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Situating Halal: religiosity, identity and lifestyle in halal consumption in the UK and UAE

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Abstract

In this paper we draw on a study of Muslim consumer perceptions and concerns about halal labels and certification practices in two affluent countries: the United Kingdom (UK) (where Muslims are a minority of the population) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) (where Muslims are the majority). The study looked at a stratified sample of 330 Muslim consumers in each country. Our analysis points to a growing demand for variety alongside increasing concern for the presence of food additives, GMOs, and alcohol in both cases. Expanding demands to label food and other commodities suitable for Muslims with information about quality and standards of production (Gauthier, 2021) are globalising trends, which Muslims everywhere engage with through 'an Islamic lens – halal' (Turaeva and Brose, 2020: 301). Our paper wants to address the gap in the literature that very little is known about how consumers perceive the halal concept regarding foodstuffs (see Demirci et al. 2016), and it argues that the expansion and segmentation of halal markets suggest that religious consumerism is affected by religious groups, but also by supply chain actors and that these markets cannot be controlled by religious authorities. Our research findings provide fresh insight into the existing understanding of religion and consumption, pointing to the geographical specificities of processes of politicization of halal consumption: the rise of new Muslim youth subcultures in the UK and the coexistence of growing processes of secularization with '*halalization*' in the UAE.

Introduction

While halal simply means 'Islamically lawful' and for long time was used mainly for identifying meat suitable for Muslim consumers **without formal certifications**, increasingly, the word 'halal' is used by Muslims in minority and majority countries to qualifying a much wider range of products and services as 'Islam-compliant'. Gautier argues that 'the emergence and planetary extension of 'halal' is a major development which sheds light on other trends that have been unravelling within Islam (2021:132) and that halal consumption has become central to be 'Muslim'.
Globally, the halal food market is reported to be worth $1.9 trillion (Chowdhury, 2021). It has the potential to serve the world's 1.84 billion Muslims (Kamali, 2021) and alongside India and China it is often spoken of as the world's 'Third One Billion' market.

In the following we address the main trends in the development of the market for halal food in two affluent countries: the UK (where Muslims are a minority) and the UAE (where Muslims are the majority). Firstly, we look at the rise of the halal brands and the role of certification bodies, in their attempt to define processes of production for 'authentic halal' goods: foods, but also cosmetics, body products, attires, leisure activities, finances and more and we argue that these markets cannot be controlled by religious authorities. Then we present the results of a study of

halal food consumption and expectations about halal certification carried out with a sample of 330 consumers in the UK and in the UAE. Regarding meat, we underline specifically the effects of the controversy about religious slaughter in the UK as an important factor for the politicization of halal meat consumption.
The findings of our study provide fresh insight into the existing understanding of religion and consumption, pointing to the geographical specificities of processes of politicization of halal consumption as in the case of the UK where more religious consumers look for halal brands for expressing their Muslim identity as well as new lifestyles, as indicated by the rise of new Muslim youth subcultures, that, following Gautier (2021) we define **"Global-Muslim-Western'**. Conversely, in the UAE most secular consumers look for halal brands as indication of quality, which point to the coexistence of growing processes of secularization with '*halalization*'.

Halal market expansion and the proliferation of certification bodies

In the UK, it is widely recognised that Muslims eat above average quantities of meat, which contributes directly to the continuing growth of the halal market (Author et al, 2022). A recent study conducted by the UK's Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB, 2020) found that more than 60% of halal consumers eat lamb weekly, which is 10 times more than the general population. Indeed, while Muslims represent about 5.7% of the UK population (ONS, 2021)[i], they consume around 20% of all lamb and a growing percentage of beef, most of which is certified halal. In 2015, halal slaughter accounted for more than 40% of sheep and goats, which had increased to 70% by 2018 (FSA, 2015, 2018). If the UK Muslim population triples to 13m by 2050 in line with the forecast of the Pew Research Centre (Lipka, 2017), the halal meat market will continue to expand rapidly.

