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## **Determinants of Tunisian Consumer Purchase Intention Halal Certified Products: A Qualitative Study**

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### **Abstract**

Tunisia created its own halal certification on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013 which is displayed only on exported products. In fact, there are no halal certified products in the Tunisian market. Thus, this study aims to identify the factors that may influence the Tunisian consumer's intention to purchase a halal certified product if they will be available on the local market. As halal certification is a new phenomenon in Tunisia, this study has used a qualitative exploratory method. Twenty one in-depth interviews have been conducted. Four consumers segments have been identified based on age and religiosity level: "Enthusiasts" (28.57%), "Supporters" (33.33%), "Indifferents" (19.04%) and "Oppositionists" (19.04%). The determinants and the intention to purchase a halal certified product differ significantly across groups. Given that this study is the first one investigating the Tunisian consumer intention toward halal certified products, it provides valuable insight for companies who want to start a halal industry in Tunisia.

**Keywords:** Halal Certification, Consumer Intention, Consumer Segments

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### **Introduction**

The global demand for halal certified food products keeps growing, and there is an increasing interest in the halal food industry from many countries across the globe, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The global halal food market was evaluated at US\$795 billion in 2014 and is expected to reach US\$2.5 trillion by 2019 (APFI 2016). This fast growth in the halal food business is ascribed to both the increase and spread of the Muslim population in Muslim countries, as well as the increase of the Muslim population in the non-Muslim territories.

Tunisia is a Muslim majority country; more than 95% of the Tunisian population is Muslim. However, Tunisia has introduced its own halal certification only by 2013 by the Tunisian National Institute of Normalization and Industrial Property (INNORPI) in close collaboration with "Diwen Al Iftaa" (a service in the ministry of Religious Affairs) as part of the attributions assigned to them by the law 2009-38 of 30 June 2009 related to normalization national system. And decree No.107 of 06 April 1962.

“All Tunisian products are halal” Said Mr. Aymen Mekki, Director General of the Tunisian National Institute of Normalization and Industrial Property (INNORPI). He added “the establishment of halal certification will concern only products destined for export for non Islamic countries such as France, Germany and some African countries where there is a Muslim community like Senegal, Cameroon and Tchad”.

However, there are reasons to doubt the halal status of some food products sold in The Tunisian market. In fact, more than 70% of Tunisia imports are from non-Muslim countries such as France, Italy, Germany (Tunisian Ministry of Commerce, 2015). Further, Chawki Tabib the President of the Tunisian National Instance for Struggle Against Corruption affirmed the dismantling of a meat distribution network that provides dead animals meat (INLUCC, 2017). These suspicions about the halal status of products in Tunisia raise the following research questions:

- ✓ Are Tunisian consumers aware about the halal status of their food products?
- ✓ What are the factors that may influence Tunisian consumer intention to purchase a halal certified product if they will be available in the Tunisian market?
- ✓ Is religiosity an important factor that may influence the Tunisian consumer’s intention to purchase a halal certified product?

This study is exploratory in nature; it provides significant insights for the manufacturing and policy makers.

## **Brief Relevant literature**

### **Halal and haram**

The word Halal is a word used by Arabs and Muslims, to designate anything known as permissible and lawful according to Islamic religion (Jallad, 2008; Majid, Sabir and Ashraf, 2015). According to Jallad (2008) and Majid, Sabir and Ashraf (2015) the term halal comes from the verb Halla that means to be or become lawful, legal, licit, legitimate, permissible, permitted, allowable, allowed, admissible, un-prohibited, unforbidden, and authorized” Halla refers also to “solve” or “resolve” (e.g. Halla the problem or the riddle). On the other hand haram, which is the opposite of halal, comes from the verb Harrama to forbid, prohibit, interdict, proscribe, ban, bar, outlaw, declare unlawful, to taboo, make illegal (Jallad, 2008). ). Contrary to halal, haram is related to anything unlawful or forbidden Within Muslim life according to sharia’a principles such as behavior, speech, dress, conduct, and manner. In fact, the dichotomy of halal and haram governs the daily life of the Muslim community.

