

## **Investigating the Effects and Prioritization of the Factors Affecting Development of Halal Brand for Export Promotion (Case Study: Food Industry)**

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**ABSTRACT** — Regarding reduction of petroleum income and its fluctuations, increasing growth of population and unsustainability of oil resource, extension of non-oil export has gained much attention among economic managers and policy makers. Moreover, non-oil export is a main source for currency. Among various industries involving in non-oil export, food industry has a special position. Regarding its relative advantage, food industry is considered as a major strategic industry for extension of export. Since Iran, as a large Islamic country, has a remarkable position for success in Halal food market, some strategies should be set to enhance Iran's share in this market. The present study was carried out to evaluate and to rate the factors affecting extension of Halal brand for promotion of food products export. A questionnaire was prepared and submitted to 211 food experts from 451 food exporting companies. Data were analyzed by SPSS and LISREL software. Data normality was tested by SPSS and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; factors were rated by Friedman test; and LISREL software was used to test the hypotheses and to evaluate questionnaire's validity. Results indicated that content, structural and behavioral factors have positive influence on extension of Halal brand export. Moreover, behavioral factors had the highest priority.

**KEYWORDS:** Export Extension, Behavioral Factors, Content Factors, Structural Factors.

### **Introduction**

The most conspicuous event in the recent decades has been internationalization of business and companies' movement to global market. Under this condition, firms try to sell their products across the world and maximize their profit by various ways. Export is an approach that has many applications for globalization of companies. Through exporting practices, the firms can provide their products in foreign markets with lowest rate of local involvement (Morgan et al, 2004). Regarding reduction of petroleum income and its fluctuations, increasing growth of population and unsustainability of oil resource, extension of non-oil export is an indispensable issue that has gained much attention among economic managers and policy makers. Moreover, non-oil export is a main source for currency and among various industries involving in non-oil export; food industry has a special position and is considered as a strategic and important industry of Iran for extension of export practices. The task of food production has found a new form among the people. Regarding the fact that consumption of halal food has been extended even in non-muslim societies, investment in producing and supplying halal food- especially in Iran- and exporting this food type to foreign countries can act as a new bridge to enter global markets. Therefore, global market of halal foods is regarded as a potentially profitable market for producers of halal products (Alam, 2011). Islamic countries constitute the main market of halal products; this market is widely extended in 57 Islamic countries and also in other ones such as China, United States, France, Germany, England and Canada. During the last year, about 800 million dollars of halal food (except for nuts) was exported by Iran. Currently, 1500 food production companies in Iran print halal brand on their products the majority of which is exported to foreign countries. Despite extension of halal food industry, this industry is faced with major hurdles such as the lack of certain director in halal food sector, inability in management and organization of halal food industry, lack of standard certificates for quality control of halal food industry, lack of structured planning for export of halal foods, not standard state of halal foods based on global market criteria, inefficiency of marketing network, lack of laws and rules in the field of halal food, as well as others (Torabi, 2012). Moreover, individual attempts of Islamic countries in the field of halal brand, lack of consensus on a comprehensive and encouraging pattern in this field, selective interpretation of halal concept and use of the corresponding results in halal business have confused muslim and even non-muslim customers so that they can't discriminate between halal and non-halal products and are not satisfied with these products due to presence of numerous halal logos and philosophies. On the other hand, economic effects of halal products and services have moved to non-muslim countries and thus effective works can be done in favor of Islamic countries and especially Iran by implementing efficient and comprehensive models (Malekpour, 2013). Although there have been many studies investigating the factors affecting

halal brand position, none of these studies has used a comprehensive approach. Therefore, by reviewing available models of brand and studies focusing on halal brand, the present study aims to investigate the most important factors influencing export of halal food products in three behavioral, structural and content dimensions. Behavioral (environmental) factors refer to social processes including networks, social players and media that affect extension of halal brand in food exporting firms. Structural factors include perspective, mission and the goal of governing system and social condition affecting extension of halal brand; and content factors include internal factors, empowerment and general indices of evaluation of halal brand that affect extension of halal brand food exporting companies (Malekpour et al, 2014; Nikukar et al, 2014).

