al., 2020). In a similar way, a study in Pakistan found that religiosity levels had a positive impact on the intention to purchase halal-certified products (Awan et al., 2015). Another study supporting this finding revealed that awareness and importance of halal food acted as a mediator between religiosity, halal food label information, and the intention to purchase halal food (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2019). A study conducted on consumers residing in Kayseri (Turkey) presented that their levels of religiosity and preferences for halal-certified products had a positive effect on their intentions to purchase halal food (Varinli et al., 2016). Furthermore, a study conducted on university students regarding halal food consumption and examining the label of the food found that only half of the participants examined the label of the food since they were living in a predominantly Muslim country (Ülker, 2020).

In this case, it can be argued that since the country in question is a Muslim country has led to a decrease in sensitivity regarding food labels. Another study conducted on young consumers found that individuals who are aware of the importance of certification systems tend to prefer halal-certified products (Akbulut et al., 2019). While the low level of awareness regarding halal food and insufficient exposure to halal-certified products suggest that more attention should be paid to this matter (Aziz & Vui, 2012), empirical findings support the notion that the level of awareness regarding halal food is in a good state in Turkey due to religious sensitivities (Atasever & Alişarlı, 2020). However, given the increasing population with each passing day, it is believed that more attention should be given to consumers' awareness levels in halal food marketing. This study aims to determine the awareness levels and attitudes towards halal food of domestic tourists visiting Gaziantep (Turkey), an important gastronomic city, based on their demographic characteristics. In this context, demographic variables can be expected to be essential determinants of the level of awareness regarding halal food and attitudes towards halal food. Based on these evaluations and studies, the hypotheses of the research have been identified as follows:

- H₁: There is a significant difference in the awareness of halal food among domestic tourists based on demographic variables.
- H_{1a}: The awareness of halal food among domestic tourists differs significantly based on gender.
- H_{1b}: The awareness of halal food among domestic tourists differs significantly based on marital status.
- H_{1c}: The awareness of halal food among domestic tourists differs significantly based on age.
- H_{1d}: The awareness of halal food among domestic tourists differs significantly based on educational level.
- H_{1e}: The awareness of halal food among domestic tourists differs significantly based on monthly income level.
- H₂: The attitudes of domestic tourists towards halal food show significant differences based on demographic variables.
- H_{2a}: The attitudes of domestic tourists towards halal food differ significantly based on gender.
- H_{2b}: The attitudes of domestic tourists towards halal food differ significantly based on marital status.

- H_{2c}: The attitudes of domestic tourists towards halal food differ significantly based on age.
- H_{2d}: The attitudes of domestic tourists towards halal food differ significantly based on educational level.
- H_{2e}: The attitudes of domestic tourists towards halal food differ significantly based on monthly income level.

Research Method

Consumers' belief systems and religious sensitivities play a decisive role in their food preferences. Religion has an influence on the structuring of people's lives, especially in the formation of eating and drinking elements. Sensitivity towards religious issues plays a major role in consumers' food and beverage preferences.

It is anticipated that providing findings on whether consumers' awareness and attitude towards halal food differ according to demographic factors would contribute to the existing literature. It is also envisioned that filling this gap in the literature can provide a significant contribution.

The aim of this study is to assert whether there is a difference in the awareness and attitude towards halal food among domestic tourists according to demographic factors. For the purpose of achieving this objective, a halal food awareness and attitude scale was implemented to the participants.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of tourists visiting Gaziantep (Turkey). The fact that this city is one of the important gastronomy cities and was visited by 527,260 tourists in the first 7 months of 2022 was influential in choosing it as the population. The research sample on the other hand consists of 495 local tourists within the population. Purposeful and convenience sampling methods were implemented in determining the research sample. The main reason for purposeful sampling is to find individuals who are knowledgeable about collecting data from local tourists based on the principle of voluntarism (Passmore & Baker, 2005). The convenience sampling method is preferred based on the reasons such as easy access to participants and high participation in research surveys (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020). The research data was collected through face-to-face survey technique between December 13, 2022, and January 13, 2023.