The growth in demand for halal food in the UK has been accompanied by a greater variety of certified halal foods (Lever and Miele, 2012). The main supermarket chains and large-scale food manufacturers have entered the halal market, and Asda, Sainsbury's, and Tesco now provide an ever-increasing variety of halal-based products, particularly ready meals inspired by international cuisine (i.e. Italian, Spanish, and Turkish). Indeed, because halal is not associated with a particular national territory like other ethnic foods and cuisines (Armanios and Ergene 2018), it has become a particularly attractive option for international restaurants, fast food outlets, discounting pizza and pasta chains, and a diverse range of eating establishments in London[ii] and other major cities such Manchester (Author, 2020) where it is possible to observe the 'two layered effects of structural homogenisation coupled with symbolic heterogenization' that Ram (2007: 466) identifies as peculiarities of present day global post-Fordist capitalism.

The rapid expansion of halal meat markets worldwide has also been accompanied by an increased export of halal meat from non-Muslim countries to Muslim majority countries and the emergence of a growing number of certification schemes and certifying bodies to reassure Muslim consumers about the halal status of meat (Fischer 2015; Yakin and Christians, 2021). For halal certification, the central issue revolves around definitions of what constitutes 'halal slaughter', as there are multiple and contradictory interpretations about the acceptability of the practice of stunning animals before slaughter (Authors 2012; Author, 2016; Bergeaud-Blackler et al. 2015; Author and Author, 2022). In Europe, 5.2% of the population is of Muslim background, accounting for less than 3% of the global Muslim population, yet the market for halal meat is growing rapidly (Authors; 2012; Armanios and Ergene 2018; Author and Fischer, 2018, a, b; Yakin and Christians, 2021) and the segment of the halal meat market is bigger than what would be expected if only Muslims were consuming halal meat. Moreover, there is a significant export of halal meat to the Middle East, East Asia and other countries: HMRC data show there was almost 700% increase in the volume of sheep meat exported from the UK to the UAE between 2018 and 2019 (see AHDB, 2019), as a clear move to find new markets after Brexit (see Lever et al., forthcoming).

The number of animals slaughtered without stunning is not systematically recorded in most countries in Europe and halal certification can be granted to meat obtained from both stunned or non-stunned animals, depending on the certifying body standard (see Authors 2012).
According to a recent survey carried out in the UK by the Food Standards Authority (FSA), over 80% of all animals slaughtered according to halal rules are pre-stunned (FSA 2018). However, there is growing pressure from a minority of halal certifying bodies (e.g. the Halal Monitoring Committee) to promote 'non-stunned' halal meat as more 'authentic' and traditional (Authors 2012, HMC 2014). The certifying bodies advocating non-stunned practices of halal slaughter claim that Muslim consumers are not correctly informed and that mainstream certifying bodies go against the wishes of Muslim consumers by allowing the practice of stunning before slaughter. In line with concerns that stunning animals before slaughter can inflict unnecessary pain (as argued by HMC and other certifying bodies) and potentially kill animals (thus making any meat haram), there is some evidence that, given the choice, a majority of halal consumers would choose meat from non-stunned rather than stunned animals (Author and Knowles, 2020[iii]). Furthermore, Muslim concerns about 'authenticity' are to some extent related to fears about 'fake' halal products (see McElwee et al. 2017) due to the lack of transparency of the meat supply chains.

At the same time, these developments raise public concerns and ethical questioning (among non-Muslim citizens) about the suffering of animals at the time of killing in practices of religious slaughter without stunning, and there is a growing demand for labelling according to the methods of slaughter (see Compassion in World Farming and British Veterinary Association campaigns) in order to protect the rights of non-Muslim consumers to be informed about the status of the meat they eat (Withnall 2014, Author, 2016, Author, 2020).