## **Theoretical background**

### **Brand concept**

Brand is a name, term, design, symbol or every other property that differentiates a certain product and service from similar products and services. Legal title of brand is trade mark (American marketing association, revised in 2004). Brand is a set of mental nodes or functional and logical awareness and advantages occupying target market in the mind. Awareness refers to linking images and symbols with the brand or its benefits and advantages. It is brand's advantages that act as the basis for purchase decision making (Jafarpisheh, 2011). In Persian, brand usually refers to a product or service with high credit and social value. In the other words, brand has a social identity and powerful brands are those to which people have an ownership feeling. For example, people may say "this is my favorite marque". Superior brands can motivate customers' emotions and the customers trust in these brands and expect them to create superior ideas and innovation in their products (Pour Fallah, 2011). Many organizations are concentrated on their own brand extension to strengthen their position in market and to compete and survive. Brands are among the most powerful capitals of the companies. Brand advantages are numerous including competitive advantage, loyalty and long term authenticity for the customers (Rozita, 2012).

### **Islamic branding**

No clear concept has been proposed to define Islamic branding term. For further elucidation, this term can be used for Islamic nature of brands such as:

- 1- These brands are in accordance with the religion (Islamic brands based on religion)
- 2- They originate from Islamic countries (Islamic brands based on origin)
- 3- Their target is Islamic customers (Islamic brands based on destination) (Alsarhan, 2010).

Combination of these three descriptions generates four distinctive brand types, namely true Islamic brands, traditional Islamic brands, inbound Islamic brands and outbound Islamic brands.

1- True Islamic brands: these brands meet three requirements of Islamic brand description; they are halal, they are produced within Islamic countries and their target is Muslim customers. The word "true" doesn't imply that other classes of Islamic brands are false. For example, majority of the brands produced in Islamic countries are halal; the apparent reason is that Muslim customers are the target for these brands.

2- Traditional Islamic brands: these brands originate from Islamic countries and their target is Muslim customers. As mentioned above, these brands are considered halal and before globalization of Islamic markets, halal nature of all available brands had been guaranteed.

3- Inbound Islamic brands: this class includes the brands whose target is Muslim customers but their origin is non-Islamic countries. These brands have gained Islamic nature meaning that they have been changed to gain halal identity.

4- Outbound Islamic brands: these brands are produced in Islamic countries but their target is not necessarily Muslim customers (Alsarhan, 2010).

### **Definitions of Islamic branding**

Brand designing can be defined in three ways that all include "Islamic" concept for description:

- Islamic brands based on following Islam rules: these brands have established their attractiveness based on religion friendly nature and have focused on halal in financial and food services and, to a shorter extend, in procurement.
- Islamic brands based on origin: these brands are entitled Islamic because they originate from Islamic countries.
- Islamic brands based on customer: These brands are produced in non-Islamic countries but are specially designed for Muslim customers. Although they are owned by non-Muslims, they are called Islamic because their target customers are Muslim (Alsarhan, 2010).

### **Halal concept**

Literally, halal means allowed and in expressional form, it means legitimate and relates to followers of Islam religion. It is mandatory for Muslims to use allowed and legitimate products (Shambavi, 2011). Academic vision supports the idea that halal should be embedded in branding frameworks. However, there are fundamental and potential gaps between thinking and commercial applications which are more apparent evaluation of customer-oriented visions. Without revision and evaluation of halal concept within commercial rules, there exist the risk of optimism, limited performance and denaturalization of this phenomenon in future. Moreover, this issue will result in damage of customers. Thus, religious thoughts of halal should regard the customers as stakeholders so that business activities serve the customers not the customers owe the commercial activities (Wilson, 2010). Halal