Data Collection Method

In this study, data was collected using quantitative research method. The quantitative research method enables the observation and evaluation of facts and events to be objectified and expressed numerically (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). In quantitative research, numerical data is obtained from a sample that can represent the population on the subject and statistical and mathematical analyses are performed based on these data (Büyüköztürk et al., 2022). The survey technique was utilized to analyze the study data. The survey technique is an essential tool that is structured for collecting research data from participants (Coşkun et al., 2015).

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool was adapted by Şahan (2021) for measuring awareness and attitudes towards halal food. The study consists of two parts. The first part includes the halal food awareness scale with 8 statements and the attitudes towards halal food scale with 5 statements. The second part consists of 8 statements aimed at determining the demographic characteristics of the participants. As shown in Table 1, Ferns & Walls (2012), Dedeoğlu (2016), Kurniawati & Savitri (2020), and Nurlatifah & Imam (2021) were utilized in adapting the Halal food awareness scale. Lam & Hsu (2006), Sparks & Pan (2009), Wang et al. (2013), Bozkurt & Avcıkurt (2019), and Vanany et al. (2020) were utilized in adapting the Attitudes towards halal food scale. Expert opinions were obtained from academics in the field before the survey form was finalized. Information regarding the scales used in the research is given in the table below:

Table 1. Information Regarding the Scales Used in the Study

Scale	Statement	Resources Used
Awareness of Halal Food	I can imagine how halal food is like.	Ferns & Walls, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2016
	I'm familiar with halal food.	Ferns & Walls, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2016
	I can distinguish halal food among other foods.	Ferns & Walls, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2016
	Some characteristics of halal food (hygienic, healthy, safe) come to my mind quickly.	Ferns & Walls, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2016
	I remember marketing activities related to halal food quickly.	Ferns & Walls, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2016
	I know about halal and non-halal food products.	Kurniawati & Savitri, 2020
	I am capable of distinguishing between prohibited foods (non-halal foods) and allowed foods (halal foods).	Nurlatifah & Imam, 2021
	I have sufficient knowledge about non-halal food ingredients.	Nurlatifah & Imam, 2021
Attitude towards Halal Food	Eating halal food is delicious.	Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009; Wang et al., 2013
	Eating halal food is nice (a good idea).	Bozkurt & Avcıkurt, 2019; Sparks & Pan, 2009; Wang et al., 2013
	Eating halal food is reasonable (a smart choice).	Bozkurt & Avcıkurt, 2019; Wang et al., 2013
	I love eating halal food.	Wang et al., 2013
	Consuming halal food is extremely enjoyable for me.	Vanany et al., 2020

Data Analysis

The SPSS program was used in the analysis of research data. Among these analyses, frequency, percentage, t-test, and ANOVA test were performed. Whether the obtained data display normal distribution or not is an essential factor in determining the type of analysis to be applied. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined to test the normality of the obtained data. According to the examination results, the kurtosis value ranges between (-0.91) and (-0.738). Nevertheless, these values should be between -1.5 and +1.5 in order to meet the condition of normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p.79; George & Mallery, 2016, p.114; Kline, 2016, p.74). Therefore, it can be stated that the data exhibits normal distribution since the skewness and kurtosis values lie within the targeted range. Based on the obtained data, it can be concluded that the data set meets the normality assumption. Parametric tests have been preferred in the analysis of the data rather than non-parametric tests since the data is normally distributed.

The Halal food awareness scale and Attitude towards Halal food scale used in data collection in the study were adapted from scales used in previous studies (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009;

Ferns & Walls, 2012; Wang et al., 2013; Dedeoğlu, 2016; Bozkurt & Avcıkurt, 2019; Kurniawati & Savitri, 2020; Vanany et al., 2020; Nurlatifah & Imam, 2021), as seen in Table 1. Therefore, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was implemented to exhibit the relationship between the statements and to test the validity of the measurement tool. The reliability analysis of the scale was examined through the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, and all these findings are presented in Table 2. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values were examined to determine the adequacy of the sample size, and it was identified that the values were appropriate. Bartlett's sphericity test results were examined to determine the suitability of the data obtained from the scales for factor analysis, and it was determined that the results were significant. Within the context of the obtained results, KMO values being higher than ,60 and Bartlett test results being significant (Büyüköztürk, 2002) indicated that the data were suitable for factor analysis. When examining the factor loadings of the scale items, the loading values of the items were considered appropriate if they were ,30 or higher (Kline, 2016). After the exploratory factor analyses, reliabilities for the scales were measured. When examining the Cronbach's alpha (CA) values, it was concluded that the scales were reliable.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Findings for the Halal Food Awareness Scale