In Europe the controversy about stunning in halal slaughter is relatively recent. Until 25 years ago, all meat available in the conventional market was considered 'lawful' or 'halal' by Muslim consumers living in non-Muslim countries because it was produced by 'The People of the Book' (Christians & Jews). More recently, several certifying bodies (such as the Halal Monitoring Committee, HMC from now on, in the UK) have questioned the assumption that the meat produced in Europe is produced by the 'People of the Book', as only a minority of European citizens now declare that they are religious or engage in religious practice[iv]. Moreover, these bodies question the adoption of several technological innovations in halal slaughter, such as the use of mechanical blades for chicken slaughter (see Author and Author, 2022).

The growth of halal certification in Europe fits into a general pattern of growing third-party certification and other regulatory arrangements involving a mix of private and public actors (Bain et al., 2013). In some cases, private regulation is largely independent of public regulation (such as Fair Trade or the Marine Stewardship Council label for sustainable fish); in other cases, private regulation is encouraged or enforced by governmental actors via industrial hygiene codes or organic production methods (see Havinga, 2008).
Shamir & Ben-Porat, in their study of religious groups in Israel and the UK attempting to protect the religious practice of 'Saturday and Sunday' as days of rest by boycotting shops that remained open, have argued that:
'*The advent of the global economy and consumer culture are powerful secularizers of the public sphere that seem to erode the religious hold on economic life. But, globalization also produces new modes of political action that can be used by religious groups to regain their power in the political, social and economic sphere* (2007:75)

However, the expansion and segmentation of halal markets suggest that religious consumerism is affected by religious groups, but also by supply chain actors and, as Turner has pointed out for religious markets in the USA, '*These markets cannot be controlled by religious authorities'.* (Turner, 2009:53, see also Klein, 2010, Author and Author, 2012). In the following sections we will illustrate the complexity of the role of halal branding for consumers in the UK and UEA. We will show that halal brands are becoming important tools for practicing a Muslim identity in minority countries, but also for enacting specific lifestyles or promoting dedicated sub-cultures that combine different values and a wide range of religious, aesthetic, and environmental concerns and aspirations.

The rise of halal brands

Author and Author (2017) have argued that food labels are important mediums through which a growing number of consumers, especially those shopping in supermarkets in industrialised countries and exposed to an increasing number of processed foods, come to understand and appreciate foods. In this context, most foods are accompanied with a wide range of information on labels and, increasingly, these labels also signal the ethical status of the food with certifications such as organic, free range, cruelty free, as well as halal and kosher. The same authors propose that ethical food labels function as both *'icons',* that epitomise e specific types of food and food production relations, and as *devices* that intervene in markets and consumption practices (see also Fuentes and Fuentes, 2023). Their main argument is that ethical food labels not only encapsulate a particular form of food provisioning that attempt to bridge the gap between producers and consumers in increasingly globalised markets (as the halal market), but that they are also '*devices'* that act upon and intervene with consumption practices, forms of political expression and broader societal issues[v]. This is consistent with long standing cultural analyses that have highlighted that food consumption involves ' "sociological" phenomena of subjectivity, emotion, memory and acculturation' (Lupton, 1996:8-9) that affect the perception of the morality of food practices and food eaten (Barthes, 1979, Lupton, 1996), Indeed, throughout history, religious peoples have used food as a prominent signifier of social relations to relate to their Gods, one another, and the world (Norman, 2012, Fiddes, 2004 for a specific discussion about the symbolic role of meat). The proliferation of halal food labels and the market segmentation that they promote suggest that Islam too, much like Christianity, must adjust:

> '…*itself to a modern world in which there is an expectation of abundance, the endless satisfaction of desires, the creation of new needs through advertising, and the democratization of consumerism through easy credit, mortgages, and low interest rates… [through which it]…has to make the shift from a message of salvation in a context of scarcity, to a theology of abundance with an emphasis on happiness now*' (Turner, 2017:44).