is an Arabic word primarily assigned for food but its applications include other issues such as dressing style, entertainment, financial transactions and personal relations (Dolan, 2010). If halal identity between brand theory and commercial product is defined as a brand or a combination of the two definitions, some scholars believe that halal is a concept that can't be included in such concepts. Instead of being a philosophy that is effective in marketing branding and product development, this concept deals with basics such as organizational behavior, anthropology, culture and sociology (Wilson, 2010). The origin of halal concept goes back to date before formation of branding and marketing activities; thus it is a fine work to include halal within such concepts. Indeed, it is brand and marketing thinking that should be modified to adapt with what halal actually is. It is recommended that halal position be determined as a compound word assuming the role of a co-brand. As a co-brand, a global organization could create a corporate division, which utilizes the term halal. However, this would bring more of an organization's practices under further scrutiny (Wilson, 2010).

### **Halal branding**

Multinational firms should develop brand with local competence to maximize their success in Islamic markets. As long as branding is the case, multinational companies usually start their activity by the key advantage of possessing managerial competence in marketing and branding compared to their Muslim competitors. These firms possess sophisticated branding and marketing skills that are far higher than those of their local competitors (Alserhan, 2010). Multinational firms should fortify their cultural understanding when entering Islamic markets. Relying on aforementioned branding skills without considering the critical role of cultural sensitivity and knowledge can neutralize their attempts. Hasty arrival without comprehensive understanding of cultural and religious motivations and basics of Muslim customer's behavior can impede penetration of a brand in Islamic markets. There are numerous examples of multinational companies that faced with terrible outcomes due to simple mistakes. The lesson these firms should learn is that their care is not sufficient when operating in a situation with different culture or targeting the customers with different culture (Alserhan, 2010).

### **Export development concept**

It is well documented that economic growth of countries is related to their export due to some reasons. Growing trend of global trade using active business and commercial strategies, revolution in information technology and addressing international hurdles have been highly accelerated; thus there is no need to justify active presence in global trade (Lotfi, 2000). Islamic republic of Iran is one of the countries exporting oil and non-oil products and regarding its natural resources such as sea, mines, etc, the country can play role in business more actively. Countries export various products in terms of their growth level. In industrial countries, export of industrial and processed products with high value added is very important (Qorbani, 2001). Strengthening of export has various advantages including mass production, currency revenue, increased employment, improved quality and reduced price of products. More advantages of export especially in the field of halal foods (regarding Islamic nature of Iran) is achieved by implementing suitable models. Success factors can show direction of export practices. Identification of these factors in various fields of export, technology, investment, production and politics results in better concentration and control and enhances success chance of the exporting firms. By adopting the target market, not only supplying the customers' demands and expectations is extended, but also providing appropriate products (in the field of halal food industry) according to foreign customers' demands and interests finds a dynamic and suitable form. Export: export refers to delivery or sending of products from one location to another either within the country or abroad (Ebrahimi et al, 1999). In the other words, export includes communicating and working with professional markets and market professionals beyond the country boundaries. Export is the start point for communication with others and plays important role in gaining currency revenue and creating commercial balance. Export and international trade are of great importance; commercial relations among different sections within a country differ with commercial relations with foreign parties and this brings about various issues including business strategies. Therefore, here we provide a review on business strategy and export of halal products in Iran.

### **Export of halal foods**

As a result of increased Muslims' awareness across the world, importance and role of international export of halal foods has experienced increasing growth in such a way that many developed and developing countries have focused on export of such foods for sustainable economic growth, regional cooperation and continuous presence in global markets. Considering increasing population of Muslims and negative effects of global financial crisis, investment in a reliable halal food sector will be a major of Islamic countries in future (Institute of business researches and studies, 2011).