Dimension	Statement	Factor Loading EFA	Common Variance	Eigenvalue	Cronbach Alpha
Awareness of halal food	I can imagine how halal food is like.	,659	,658	7,400	,92
	I'm familiar with halal food.	,662	,658		
	I can distinguish halal food among other foods.	,682	,696		
	Some characteristics of halal food (hygienic, healthy, safe) come to my mind quickly.	,671	,668		
	I remember marketing activities related to halal food quickly.	,557	,574		
	I know about halal and non-halal food products.	,695	,701		
	I am capable of distinguishing between prohibited foods (non-halal foods) and allowed foods (halal foods).	,713	,712		
Attitude towards halal food	I have sufficient knowledge about non-halal food ingredients.	,687	,688	2.436	,97
	Eating halal food is delicious.	,890	,890		
	Eating halal food is nice (a good idea).	,927	,927		
	Eating halal food is reasonable (a smart choice).	,910	,911		
	I love eating halal food.	,880	,880		
	Consuming halal food is extremely enjoyable for me.	,874	,873		

Note. Total Explained Variance: 75.66 %. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy: 0.927
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Chi-Square: 6350.2, Degrees of Freedom: 78, Significance (p-value): 0.000

Findings and Analysis

Findings section of this study, which aims to determine the relationships between demographic variables and the awareness and attitudes towards halal food of domestic tourists, principally provides descriptive findings regarding the participants and variables. In Table 3, descriptive statistics on the demographic characteristics of the participants are exhibited.

As it can be seen in Table 3, the majority of the participants are women (f=288, 58.2%). In the analysis on age, it is seen that the participants between the age range of 25-34 constitute the majority. In addition, it can be stated that 72.5% of the participants are married (f=359). As for the examination on the education level, it is seen that the majority of the participants are high school (f=159, 32.1%) and undergraduate (f=215, 43.4%) graduates, respectively. In terms of the

examination on the employment status of the participants, it is discovered that the majority ($f=282$, 57.0%) are employed, while 55.4% of the participants declare that they have middle income.

Table 3. Information on Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristic		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	288	58,2
	Male	207	41,8
Age	18-24 years old	43	8,7
	25-34 years old	165	33,3
	35-44 years old	142	28,7
	45-54 years old	90	18,2
	55 years and older	55	11,1
Marital Status	Single	136	27,5
	Married	359	72,5
Educational Level	Elementary or Middle School	52	10,5
	High School	159	32,1
	Bachelor's Degree	215	43,4
	Graduate Degree	69	13,9
Occupation	Employee	282	57
	Employer	79	16
	Student	48	9,7
	Retired	50	10,1
	Unemployed	36	7,3
Monthly Income	Very low	21	4,2
	Low	64	12,9
	Middle-income	274	55,4
	High	99	20
	Very high	37	7,5

The findings regarding the consumption of halal food by tourists are included in Table 4 as well.

Table 4. Findings on Participants' Halal Food Consumption

Variable		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sensitive Products*	Red meat	412	83,2
	Milk and dairy products	25	5,1
	Animal and plant-based foods with additives	126	25,5
	Chicken and chicken products	285	57,6
	Food additives	278	56,2
	Processed food products	124	25,1
	Fruit juices and carbonated drinks	66	13,3
	Processed meat products	247	49,9
	Chips, chocolate, and biscuits		
	Source of food (raw materials)	334	67,5
Risk Points on Halal Food*	Production-processing method	216	43,6
	Components of food	83	16,8
	Additives	239	48,3
	Place where food is served	62	12,5

Note. The total percentage might be more than 100% as multiple options can be selected

When the question of what sources are considered essential for halal food is examined, it is worthy of notice that the most important food source for tourists is red meat dishes ($f=412$, 83.2%) and chicken dishes ($f=285$, 57.6%). When asked about the points that entail a risk in halal food, it stands out that the most important source of food for tourists is the origin ($f=334$, 67.5%) and additives ($f=239$, 48.3%) are considered risky.