With regard to food, Muslim were informed what kinds of food must be consumed and what kinds of food must be avoided. This is explicitly highlighted in the holy Quran wherein Allah says:

*“He hath forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and swine flesh, and that which hath been immolated to (the name of) any other than Allah. But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is no sin for him. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (2:173).*

Thus, Halal products refer to all goods that are conform to Islamic law (Hanzaee and Ramezani, 2011; Razalli and al., 2013) which means that food must:

- Not contain haram elements
- Not be touched or must not come from haram substances or najas such as carrion, alcohol, pork, blood, faeces, urine
- Be derived from halal animals that have been slaughtered in compliance with Islamic guidelines

- Prepared, handled or produced using equipments that have not been contaminated with haram, najas or unclean elements
- Not include any human parts or their derivatives
- Be safe and not harmful (must not contain physical, chemical, or biological/microbial hazards)
- Not involve worker or environment exploitation

Therefore Muslims are required to check the halal status of the products that they consume or use.

### **Halal Certification**

The Tunisian National Institute of Normalization and Industrial Property (INNORPI, 2017) defines the halal certification as a brand compliance which applies to particular technical regulations and affects a wide range of products and services based on principles, laws and rules of Islam. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (2017) considers the halal certification as: a process, a sequence of steps, a proof that the production process and the material used are in compliance with Islamic guidelines.

Halal certification is a document provided by an approved Islamic organization which asserts that the product complies with Islamic dietary requirements (Ab Talib, Abdul Hamid and Chin, 2015; Hanzaae and Ramezani, 2011). I.e. that the product contains no pork (and its derivatives), no alcohol, no food ingredients derived from animals forbidden by Islam and that it is produced using a clean equipments.

Thus, Halal certification/logo is an identity card of a product/service issued by an independent body named Certification Authority or third party. It is established to help consumer identifying goods which meet Islamic laws and fulfils a strict safe and hygienic practices (Hussin and al., 2012; Ismaeel and Blaim, 2012) Yusuf, Abdul Shukor and Bustamam (2016) asserted that halal certification is recognized as a “new defining market force”. It helps to reinforce the development of Muslim business in the global market.

Shafie and Othman (2006) have conducted a qualitative and quantitative research to investigate the level of understanding of halal and its impact on Muslim consumers and managers in Malaysia. They found that Muslim consumers consider halal certified products as more important and that halal certification have more meaning than those with ISO or similar certification. For them halal is more “wholesome” and gives them some “peace of mind”. As for the entrepreneurs, they mentioned that halal certification makes their products/services more important and gives them more value. For non Muslim consumers, halal logo let them make an informed purchase without the need to check and to understand the meaning of all scientific ingredients listed on the packaging. In other words, the halal certification/logo is considered as a source of reassurance, trustworthiness and information (Shafie and Othman, 2006; Ismaeel and Blaim, 2012).

### **Halal Accreditation Body in Tunisia**

The Tunisian National Institute of Normalization and Industrial Property (INORPPI) is a non- Administrative Public Establishment granted a civil personality and financial autonomy, it implements state policy in the field of Standardization, certification and Industrial property. It was created in 1982 regulated by the law No.2009-38 of 30 June 2009, which repeals the Law 82-66, it is placed under the authority of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mines. It is managed by Business consulting representing the various concerned ministries.

The INORPPI mission is to take actions on standardization, products and quality services and to protect the industrial property.

In this context, the institute:

- ✓ Centralizes and coordinates all works, Studies and surveys in these various fields. It plays an information and training role.
- ✓ Sets up, in collaboration with concerned organizations, general program of the standard development, Creates standardization technical commissions, organizes their work and provides secretariat support to them. INORPPI is the national information point on standards.
- ✓ Provides product, service and management system certifications.
- ✓ Issues patents, registers trademarks and industrial designs.
- ✓ Receives and registers all acts affecting Industrial property rights.
- ✓ Maintains the Central Commercial Register

INNORPI represents Tunisia at International standard organization ISO, International Electro-technical Commission IEC and World Intellectual Property Organization WIPO.

### **Tunisian Halal Certification Process**

A consultative committee/certification committee was established to ensure the smooth running of the halal certification process according to the international certification requirements with respect to the independence and impartiality principles. The certification procedure is conducted by an assessor team composed of:

- An auditor specialized in food safety and food risk analysis. His selection is based on auditor qualification criteria of INNORPI
- An expert on Islamic affairs recognized by DIWAN AL IFTAA, whose mission is to assess the degree of organization compliance to Islamic guidelines to which the particular technical regulation refers.