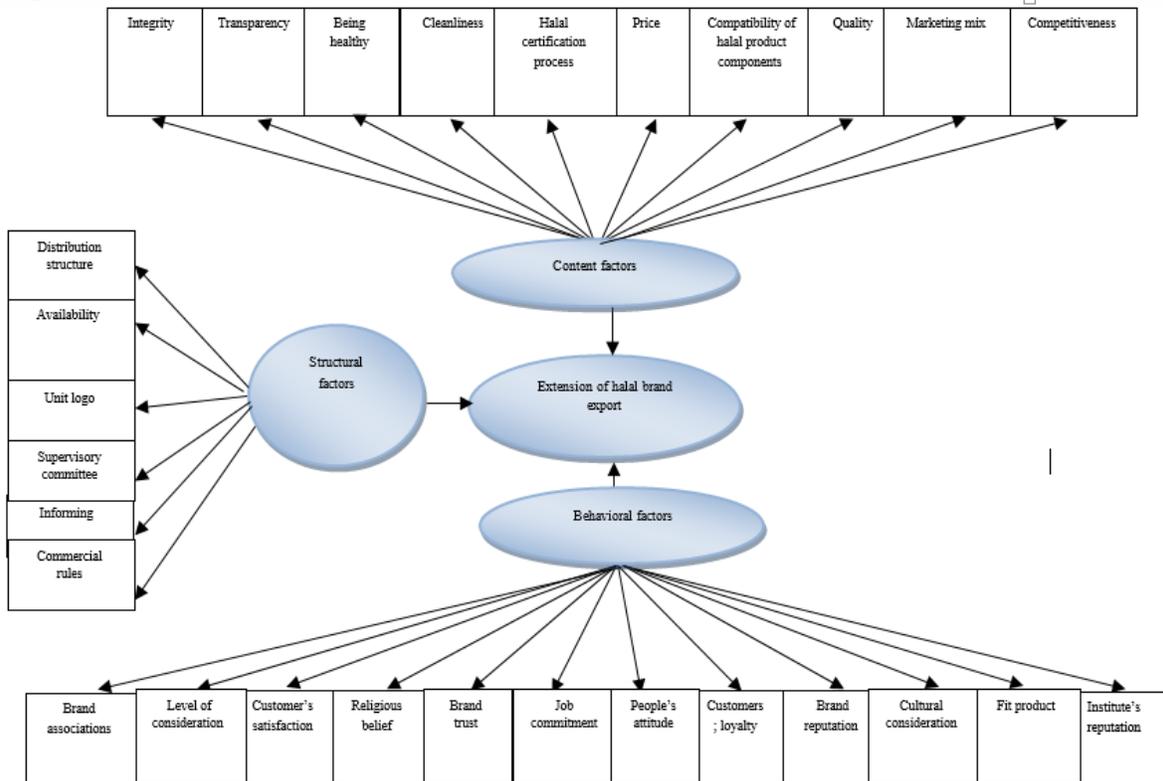
### **Literature review**

Numerous studies have been carried out in the field of brand and branding during recent decade such as the studies conducted by Chang and Yang (2013), Doss and Robinson (2013), Wirtz et al (2013), Davcik and Portugal (2013), Tieman et al (2013) and Farooq (2013). A summary of the studies in this field is presented in table 2.

**Table1.** Studies conducted within and out of the country

| Results   | Year | Author(s)        | Paper or dissertation title   |
|---|------|------------------|---|
| In this paper, factors affecting Muslim customers' behavior in consumption of halal food are investigated in Indonesia. At first, the author evaluated Muslims awareness about halal and haram concepts and then investigated the relation between religiosity and consumption of halal foods using Pearson's correlation. Results indicated that higher consumption of halal foods is observed among people with stronger religiosity which is based on customers' attitude and the most important criterion for consumption of halal foods is lack of pig meat and alcohol in the food; but presence of halal certificate label on foods is not much important. | 2010 | Suesilvati       | Business opportunities for halal foods in global market, Muslim customers' behavior and consumption of halal food |
| Investigating European countries, the authors concluded that European policy makers have faced growing demand for halal foods; the political factors have been proposed as the cause of lack of suitable growth in these markets.   | 2012 | Lever & Miele    | The growth of halal meat markets in Europe: An exploration of the supply side theory of religion                  |
| In this paper livestock slaughter and similar issues are described and in addition it is remarked that people's trust on halal brand has diminished and a major approach to address this concern is to follow Quran principles.   | 2012 | Sazili et al     | Halal authenticity issues in meat and meat products   |
| In this research, the authors remark that religious commitment is a key factor affecting people's intention to purchase products with halal brand   | 2012 | Mukhtar and Butt | Intention to choose Halal products: the role of religiosity   |
| The authors investigated effects of religious symbols printed on product package on customer's purchase intention and, through a field survey, report that such symbols enhance customers' purchase intention and affect their perception of the product.   | 2013 | Bakar et al      | The effects of religious symbols in product packaging on Muslim consumer responses                                |
| The authors investigated effect of halal foods in restaurants menu and found out that presence of these foods has positive effect on restaurant's sale and customers' purchase intention  | 2013 | Wright and Annes | Halal on the menu?: Contested food politics and French identity in fast-food                                      |
| The authors described in this paper religious slaughter in Australia, Turkey, Germany, Belgium, etc and found that there are differences among these countries regarding religious slaughter  | 2014 | Velard et al     | Religious slaughter: Evaluation of current practices in selected countries  |