In Table 5, the average and standard deviation values for the variables are provided. In examining the data related to the variable of awareness on halal food, it is evident that the statement with the lowest average ($\bar{x} = 3,96$) is “I quickly remember marketing activities related to halal food. On the other hand, “I am aware of halal food.” is the statement with the highest average ($\bar{x} = 4.22$) for this variable is” In this context, it can be stated that the participants’ awareness levels of halal food are generally high. Furthermore, the data related to the variable of attitude towards halal food exhibits that “Eating halal food is extremely enjoyable for me.” is the statement with the lowest average ($\bar{x} = 4,20$). In addition, the statement with the highest average ($\bar{x} = 4,25$) for this variable is “Eating halal food is good (a good idea).” In this context, it can be indicated that the participants’ attitude levels towards halal food are high in general.

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Variables

Scale	Representation	\bar{x}	s.s.
Halal Food Awareness ($\bar{x} = 3.85$)	FD1	4.05	1.13
	FD2	4.22	1.05
	FD3	3.72	1.28
	FD4	3.89	1.19
	FD5	3.41	1.29
	FD6	3.79	1.19
	FD7	3.94	1.20
	FD8	3.74	1.18
Attitude towards halal food ($\bar{x} = 4.23$)	TD1	4.23	1.08
	TD2	4.25	1.07
	TD3	4.24	1.05
	TD4	4.22	1.13
	TD5	4.20	1.13

Note. 1 = Completely Disagree; 5 = Completely Agree

FD = Halal Food Awareness; TD = Attitude Towards Halal Food

In Table 6, the T-test results for independent samples are given. According to these results, the equality of variances was examined in the part of Levene’s test, and it was found as $p > 0.05$. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances has been met. Additionally, the significance was examined to determine whether there were any differences. It was observed that $p > 0.05$ between the gender and marital status variables related to the participants’ awareness of halal food. The results obtained herein exhibit that there is no significant difference between the groups in terms of the variables of gender and marital status. Therefore, hypotheses H1a and H1b have been rejected based on these results.

Table 6. Independent Samples T-Test Results for Participants’ Halal Food Awareness Level

Variable	Category	n	\bar{x}	s.s	t	p
Gender	Female	288	3,83	,94	-,476	,167
	Male	207	3,87	1,00		
Marital Status	Single	136	3,90	,92	-,795	,195
	Married	359	3,82	,99		

In Table 7, the T-test results for independent samples are given. According to these results, the equality of variances was examined in the part of Levene’s test, and since it was discovered that that $p > 0.05$, the assumption of homogeneity of variances has been met. Furthermore, the significance was examined to determine whether there were any differences. It was observed that $p > 0.05$ between the gender and marital status variables related to the participants’ attitude towards halal food. The results obtained herein exhibit that there is no significant difference between the

groups in the gender and marital status variables. Therefore, hypotheses H2a and H2b have been rejected based on these results.

Table 7. Independent Samples T-Test Results for Participants' Level of Attitudes towards Halal Food

Variable	Category	n	\bar{x}	s.s	t	p
Gender	Female	288	4,27	1,01	1,208	,429
	Male	207	4,16	1,06		
Marital Status	Single	136	4,20	,99	,347	,400
	Married	359	4,24	1,05		

In Table 8, results on the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted to determine whether there are differences in participants' awareness of halal food according to age groups are displayed. Upon examining the relevant data, since it was discovered that there was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in halal food awareness depending on the age variable, hypothesis H1c was accepted. In addition, a Post Hoc analysis was performed in order to determine the source of the difference. Due to the homogeneity of variances, comparison was made in accordance with Scheffé's test (Scheffé, 1954). As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the relevant difference originated between the age groups of 25-34 / 45-54 and 45-54 / 25-34.