The final decision of certification is made by the general manager of INNORPI and “Samahet Al-Mufti”, based on the evaluation report and the certification committee’s decision. The halal certification approval enables applicant to display the Tunisian halal label/logo. To keep this right of use, the organization must be monitored twice: at the first and second year after certification. Applicant can get renewal after three years.

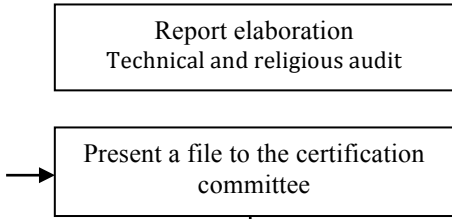
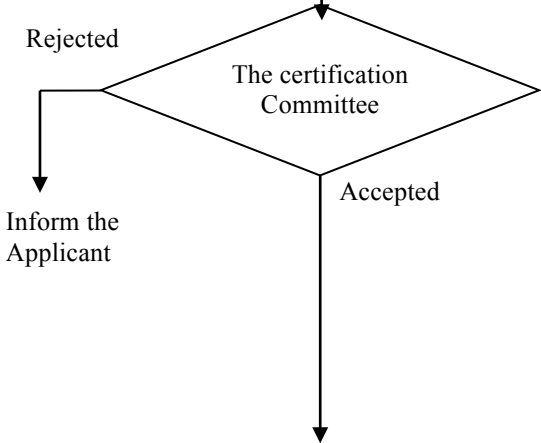
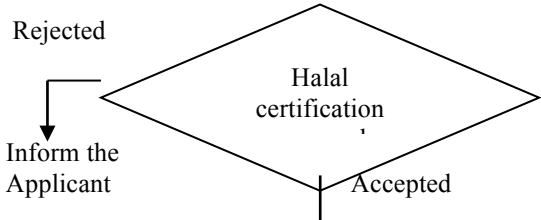
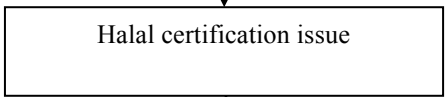
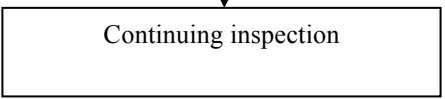
It should be mentioned that the certification process of halal food in Tunisia is based on the three following standards:

- ✓ NT 124.66 (2012) of food products – guidelines for HALAL foodstuffs.
- ✓ NT 124.67 (2012) of food products – Instructions For organizations providing halal certification.
- ✓ NT 124.68 (2012) of food products – Instructions for the HALAL accreditation body Accrediting halal certification bodies.

These standards refer to those introduced by OIC: the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (SMIIC Standards: Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries), as INORPI has actively participated in the development of SMIIC Standards.

**Table 1-Tunisian Halal Certification Process**

Responsibles	Stage	Clarification
- Diwan al Ifta - INNORPI	1. 2.	the firm applying for halal certification has to send a written request or application form to mentioned organizations
- Diwan al Ifta - Technical Centre for Food Industries		
-INNORPI	3.	Firms must provide INNORPI with some documents such as : Healthcare Accreditation Certificate, The legal status of the organization, the certification field, the number of locations that need to be certified, the number of employees, raw materials, output paths, documents of food safety management system, the HACCP plan ...
INNORPI	4.	A coordination will take place between INNORPI and Diwan al Iftaa to fix the audit schedule
INNORPI	5. Audit	The stage 1 audit consists in checking all the company documents and in ensuring that they meet the technical and legal requirements The aim of this stage is to get detailed information to be ready for the stage 2 audit
- INNORPI -Diwan al iftaa - Laboratory  - Laboratory		In this stage, the representative of Diwan al Iftaa and the INNORPI auditors will verify on the spot whether the company meet shariaa and technical requirements