**Conceptual model of the research**



**Research hypotheses:**

- 1- Behavioral factors have positive and significant effect on extension of halal brand (foods) export
- 2- Structural factors have positive and significant effect on extension of halal brand (foods) export
- 3- Content factors have positive and significant effect on extension of halal brand (foods) export

**Research method****Research methodology**

This is an applied research in terms of aim & descriptive-survey in terms of method. Because descriptive researches are series of methods their aims are describing under-investigation phenomena & conditions as well as using questionnaire tool & are a certain research in terms of data certainty since in that hypotheses investigation is done.

**Statistic population & sample size**

In this research statistic population includes all firms exporting foods with Halal brands. It should be noted that firms which have had the allowance of Halal brand for exporting are 495 that 451 of them are exporting food firms. This amount has been clarified through inquiring from Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of industry, mining & agriculture (the only agent for Halal Brand in Iran) & Iran Halal Information database (through controlling & participation of Halal World Organization).

Sample size has been calculated by Cochran formula as follow;

n: sample size

N: Population size

Z: The value of standard normal unit variable at confidence interval of 95% is 1.96.

p: The value of existing trait proportion in society which if it isn't available, it can be considered as 0.5; in this situation variance value will be the maximum.

q: the percentage of people who don't have the trait in the society .  $q=1-p$

d: the value of permissible error which is 0.05.

$$\frac{NZ^2pq}{Nd^2 + Z^2pq} = \frac{(451)(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(451)(0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)} = 207$$

Of course it is notable that sample size has been considered 240 due to problems such as some filled questionnaires being distorted or not returning some of them .And finally 211 complete questionnaires have been returned & gathered.

The number of firms exporting foods with Halal brands have been indicated in table (3-1) as well as the number of firms which must have been chosen from each province for distributing questionnaire have been indicated too. For instance, chosen sample size for Tehran province has been calculated through below formula

$$\frac{74}{451} \times 207 = 34$$

And the sample size of other provinces has been calculated by above formula.

**Research tool:**

In this research, a questionnaire has been used for measuring under-studied variables which has two main parts:

1. Respondent general information: in this it has tried to gather complete & demographic information on respondent (age, education, marital status, revenue & job).

**Reliability & validity**

In this research, content validity method & construct validity have been used in order to investigate questionnaire validity; so that questionnaire was distributed between some of experts & management and behavioral science professors like supervisor and advisor professors & their viewpoints have been asked about questions & hypotheses assessments. All of them have confirmed the questionnaire. Cornbrash Alpha which was more than 0.7 for all variables (proper value) was used for calculating reliability.

**Analysis method**

In order to test model, conceptual presented model through Structural Equation Modeling was investigated after investigating data normality distribution. So, LISREL software was used.

**Findings**

At first, descriptive statistic was used for investigating statistic population traits.