A growing literature also highlights the fact that very little is known about how consumers (both Muslims and non-Muslims) perceive the halal concept regarding foodstuffs (see Demirci et al. 2016). Recent research indicates that consumers in Muslim minority countries choose products with halal labels in search of assurance that products are suitable for Muslims to consume (Authors, 2012), while other studies in Muslim majority countries found that a significant number of consumers are appreciative of halal and associate it with clean, safe and of high quality (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). Studies in Malaysia paint a mixed picture. One study suggested that awareness of halal certification and the status of halal food among Muslim consumers is limited and could be improved (Ahmad et al., 2013), while other studies found that non-Muslim consumers believe 'halal' to encompass food safety and environmentally friendly aspects (Golnaz et al., 2010; Golnaz et al., 2012). There is also evidence that the lack of uniformity in halal standards, weak enforcement and the confusing variety of halal labels make it difficult for consumers today to make qualified and informed choices (Latif et al., 2014). Worldwide there are variations in the halal food industry in halal requirements, halal assurance activities (Van der Spiegel et al., 2012) and a lack of an appropriate national accreditation system to oversee the activities of halal certification bodies. As Kamali (2021) confirms, ambiguous and misleading signs, words and phrases have become problematic in both minority and majority Muslim contexts.

This complexity offers great opportunities for '*brands to dictate taste'* (Holt, 2002) and for enabling the enactment of a range of hybrid 'global Muslim identities' to Muslims living in secular countries, especially the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants born in Western countries, as well as increasing the halal food market segmentation to reach non-Muslim consumers. We argue that this is particularly evident in the UK, where Muslim food consumption is becoming what Boubekeur (2005) has defined as a 'third space', where 'an extension of the growing individualization in post-industrial societies at the sociological level and of the global neoliberal environment' has embedded 'Islam in capital markets' (Boubekeur 2005:12). Many authors agree that the emergence of 'religious consumer society' in linked to a 'modernization process', or, more specifically, an Islamization of modernity, is responsible for the appearance of the contemporary 'religious consumer society' in Western societies (Dawson 2011; Gauthier, Martikainen, and Woodhead 2011; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Rinallo, Scott, and Maclaran 2013; Wallis and Bruce 1995). This process is largely centred upon the creation and marketization of new Islamic (now labelled as halal) products.

Boubekeur (2005) has argued that these new Islamic products help to cultivate what Gole (2002) has called a new 'Islamic way of life', both modern and Western, through both the aesthetics of the products and the use of new marketing slogans. Here, the artisanal origins of traditional religious objects are abandoned in favour of an Islamic version (labelled halal) of these dominant global products:

> *'…the design and red and white colours of Coca Cola flooding the soda market, the "streetwear" cut inspiring new clothing lines, and the Razanne doll being as anorexic as her counterpart Barbie, but wearing a veil. These objects will thus introduce a new and shared general transnational aesthetic that borrows elements from both Islamic and Western societies' (Bourkeur, 2016:426).*

An example of products assuming this role has been described by Ajala (2018), who looked at young Muslims 'streetwear'. She argues that these products enable new cultural practices among young Muslims (movements such as 'Cool-Islam' or 'Pop-Islam') in countries where Islam is a minority religion and in Muslim countries abiding by conservative religious practises. Here, traditional forms of Islam coexist with modern marketing practices, a lifestyle promoted by the new bourgeoisie in Muslim countries and Muslim communities in the West (Pras and Vaudour-Lagrace 2007). In a Western setting, this streetwear becomes a way to claim pride in being a westernized Muslim without any contradiction (Boubekeur 2005: 12). This trend has also been described as a social visibility of faith manifestation, and a process of interiorization and privatization of believing (Amghar 2003: 78).
This resonates with the development of food consumption practices of younger Muslims, particularly in the UK, where a hybrid identity is performed combining elements of Global Islam (i.e. a strict requirement for 'authentic' halal slaughter without stunning) and Western consumerism (a preference for western food via fine dining and international cuisine). In 2010 Eblex published a report arguing that opportunities for developing further the halal meat market might lie in appealing to young Muslims with a growing range of modern/ convenience products such as ready meals or sandwiches made with halal meat as well as a wider range of cuts. These findings have been confirmed by studies which pointed to a lack of choice for the Muslim foodies or '*haloodies*' (Henly (2013), who seem to be interested in 'fine dining' options (where the absence of pork and alcohol or other forbidden ingredients is guaranteed) or in products where environmental