<p>- INNORPI -Diwan al iftaa</p> <p>- INNORPI</p>	<p>6.</p>  <pre> graph TD     A[Report elaboration Technical and religious audit] --&gt; B[Present a file to the certification committee]   </pre>	<p>Auditors will write the audit based on the report of the representative of Diwen al Iftaa</p> <p>The file includes the audit and laboratory report</p>
<p>- INNORPI -Diwan al iftaa</p> <p>- The Ministry of Industry - Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry of Commerce - Consumer protection organization -Other organizations</p>	<p>7.</p>  <pre> graph TD     A[The certification Committee] -- Rejected --&gt; B[Inform the Applicant]     A -- Accepted --&gt; C[ ]   </pre>	<p>Diwan al iftaa is the head of this committee</p> <p>The main role of this committee is to study the file and give its opinion</p>
<p>NNORPI General director</p>	<p>8.</p>  <pre> graph TD     A[Halal certification] -- Rejected --&gt; B[Inform the Applicant]     A -- Accepted --&gt; C[ ]   </pre>	<p>The general director will give his approval</p>
<p>Samahat mufti al jomhuriya</p>	<p>9.</p>  <pre> graph TD     A[Halal certification issue] --&gt; B[ ]   </pre>	<p>Samahat mufti al jomhuriya will give his approval The halal certification will be issued</p>
<p>INORPPI Diwen al Iftaa</p>	<p>10.</p>  <pre> graph TD     A[Continuing inspection] --&gt; B[ ]   </pre>	<p>The Tunisian halal certification will be valid for three years</p>

### Research Methodology

Being a qualitative study, this research utilized semi-structured interview technique. Face-to-face interviews enable maximum of communication and interaction between

interviewees and interviewer (Cardamone, Eboli and Mazzulla, 2014). Further, the presence of interviewer ensures a good understanding of the questions and a uniform interpretation of the question leads to more precise answers (Conrad and Schober, 2000). In fact, semi-structured interview is considered as an appropriate technique for exploratory studies as it enables researchers to gather rich data (Shafiq, Haque and Omar, 2015).

### **Respondents of the Study**

The sample size of this study was defined according to data saturation principle. The interviews have stopped when no additional data were attained. Thus, 21 in-depth interviews were conducted to achieve the objectives of this study. Indeed, Qualitative, exploratory researches utilize small samples and the results are generally not representative of the population under study (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). The sample used in this study consists of ten female and the eleven male.

#### *Sampling and Data Collection*

A sample of educated and knowledgeable consumers aged 18 and above was selected for this research. The respondents were contacted at the entrance of the supermarket. Supermarkets were chosen given the fact that some certified halal food products which are imported from countries such Turkey and Malaysia are available there, as there are no Tunisian halal certified products in the Tunisian market. A list of open-ended questions was utilized at the beginning of the interview to guide the respondents. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed in the early phases of data gathering while assuring the best possible standard of information capturing.

### **Data Integration and Analysis**

After a careful and considered process of data integration, themes were extracted and analyzed through a combination of respondent viewpoints and literature. To meet ethical norms the identity and information of interviewees were kept confidential. In this study, the interviews were transcribed, codified and interpreted utilizing Nvivo 8.0, a qualitative data analysis software. The findings were divided into two main categories: “the factors influencing consumers’ intention to purchase a halal certified product” and “acceptance of halal certification”. The first theme was divided into six sub-themes as following:

- ❖ Factors influencing consumers’ intention to purchase a halal certified product
  - Awareness
  - Religiosity
  - Attitude
  - Subjective norm
  - Perceived behavioral control
  - Trust
- ❖ Acceptance of halal certification

Furthermore, four consumer segments were identified based on their level of religiosity and their age: “Enthusiasts” (28.57%), “Supporters” (33.33%), “Indifferents” (19.04%) and “Oppositionists” (19.04%).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***The Enthusiasts***

This segment consists of aged people with high level of religiosity. They represent 28.57% of the sample size. Compared to interviewees of other groups, this group of respondents expressed the greatest understanding and showed a very particular concern about halal

issue. They gave longer and more detailed answers which indicate that they have a good background and knowledge of the halal concept. They highlighted the linguistic meaning of halal, such as permissible, lawful forbidden, unlawful... This is similar to the study of Hasan (2016) who showed that the degree of awareness toward halal concept among the interviewees is very high which may be a major determinant factor in buying halal certified product.

The respondents of this profile asserted that Islamic religiosity plays a crucial role in shaping their consumption behavior. This is supported by Zakaria et al. (2017) who suggested that religiosity has a positive effect on purchasing decision process.

Further, respondents affirmed also that obviously social pressures such as their friends, their family members and persons who are important to them will affect their decisions to buy halal certified products if they will be available in the Tunisian market. This is in line with the conclusion of Awan, Siddiquei and Haider (2015) who showed that social and family pressure has a positive effect on consumer intention to purchase a halal certified product as in a Muslim country halal food consumption is socially acceptable.