Table 8. Results of One-Way ANOVA Based on Age Variable of Participants

Dimension	Age	n	\bar{x}	F	p	Accept/Reject
Halal Food Awareness	18-24 years old	43	3,71	3,724*	,006	Accept
	25-34 years old	165	4,05			
	35-44 years old	142	3,82			
	45-54 years old	90	3,57			
	55 years and older	55	3,86			

*: Since homogeneity of variances was not achieved, Welch test has been taken into consideration.

Post Hoc Test		Mean Difference		p
Age				
18-24	25-34 years old	-0,338		,216
	35-44 years old	-,102		,999
	45-54 years old	,140		,996
	55 years and older	-,143		,996
25-34	18-24 years old	,338		,216
	35-44 years old	,236		,261
	45-54 years old	,479**		,006
35-44	55 years and older	,195		,840
	18-24 years old	,102		,999
	25-34 years old	-,236		,261
45-54	45-54 years old	,242		,610
	55 years and older	-,040		1,00
	18-24 years old	-,140		,996
	25-34 years old	-,479**		,006
55 years and older	35-44 years old	-,242		,610
	55 years and older	-,283		,627
	18-24 years old	,143		,996
55 years and older	25-34 years old	-,195		,840
	35-44 years old	,040	1,00	
	45-54 years old	,283	,627	

** : Comparison was made according to Tamhan's T2.

In Table 9, analysis results of the ANOVA test conducted in order to determine whether there is a difference in participants' awareness of halal food according to their education levels, occupations, and monthly incomes are given. When the relevant data was analyzed, it was discovered that there

was no difference ($p > 0.05$) in the awareness of halal food pursuant to participants' educational levels, occupations, and monthly incomes.

Table 9. Results of One-Way ANOVA Based on Halal Food Awareness Level of Participants

Variable	Category	n	\bar{x}	s.s	F	p
Educational Status	Elementary or Middle School	52	3,64	1,02	1,495	,215
	High School	159	3,86	1,05		
	Bachelor's Degree	215	3,92	,88		
	Graduate Degree	69	3,74	,99		
Occupation	Employee	282	3,96	,96	1,446	,218
	Employer	79	3,74	1,04		
	Student	48	3,71	,87		
	Retired	50	3,81	,96		
	Unemployed	36	3,64	,98		
Monthly Income	Very low	21	3,76	1,09	,459	,766
	Low	64	3,78	,96		
	Middle-income	274	3,90	,97		
	High	99	3,77	,95		
	Very high	37	3,85	,94		

In Table 10, analysis results of the ANOVA test conducted in order to determine whether there is a difference in participants' attitudes towards halal food according to their education levels, occupations, and monthly incomes are provided.

Table 10: Results of One-Way ANOVA Based on Participants' Level of Attitude towards Halal Food

Variable	Category	n	\bar{x}	s.s	F	p
Age	18-24 years old	43	3,89	1,17	1,529	,192
	25-34 years old	165	4,29	,99		
	35-44 years old	142	4,24	1,05		
	45-54 years old	90	4,18	1,12		
	55 years and older	55	4,35	,80		
Educational status	Elementary or Middle School	52	3,91	1,15	1,868	,134
	High School	159	4,24	1,08		
	Bachelor's Degree	215	4,26	1,01		
	Graduate Degree	69	4,32	,87		
Occupation	Employee	282	4,28	1,02	1,219	,302
	Employer	79	4,20	1,11		
	Student	48	3,98	1,15		
	Retired	50	4,32	,80		
	Unemployed	36	4,06	1,09		
Monthly Income	Very low	21	3,95	1,42	,820	,513
	Low	64	4,15	,98		
	Middle-income	274	4,28	1,02		
	High	99	4,15	1,01		
	Very high	37	4,28	1,05		

Upon examining the relevant data, it was identified that there was no difference ($p > 0.05$) in the attitudes towards halal food pursuant to participants' educational levels, occupations, and monthly incomes.

As seen in Table 8, while participants' awareness of halal food varies according to their age, their attitudes towards halal food do not differ significantly pursuant to their demographic variables.