sustainability or health claims are coupled with a guarantee of 'traditional halal slaughter'. Other interesting trends suggest that the future development of the halal food market will be based on quality segmentation – organic-halal, sustainable-halal, convenience-halal (see for example, Armanios and Ergene 2018; Author, 2020) – where other aspects of the farming system and processing techniques will be as relevant as traditional halal slaughter.[vi]

In the following section, we illustrate the emergence of this group of consumers in a minority country like the UK, expressing a hybrid identity that, following Gauthier (2021), we call 'Global Muslim-Western'. For this group, consumption becomes more important to religious practice or, more simply, the expression of spirituality, and it is here that the role of halal labels on food and non-food items become central in the crafting of lifestyles strongly affected by brand communication. This is in striking contrast with the use of halal brands in the UAE, a majority country, where non-religious more than religious consumers look for halal brands as signs of qualities (hygiene, environment, organoleptic…) and are much less associated with religious practice.

Methodology for researching consumer use and understanding of halal labels

In 2016 we carried out a study by means of an online survey to understand Muslim consumer knowledge of halal labels and their underlying concerns and perceptions about halal certification. The study looked at a stratified sample of 330 Muslim consumers in the UK and in the UAE, one country where Muslims were the majority and one where they were the minority population. However, both countries are affluent and have a growing segment of young and well-educated Muslim citizens. The sample was stratified in order to have a good spread of age groups (between 18 and 85 years old, Tab 1b), gender (Tab 1a) even though in the UAE the percentage of male participants was higher to reflect the local gender balance, religious identity (Tab 1c) income (Tab 1e) and groups according to beliefs (Tab 1d). Around 17% of the sample were Shia, the remainder were Sunni across both countries. The questionnaire was administered by Qualtrics and consisted of 20 questions, nearly one-third open-ended (Annex 1).

Add here Tab. 1a-e

Table 2 compares consumer answers from both countries about what types of food they consume, where they look for halal logos, trust about certification and whether they would be willing to pay a premium price for halal certified products.

Add here Tab. 2

The analysis of the data (Tab. 2) indicates that Muslim consumers in the UK consume both more 'western' and 'eastern' food, and the majority (75%) look for halal labels, only a minority of consumers in the UAE consume western food and only 50% look for halal logos. In the UK, 42% declared that they also check the halal label on cosmetics, while only 12 % do so in the UAE.

The answers to the question 'Which certification body or halal logo do you prefer?' indicate a great deal of uncertainty and a general lack of knowledge (Fig. 1).

Add here Fig. 1 Word cloud about knowledge of certification bodies and logos

Add here Fig. 2 Knowledge and use of halal labels: word-cloud representation.

Interestingly, while a majority of respondents indicated that they check for halal labels while shopping for meat (chicken was mentioned 208 times, mutton 76 and beef 74) the second largest answer was 'none' 182 (Fig. 2). Then, a smaller number of respondents indicated that they look for the halal logo on a wide range of food and non-food goods: cosmetics (42 times), perfumes, soap, beverages, sweets, cream, cottage cheese, vegetables, chocolate, pasta, granola bars, bread and buns, but also insurance and banking. A few indicated 'products imported from other countries (i.e. Australia, Canada and Malaysia (Fig. 2).

However, as Fig. 1 shows, knowledge about halal-certified brands or halal-certifying bodies was very limited in both countries, and most respondents answered that they look for a generic 'halal sign' or any 'halal logo'. A minority mentioned the name of a few certifying bodies both in the UK and in the UAE (HMC, British Islamic Foundation, Halal IDCP, IFANCA, Gulf Halal Centre, Dubai FDI). In the UK, a minority of respondents mentioned the 'Red Tractor' or supermarket own halal brands (i.e., 'Sainsbury'). However more than half of respondents answered 'none'.