Furthermore, the respondent of this segment judge themselves able to buy products with halal certification. They believe that they have resources such as time, money and knowledge to buy such products. The interviewees expressed the idea that they are even willing to devote substantial effort and pay more in getting halal certified products if they will be available. This is consistent with the findings of Bonne and Verbeke (2006) which demonstrated that Muslim consumers are willing to put substantial effort in getting halal meat or food even though they are residing far from their home country.

However, Four out of six participants of this group affirmed that they are not confident that Tunisian products and beverage are 100% halal. They claimed that they have a serious doubt about the halal status of products sold on the Tunisian market. This is contrary to the study of Hasan (2016) which indicates that when the majority of the society is Muslim, consumers are confident that all food products are halal.

Finally, the respondents of this group have a positive attitude toward halal certified product and were the most enthusiastic about the introduction of halal certification for the local market. They expressed that this measure is supposed to be taken since long time as we live in a Muslim country. The members of this profile consider that halal certification may be a solution for food manufacturing issues in Tunisia. They also believe that halal certification will increase their trust in Tunisian products, let them avoid any doubts and mostly give them peace of mind. This point of view is supported by Shafie and Othmen (2006) who affirmed that consuming halal product give consumers peace of mind. Some of the answers from interviewees of this segment were the following:

*“Halal fits the criterion mentioned in the Quran, for example the flesh of swine, carrion and the animal which is gored to death are not halal. Halal is what Allah allows and haram is what Allah prohibits. We eat every thing except those which are forbidden”* (Participant A)

*“Allah allows tayyibat and prohibits impurities Allah permitted things to be eaten and prohibits things and forbade them because they are harmful to human health although these things seem to be good like wine. It is both a harm and benefit for people but its sin is greater than its benefit”* (Participant B)

*“It is evident according to familiar stand point: wife and children understand these things. They have influence on each other. We are living together so the influence is reciprocal”* (Participant E)



*“If they are available of course I will buy them even if they are more expensive even if I have to go to another place to buy them maybe these products will not be sold in the store and they will be available in supermarkets so I have to go there to purchase them”* (informant )

“From my point of view most food products are doubtful I don’t feel comfortable, today when you buy a product and you check the list of ingredients that you don’t find. Most of the time you will find symbols and indices which are known only by experts or nutritionists I’m not an expert you buy a soft drink you find E114 what does it mean E114? I’m an ordinary person I don’t understand these symbols so I put a question mark on it how is it manufactured? What is it E114 or E115?” (respondent F)

“Introducing a halal certification for the Tunisian market: this is what it is supposed to be. Besides the halal and haram concept the hygiene concept will be granted.”

### **The Supporters**

This segment includes young people with a high religiosity level. They represent 33.3% of the sample size. Overall, the participants of this profile covered the meaning of halal concept. They showed that they understand what a halal product means. Like the first group, respondents they admit that Islamic religiosity has a positive influence on their consuming and purchasing behavior of food and beverage products. This is consistent with the study of Azam (2016) who argued that religiosity is the best guideline to determine the consumption behavior as various religions impose some restrictions related to food.

Respondents mentioned also, that social pressures have a significant impact on their consuming and purchasing behavior of food and beverage products. This combined with the findings of Alam and Sayuti (2011) who found that subjective norm is an important factor in influencing consumer-buying behavior especially in a Muslim country. The authors explained that Muslim culture is a collectivist culture where individuals perceive themselves as dependent on the members of their group and they prioritize collective objectives rather than personal objectives.

Further, participant of this segment affirmed that they possess enough resources such as money time and knowledge to buy halal certified products if they are available on the Tunisian market. However, unlike the first profile, the respondents of this group assume that all products sold on the Tunisian market are halal as Tunisia is a Muslim country. Interviewees expressed the view that they do not think about the halal status of products when they purchase because they take halal for granted. This is similar to the research conducted by Ahmad, Abaidah and Yahya (2013) who indicated that Malaysian consumers are not generally concerned with halal factors when buying food products because they are confident that food manufactured in Muslim majority country is halal.