Therefore, hypothesis of H2 has been rejected while hypothesis of H1 has been partially accepted. In other words, hypothesis of H1c is supported, while H1a, H1b, H1d, and H1e are not supported.

Discussion and Conclusion

Within the framework of this study, it was examined whether the awareness and attitudes towards halal food of domestic tourists visiting Gaziantep (Turkey) varied by demographic variables. It can be indicated that consumers' religiosity or religious characteristics influence their purchasing behavior, awareness, and attitude levels. The religion of Islam has imposed some restrictions on nutrition, especially in terms of halal and haram concepts, which are effective in all areas of life, including nutrition. Halal food is one of the highly emphasized issues in this context. In this scope, the aim of the current study is to examine the awareness and attitudes of domestic tourists visiting the region towards halal food. When the demographic characteristics of the research participants are taken into account, it is discovered that the majority of the participants are women, and their age ranges from 25 to 44 years (see Table 3). Furthermore, in terms of educational level, the vast majority of the participants' hold a bachelor's degree. Regarding the products that participants are sensitive to in halal food consumption, the majority expressed their opinions on *red meat* followed by *chicken and poultry products*, *food additives*, and *processed meat products*. When the points that entail a risk in halal food are examined, it is seen that they are *the source of food*, *production and processing method*, and *additives* (see Table 4).

In the primary targeted part of the research, based on the independent samples t-test and ANOVA test which were applied to test whether there were any differences in the awareness and attitudes towards halal food among domestic tourists according to demographic variables, no significant difference was found between halal food awareness and attitudes and demographic variables. It was determined that there was only a difference between halal food awareness and age variable (see Table 8).

The obtained results include consistent findings in comparison with the literature. Şahan & Dedeoğlu (2022) identified that the intention to purchase halal food did not vary according to demographic variables such as gender and place of residence, but it was positively affected by age, marital status, and educational level. On the other hand, Yazıt et al. (2016) concluded that the perception of halal food among restaurant customers was moderate and did not differ according to participants' gender, marital status, and occupation, however, it varied significantly pursuant to educational level, age, and income level. Avcı & Köroğlu (2021) discovered that religiosity had a partial mediating effect on the intention to purchase halal food, and the knowledge of halal food and the importance attached to halal food had a partial mediator effect. Besides, they revealed that knowledge of halal food had a greater mediator effect than the importance attached to halal food. Furthermore, Demirdağ et al. (2020) determined that religiosity positively affected attitudes and behavioral intentions towards purchasing halal food-labeled products. Additionally, the analysis exhibited that attitudes towards purchasing halal food-labeled products and behavioral intentions were similarly positive. Ahmad et al. (2015) stated that there is a relationship between religiosity and halal knowledge. Maichum et al. (2017) determined that knowledge of halal food had an influence on the intention to purchase halal food. Finally, Kurtoğlu & Çiçek (2013) concluded that religious beliefs, which are among the cultural factors, influenced consumer purchasing decisions, and accordingly, consumers' perception, attitude, and expectations regarding halal products varied according to socio-demographic characteristics.

Based on the findings, some recommendations can be proposed to researchers. Due to the growing concern about food safety, consumers' inclination towards halal food has increased in recent years both in the world and in Turkey. In their study, Golnaz et al. (2010) revealed that non-Muslims considered halal products to be healthier and more reliable. This study also exhibits that local tourists have a positive level of awareness and attitude towards halal food. Furthermore, the level of religiosity that affects individuals' purchasing behavior is anticipated to be effective in creating marketing strategies. In this regard, businesses may focus on halal certification efforts to increase their sales, which can play an important role in the positive attitudes of religious consumers towards halal food.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations. The study's limitation of being conducted with domestic tourists visiting Gaziantep and analyzing the awareness and attitudes towards halal food based on demographic variables is acknowledged. Since Gaziantep is visited by tourists from various ethnic backgrounds, the study has a limitation in this regard. Future studies could include individuals from different nationalities visiting Gaziantep to see if their awareness and attitudes towards halal food differ and different results can be obtained consequently. Finally, the results of this study can be compared with those of similar studies conducted in metropolitan cities such as Istanbul, where people of different faiths visit, to obtain more comprehensive insights.

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