The acceptance of non-halal additives in food (73%), Genetically Modified Organism (82%) and alcohol (94%) was far higher in the UAE than in the UK and the consumption of alcohol (as a drink) was also higher in the UAE (52%) than in the UK (44%), as indicated in Tab. 2. This was highest across the 24-34 years old and 35-44 years old cohorts. While trust in halal certification is quite high in both countries (92%- UK and 99%- UAE) the data indicates significant differences regarding trust towards 'non-Muslim' certifying bodies: 96% in the UAE and only 70% in the UK.

These data suggest signs of common trends of a general sophistication of the demand for halal products, and the rise of *'halalisation'* (Gauthier, 2021). As the word cloud in Fig. 1 demonstrates, there is evidence of the extension of the search for halal certification to other than meat items (western foods, processed foods, but also cosmetics, cleaning products, and services…), particularly in the UK, and to a much lesser degree in the UAE, where concerns were expressed specifically about imported foods.

But the differences also point to specific and localised processes of 'politicization' of the market for halal food in the UK. The main difference between the UAE and the UK that emerged from our study was the greater attention paid to halal certification by UK consumers. While this political dimension to consumption was largely absent in the UAE, interestingly there was an evident desire to know more about the whole production system (i.e. environmental sustainability, health and food safety) than there was in the UK. Acceptance of alcohol (in drinks, food and cleaning products) and trust in halal certification were all areas of lesser concern.

Stunning and mechanical slaughter as key issues for the politicization of the market

Market politicisation in the UK largely revolves around concerns about stunning and mechanical slaughter, and previous studies have shown that this is linked to a lack of trust in the arguments of scientific authorities about stunning and animal welfare (Eblex, 2010). As the data in Tab. 3 shows more consumers eat stunned poultry in the UAE (53.94%) than in the UK (33.64). More consumers also eat stunned bovine/ ovine meat in the UAE (64.85%) than in the UK (33.94). While more respondents indicated that they eat stunned meat of all types in the UAE than did in the UK, there were far fewer 'it depends' in the UK than there were in the UAE, perhaps reflecting the lack of interest in this issue. Mechanically slaughtered poultry meat is more acceptable and likely to be purchased in the UAE (60%) than it is in the UK (34.65%); in the UK sample, the preference for manually slaughtered poultry meat is greater. The vast majority (95.15%) of respondents in the UAE declared that they eat meat produced by 'People of the Book' (Cristian and Jews), compared to the UK (63.03%); more males consume the meat of Jews and Christians across both countries, but fewer women do in the UK.

Add here Tab. 3 Acceptability of Stunning in halal slaughter

Certification and use of halal labels

In general, knowledge of labels varies, and it depends on the availability of products in the market and the publicity and activities of the certifying bodies and other supply chain actors. While consumers in both countries trust halal certification, non-Muslim certification is trusted more in the UAE than it is in the UK; the highest levels of trust for non-Muslim certification in both countries were in the 25-34 age group. It is worth noting that while non-Muslim certification is trusted more in UAE, slightly more preferred Muslim-only accreditation in the UAE than in the UK, which could be attributed to the increasing imports of meat into the UAE from countries such as Brazil (Beer 2016) and the UK.

The names of the mentioned brands/labels also reflect the availability of the products in the market. Interestingly, the simple qualification of products as 'halal' is the highest cited answer (Fig 1) and is considered sufficient for informing food choices, without clear knowledge or questioning of the certification process. There is also a growing desire for certification to cover the whole production system, rather than only focusing on slaughter. More consumers indicated that they would prefer to know how animals are reared and killed and that this should be explicitly stated on the label. This is more evident in the UAE than in the UK, but more male than female consumers prefer this option in the UK. The higher numbers preferring a sample of all meat to be checked in the UK can be seen as a reflection of familiarity with auditing practices in the UK (mostly based on sample checks).