The participants of this profile agreed that it would be great if the Tunisian government introduced halal certification for the local market and make it compulsory. According to them, this measure will form a second control on food and beverage manufacturing. It will enable, from one hand, to check the product ingredients and make sure that they do not contain any haram elements, from the other hand to verify the applying of hygiene and safety standards. This is in conformity with what Awan, Siddiquei and Haider (2015) viewed about the importance of halal certification as they highlighted that certification obligates a process of quality control to monitor efficient implementation of required manufacture conditions and ensure quality standards. Some of the responses from participants of this segment were the following:

*“When you say halal product two things come into my mind first the meat is slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines second the product is free of pig gelatin only these”* (Informant, K)

*“The influence of religiosity on consuming and purchasing behavior is clear we have to follow what is mentioned in Quran every think mentioned as unlawful in Quran we cannot eat every thing mentioned in Quran as lawful we can eat”* (Informant J)

*“Yes of course, automatically, if halal products will be available my family will buy only products with halal certification”* (interviewee M)

*“If they will be available I will buy them sure I will find money and time. The important things that they will be available”* (informant L)

*“I think that the Tunisian products are halal because we are a Muslim country I don't think that producers may use non halal ingredients in manufacturing products”* (respondent J)

*“I consider introducing halal certification a good thing and this step must be taken at the beginning [...] at that time, dual objective will be met: from one hand we will verify the halal status of products, from the other hand we will maintain a good health because if haram ingredients will be used this will automatically harm our health”* (respondent J)

### **The Indifferent**

This segment consists of young people with low level of religiosity. They represent 19.04% of the sample size. Unlike the first and the second group, participants of this profile did not show an interest or deep knowledge about the halal concept. When asked about halal product they gave brief answers which they were not sure about as they used expressions such “I heard that”, “they said that”, “I am not sure”. This means that they don't have a good knowledge about the halal concept and that they have a low awareness toward halal product. Religiosity has no influence on their consuming and purchasing behavior. They do not base the choice of their food products on halal but on other factors such as quality and price. This is in contradiction with the finding of Elseidi (2017), which revealed that religiosity is the most powerful factor in shaping consumer purchasing behavior in a Muslim country.

Interviewees also affirmed that social pressure has no influence on their consuming and buying behavior. They consider that they are free to choose and to consume whatever they want without any pressure or influence either of the family members or friends. According to them, consumption is a personal freedom no one may impose or influence their food or beverage choice. This is contrary to the research of Alam and Sayuti (2011) which suggests that in a Muslim country which is characterized by a collectivist culture social pressure normally has a significant effect on individual consuming and purchasing behavior. However, given that the Tunisian society has changed, young people leave their parent's houses and live alone to pursue their studies. So they become more autonomous and independent and started prioritizing their personal goals rather than collective goals such as they do in western cultures.

Three out of four respondents declared that even if they have enough resources such as money and time it does not mean that they will buy products with halal certification. They explained that may be they may buy this kind of products and they may not. They purchase the product which is more convenient for them regardless its halal or haram status. This is contrary to the study of Ambali and Bakar (2013) who showed that 84.8% of respondents consider that consuming non halal food is a sin for Muslim.

Some interviewees said that do not trust the halal status of Tunisian products as they do not know how they are manufactured and what kind of ingredients are used. Other participants indicated that they trust Tunisian producers when it comes to halal status. The participants of this profile agreed that they do not care about the halal status of products they purchase and they are indifferent towards the establishment of halal certification in the national market. They stated that halal certification will make no difference for them when buying a product. They are looking for criteria other than religious criteria. But they do not deny that they may purchase products with halal certification if they meet their needs in term of quality and price. Some of the responses from interviewees of this segment were the following:

*“According to my knowledge halal product concern meat which must be slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines that is mean slaughtered not killed not beaten by sticks not shocked by electricity it must be slaughtered to drain blood out of the body and apparently I don’t know but they said that scientifically proved it is more healthy”* (Informant (O))

*“In my personal opinion, religiosity should not affect the purchase behavior because, as I said from the beginning, it is a personal relationship with God, all purchases or these things they are your lifestyle [...] religion has no effect on me I don’t see that religion may affect consuming behavior”* (Interviewee P)

*“As I said before, consumption is a personal choice no body has the right to interfere or to influence your choice either your family or your friends”* (Interviewee P)

*“Even if halal certified products are available, even if I have resources I don’t care so much about these things I may purchase them as much as I may not purchase them it depends on other criteria such as quality and price”* Informant (N)

*“I have no idea about the halal status of Tunisian food products because I don’t have the ingredients, no idea because I trust them”* (Interviewee O)

*“Actually I don’t care if it is halal product or harm what matters to me is to find something I like, with convenient price and good quality this is the most important”* (Informant Q)