**Demographic features**

172 of the respondents was male constituting 82% of sample size. 165 of them were married & 46 of them were single

Respondent's age was categorized in 3 parts. 211 of them had the least frequency with the age of less than 35 years old which 63 of them constituting 29.86 % of the sample size. The most frequency is for the age of 45 which 82 of them constituting 38.86 % of the sample size. 66 of them was between 35 to 45 years old with 31.28 % frequency. Regarding education grade, the highest frequency was observed for individuals with BS grade that constitutes 87.47% of the sample; whereas the lowest frequency was found for respondents with diploma and lower grades (2%).

Regarding job experience, 37.44 % of sample size have had experience less than 10 years old.

**Investigating data dispersion normality**

Kolmogorov- Smirnov test & SPSS21 have been used for determining data dispersion normality. Results of data normality was indicated in table 1.

**Table 2:** Comparing elements scores dispersion with normal dispersion

|                     | Content factors | Structural factors | Behavioral factors | Halal Brand export expansion |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| N                   | 211             | 211                | 211                | 211                          |
| Mean                | 3.783           | 3.817              | 3.791              | 3.759                        |
| S.D                 | 0.526           | 0.536              | 0.478              | 0.455                        |
| Kolmogorov- Smirnov | 1.494           | 1.720              | 1.915              | 1.303                        |
| Significance        | 0.053           | 0/054              | 0.130              | 0.067                        |

According to the results have been presented in table3, k-s value was higher than 5; suggesting normality of data distribution.

**Model fit test**

In evaluation of each model, before confirming structural relations, fitness of the measurement model should be ensured meaning that  $\chi^2$  and other indices of fitness should be investigated. The suitable model is one that all of its fit indices are in the allowed range. A common index of model fir is  $\chi^2/d.f$  and according to Gefen et al (2003), values of this index below 3 indicates goodness of model's fit; the value of this index in the present study was 2.06. Since this index lacks a constant criterion for an acceptable model, its significance varies according to sample size (Hooman, 2005) and hence can't be a reliable index for evaluation of model's fit. Thus, other indices were used in this research as well. Another fit index is Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). According to Gefen et al (2003), RMSEA values below 0.08 indicates goodness of model's fit. RMSEA value in this research was calculated 0.025 suggesting that the model is well fitted. Other indices include: goodness of fit (GFI=0.94), comparative fit index (CFI=0.94) and adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI=0.96); the values of these indices should be in the range of 0-1 and values closer to 1 imply better fit of the model. The values of these indices in the present study was higher than average level, thus the model is well fitted.

**Hypotheses test**

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to verify research hypotheses. Standard factor loading and t-statistic were calculated for SEM; the general rule is that the relation strength between factor (latent variable) and observed variable is shown by beta coefficient. Beta coefficient varies between zero and one. If beta coefficient is lower than 0.3, then the relation is considered weak and thereby is neglected. Beta coefficient between 0.3 and 0.6 is acceptable and values higher than 0.6 is very acceptable (Kline, 2010, p125). After identifying the correlation among the variables, significance test should be performed using t-value. Since significance is evaluated at  $p < 0.05$ , thus loading factors for t-value lower than 1.96 suggest that the relation is not significant (Kline, 2010, p55).

**Table 3.** Outputs of structural equations (LISREL)

| Result   | t.value | Beta coefficient | Research hypotheses                                    | Hypothesis number |
|----------|---------|------------------|--|-------------------|
| Approved | 5.91    | 0.59             | Behavioral factors and extension of halal brand export | Hypothesis1       |
| Approved | 4.76    | 0.42             | Structural factors and extension of halal brand export | Hypothesis2       |
| Approved | 5.05    | 0.46             | Content factors and extension of halal brand export    | Hypothesis3       |

**Subsidiary results**

In addition to research hypotheses, the author investigated importance and priority of each variable using Friedman test and found their priorities as follows:

| Importance rank |  | Friedman rank | Variables          |
|-----------------|--|---------------|--------------------|
| 1               |  | 3.252         | Behavioral factors |
| 2               |  | 2.408         | Structural factors |
| 3               |  | 2.879         | Content factors    |

Behavioral factors with Friedman rank of 3.252 has the highest priority, followed by content factors with score of 2.879 and structural factors with Friedman score of 2.408. Furthermore, indices of each of these three criteria were also prioritized using Friedman test and it was observed that regarding content factors, competitiveness of halal brand with Friedman score of 7.652 has the best status. Regarding structural factors, alleviation of public hurdles for halal products export and import among various countries with Friedman score of 3.640 has the best situation and considering behavioral factors, supplying halal products proportional to customers' demands with Friedman score of 7.024 has the best status.