Across both samples, data suggest a strong willingness to pay more for halal-certified products, more so in the UAE than the UK, again perhaps reflecting a willingness for segmentation of the halal meat market and an interest in differentiated meat qualities. However, market data from the UK and from the global halal meat market indicate that overall Muslim consumers are more 'price conscious' than non-Muslim consumers and that halal meat is generally sold at lower prices than kosher or non-halal meat.

The 25-34 years old age group is the largest in both samples and this group of consumers check for labels more in both countries, although more check in the UK. Significantly, attention to labels declines with age in both countries, which could correlate with the increasing questioning of halal over time, or simply with the fact that younger Muslim consumers often shop in supermarkets and are more accustomed to a wider range of food labels in modern retailing than in traditional markets. More self-defined 'religious' consumers declared that they check halal labels in the UK, while in the UAE more secular consumers check labels.

Overall, data in this study suggest that both in the UK and UAE there is trust in the existing halal labels but very little understanding of the certification of halal products and of the accreditation of certifying bodies. There is a latent demand for more information about how the halal status of meat (and other products, i.e., cosmetics) is achieved, and an explicit demand for more information about systems of production, and not limited to stunning/ killing methods of farm animals. The greater interest in the overall system of production in the UAE is perhaps also indicative of the lack of concern about the halal status of food (as well as other products) as largely taken for granted in a majority Muslim country and of the growing concern of consumers everywhere for more traceability and environmentally sustainable methods of food production.

One of the most significant differences in our cases is the type of consumers who are interested in and actively check halal labels: in the UK, it is mostly religious consumers, while in the UAE it is mostly secular consumers, which suggests wider appreciation of halal assurance systems. The extension of the halal definitions to non-food products and services, which Gauthier (2021) has defined '*halalisation*', is more evident in the UK and hardly present at all in the UAE. Indeed, our data suggest that food consumption (and other consumption practices) in the UK are effectively a space for enacting Muslim religious and political identities, while in the UAE there is no need to do so. Interestingly, in the UK sample, most respondents (75%) declared that they check for halal labels on food, but while a majority (64%) consumed 'western' food and nearly 40% Eastern food, none of the respondents mentioned their country of origin as a 'source' for identity or any concern about the authenticity of the geographical origin of the food and other products. This is consistent with the recent analysis of the marketization of Islam, and the shift from a nation-state-centred brand of Islam (Haenni 2005) towards 'Market-Islam' (Gauthier, 2021).

Conclusions

In the paper we have addressed the growth of the global demand for halal food and specific consumer trends for halal food and non-food items in two countries, one where Muslims are a minority population and one where Muslims are the majority. Our aim has been to investigate how consumers (both Muslims and non-Muslims) perceive the halal concept regarding foodstuffs (see Demirci et al. 2016) and whether halal branding is influencing the performance of Muslim identities. The consumer study we carried out indicates that the controversy and contestation about stunning animals in religious slaughter has been and still is far more prominent in the UK than in the UAE. One of the effects of this controversy, which animated a significant public debate centred upon issues of animal welfare and 'rights' to practice their own religion, has been the role assumed by the halal labels.