### **The Oppositionists**

This segment comprises aged people with low religiosity level. They represent 19.04% of the sample size. Interviewees gave short answers. Compared to the members of other profiles, the respondents of this group did cover neither the halal concept nor the halal linguistic meaning. Their responses were limited to products permitted by religion, allowed by God, halal slaughtering, without giving any explanation, details or examples, which shows a limited form of knowledge and a low concern about the subject. When asked about the effect of religiosity on consuming and purchasing behavior all interviewees gave common responses they indicated that religiosity have no influence on their consuming and buying behavior. They were even confused and they wondered how religiosity may affect their purchasing behavior. This appeared to be quite similar to what Khan and Azam (2016) found which revealed that religiosity has no effect on consumer buying behavior. This is opposed to the common belief putting the religious connotation of the subject in question.

According to the member of this group, when they buy food products they look for criteria such as quality, price but they do not make attention to religious criteria. Like the third group and contrary to the first and second group, the participants of this profile affirmed that no body might influence their consumption decisions and choices. They

argued that, at their age, they cannot be influenced any more. They asserted that they have enough knowledge and they are able to decide by themselves what they want to buy and consume and what they do not want. This finding is supported by the works of Soon and Wallace (2017) who demonstrated that subjective norm has no effect on consumer purchasing behavior.

Also the informants of this segment affirmed that they won't buy halal certified products even if they are able to do so and even if they possess enough resources such as money and time. They argued that halal certification is only a commercial tool to influence consumers to purchase. The majority of respondents declared that they believe that all Tunisian products are halal as Tunisia is a Muslim country. They have confidence in Tunisian government and producers. The consumers of this profile affirmed that the establishment of Tunisian halal certification for the local market is not interesting. According to them this certification is nothing more than a tool of exploitation and manipulation of the Tunisian consumer. They asserted that they wouldn't buy products with halal certification as they know what it is all about. Some of the answers from respondents of this segment were the following:

*“Not at all, religiosity has no effect on my consuming and purchasing behavior because I look for suitable criteria, a suitable quality, and suitable prices without paying attention in fact so far I've never paid attention whether it's a halal product or not”* (Participant T)

*“I guess, I'm wondering, I say to myself a halal product what is it, is it authorized by the religious authorities? by what? by an Imam? by a minister of religious affairs? by a Middeb? I don't know I don't know”* (Respondent S)

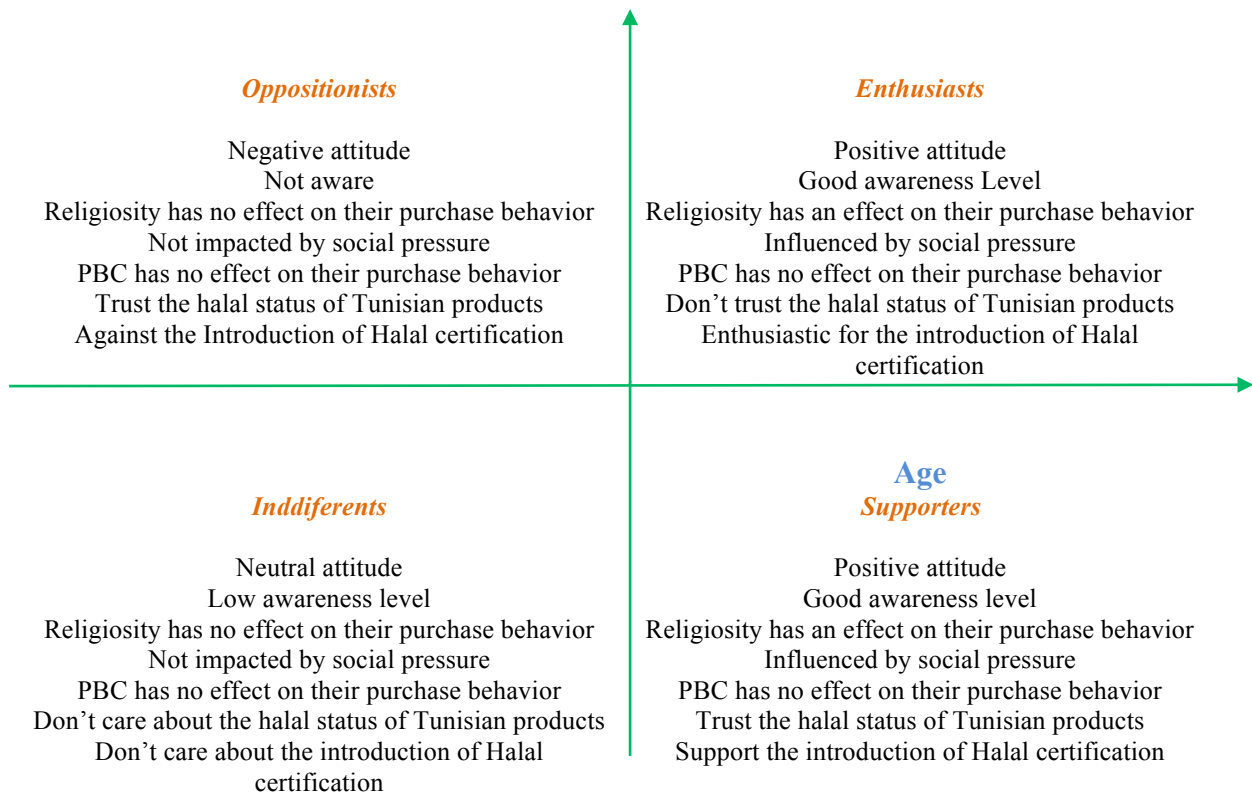
*“At my age, I can not be influenced anymore by either family members or friends”* (Participant V)