### **Conclusion and recommendations based on research findings**

As mentioned before, the goal of this study was to evaluate the influence and to prioritize the factors affecting extension of halal brand for promotion of export in food industry. The results indicated that all hypotheses were approved. According to the results, considering firms' status in terms of internal and external factors for promotion of export and competitiveness requires fundamental efforts by government and food manufacturing companies. For extension of halal foods export, there is a great need to a serious and public intent by policy makers and country planners especially by ministries of industry, business and economics. The facilities that government can provide include:

- Assisting in holding workshops and conferences in the field of halal food manufacturing and marketing (by Chamber of commerce of ministry of industry and mines)
- Developing funds for halal industry renovation and entrepreneurship for manufacturing and exporting companies according to interests and preferences of Muslim customers (ministry of industry and mines, ministry of economics and capital)
- Attempting to introduce some successful Persian halal brands in global market and introducing properties of Iranian halal foods as the most reliable supplier and thereby acquiring relative advantage in export of halal food (by Chamber of commerce of ministry of industry and mines)
- Implementing tax exemptions and export incentives for halal food manufacturers especially in private sector to promote participation of this sector in production and export of products and thus creating a competitive atmosphere in food industry activities of the country (government, ministry of industry and mines)
- Since behavioral factors have the highest influence on expansion of halal brand export, some issues are recommended to producers and exporters of halal brands:
- Taking the help of professionals in preparation of marketing strategy for halal products and planning of marketing practices to enter halal markets (because behavior of customers in halal market is of great importance)
- Providing halal products according to customers' demands through accurate marketing plans
- Balanced promotion of content, structural and behavioral variables to create trust in halal brand among the customers
- Advertising in global media at strategic and macro level and via websites, social networks and participation in international trade shows to promote and expand halal export and hence to improve people's attitude to halal products
- Improving quality of foods to acquire customers' satisfaction and loyalty
- Firms are recommended to introduce their products in the market successfully and make their halal certification as an association among the customers
- Investigating local culture of halal customers and customization of the halal products according to their culture, ideas and interests
- Considering structural factors and their positive influence on expansion of halal export, government plays crucial role; so some recommendations are made as follows:
- Reduction of public barriers for exporting and importing of halal products among the countries
- Formation of consistent commercial unions by import/export participants certified by Organization of Islamic Cooperation to assist in legislation of the laws facilitating products import and export
- Setting a unit logo in a committee supervised by Organization of Islamic Cooperation for all Islamic countries; therefore a certain logo is assigned for all halal products which enhances customers' awareness and prevents from multiple logos
- Content factors have positive impact on expansion of halal products and generally include 4Ps marketing factors. Therefore, the firms should follow a professional thinking to set marketing mix plans; thus these issues are recommended:
- Halal products producers and exporters should exploit competitive models based on local considerations to strengthen halal brand competitiveness at national and global levels
- Adaption of halal marketing mix based local condition of target market (although local condition of target market is important, the high position of religious standards in production and distribution of halal products shouldn't be ignored)
- Improving quality of halal products by considering technical and qualitative standards during halal production (without abusing religiosity title) and thus, readiness for presence in halal competitive market
- Use of suitable packaging in proportion to halal products and based on products characteristics for informing and attracting more customers
- Simultaneous consideration of quality, packaging, price, and so forth
- It should be mentioned that by balanced improvement of content, structural and behavioral factors, export of halal products to global markets can be promoted.

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