*“No, I won't buy this kind of products even if I have enough resources”* (Respondent U)

*“For me Tunisian food products are 100% hala!”* (Respondent S)

*“As I said this story of halal and haram is a fake story, is nothing but a commercial tool to exploit consumers”* (Participant T)

**Figure 1- Four Consumer Segments**



## Conclusion and Implications

The qualitative analysis of data gathered from the in-depth interviews yielded four consumer segments. Thus, marketing strategy may be tailored in accordance with the target segments. “Enthusiasts” and “supporters” showed the highest level of interest in the halal certified products. They are expected to be lucrative segments, which will be willing to purchase the halal certified products. These two segments are characterized by a good level of halal awareness and a positive attitude toward halal products. Further, religiosity and subjective norm have a positive effect on their intention to purchase. Thus, marketers should incorporate the element of religion, attitude and social pressure in their marketing campaigns. They must build their image as in full conformity with Islamic guidelines.

The “Indifferents” claimed that they look for factors other than religiosity such as quality and price when purchasing a food product. They asserted that religiosity has no effect on their purchasing behavior and they purchase the product which is more convenient for them regardless of its halal or haram status. Thus, the marketing effort should not only be concentrated about the halal aspect but also about the quality of the goods themselves.

As for “Oppositionists”, they have a low level of awareness. They consider that religiosity cannot influence their consuming behavior and that halal certification is nothing but a commercial tool to gain profit. It is recommended then to organize series of campaign to educate and increase their awareness while emphasizing the safety, healthy and hygienic aspect of halal certified products. These items must be respected when manufacturing halal certified products to gain the confidence of this segment.

Trust appeared as very important factor in influencing purchasing behavior for the consumers of the four segments. Thus, INORPI must meet halal standards to gain consumer trust as mentioned by Bonne and Verbeke (2007). Further, INORPI has to take its responsibility in regulating, supervising and monitoring the halal certification process to prevent any halal certification abuses or misuse which may lead to distrust the halal logo. Tunisian consumers will rely on the information provided by the INORPI as the halal certification process is not visible to them so they need external observers which is INORPI to handle the halal certification. Therefore, it is vital that the trust institution which is INORPI not breach the confidence of consumers in handling halal certification matter as stressed by Morrow et al. (2004).

Given the fact that this study is the first one aiming to investigate the factors that may influence the Tunisian consumer intention to purchase a halal certified product, it provides precious and significant information for manufacturers, who want to start a halal industry in Tunisia and take advantage of a lucrative market, in identifying their consumer target. It will also facilitate companies and marketers to determine adequate strategy with the aim of best meeting the wants and needs of Tunisian consumers.

The results of this research raise some questions to be tackled in the future. First, the study is performed in the food sector; conducting the same study in different sectors may yield varying outcomes. Second, this study included attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control awareness, religiosity and trust, testing other variables such as habit, word of mouth may be explored in future researches. Finally, the interviewees of this study were consumers, it would be interesting to gather data from Tunisian food manufacturers to investigate the opportunities and challenges of manufacturing halal certified product for the local market.

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