The analysis of consumer expectations and use of halal labels on foods and a growing range of non-food commodities and services in the UK shows the role of both *icon* and *device* played by halal labels as described by Author and Author, 2017. Halal labels can be seen as 'icons', as they epitomise the current state of the commodification and supermarketisation of ethical and religious ideals, where trust in food has become reliant on symbols and certificates rather than personal relationships and they indicate that halal food, particularly processed foods and food sold in supermarkets, is 'lawful'/ 'permissible' for Muslim consumers. But they are also be conceived as devices that indicate how a religious Muslim lifestyle can be enacted through the consumption of an increasingly wide range of products that are now labelled as halal. Indeed, our data point to the emergence of a group of Muslim consumers using halal-labelled items for practising their religion and for expressing a hybrid identity that, following Gauthier (2021), can be defined as 'Global and Western Muslim'. This group of mostly younger Muslim consumers holds an idiosyncratic mix of priorities and values that challenge the common religious-secular and Western- non-Western identity divides. Their consumption practices are arguably central to the enactment of a lifestyle that signals this identity, and which combines elements of a 'global Muslim identity' (including a preference for 'traditional slaughter') as a sign of both the 'authenticity' of halal food and the *halalisation* of non-food commodities and services aligned with a Western preference for international cuisine and food 'omnivorousness' (Handriana et al., 2020, Rankin & Ergin, 2017, Warde et al., 2005). In this context, brands are becoming more important to the performance of this lifestyle and have created the space for the enactment of religiosity and spirituality. Here, it is interesting to note the specificity of this phenomenon and the difference with other studies in less affluent Muslim majority countries such as Iran, which point to the negative perception *of* and the low level of engagement *with* consumerism by religious people, albeit (once again) except for younger generations (Godazgar, 2007).

Conversely, our UAE data indicates the limited *halalisation* of the market (very few non-food items in the market are labelled halal), a higher level of secularization (most consumers define themselves as secular) and the lack of contestation about religious slaughter. However, environmental concerns and desire for higher differentiation in food quality are prominent. Even if our study did not address explicitly the nature of the secularism in the UAE, it might suggest that there are some similarities to Ben-Porat and Feniger's (2009) study of consumption practices in Israel, where their findings suggest a high degree of secularization and a lack of liberalism. They argue further that there are two dimensions to secularism:

> *'A principled secularism, rooted in liberal values and translated into a series of struggles over civic rights and a desire to separate church and state or to break the Orthodox monopoly on central issues. And a the secularism of everyday life, conversely, is rooted in socioeconomic changes associated with globalization, consumerism and consumer culture and is translated into practical decisions about leisure and consumption'(2009:294).*

In the UAE as well, a specific form of secularism is emerging, one associated with the practices of everyday life and consumption that does not necessarily extend to holding liberal values or beliefs.

This study contributes to current literature about the evolution of the halal market and shows that the *'halalisation'* of the market is growing but in a very uneven way. In the UAE, an affluent Muslim country, the modernization of retailing and the 'secularization' of consumption practices happen in a context in which the core values and beliefs of Islam are endorsed by the government and main institutions, therefore the halal status of food, non-food items and services are not doubted, and brand differentiation is expected to offer diverse quality attributes and address environmental sustainability.
In the UK, by contrast, the use of halal brands for a much higher range of products is mostly associated with a segment of younger Muslim consumers who are more embedded in Western culture than the previous generations of Muslim immigrants, and who use halal products to express pride in their faith as well as belonging and integration (without assimilation) into Western culture. Given recent debates about Islam's engagement with consumerism, and calls to assess how halal can contribute to environmental debates at the global level (Kamali, 2021), it remains to be seen how the different understandings of halal evident in our data continue to develop in different regional contexts.

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[i] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/populationestimatesbyethnicgroupandreligionenglandandwales/2019

[ii] https://trulyexperiences.com/blog/best-halal-restaurants-london/

[iii] Author and Knowles (2020) carried out a cross-sectional survey of 250 halal consumers in England and reported that 70% of respondents indicated their preference for meat from animals slaughtered without stunning.

[iv] This claim is supported by recent trends in self-reported attitudes towards religion. For example, according to the British Social Attitudes Survey's 31st report issued in 2014, in the UK between 1983 and 2013, the percentage of the population which describes itself as belonging

to no religion has risen from 31.4% to 50.6% with sharp declines in the number of people identifying themselves as Christians (from 65.2% in 1983 to 41.7% in 2014). Membership of the Church of England has seen the greatest decline in its numbers going from 40.3% of the population in 1983 to 16.3% in 2014 (http://www.britsocat.com).

[v] See for example Author, 2011 for a discussion about the influence of the 'free-range' and organic logos on the perception of taste of meat

[vi] It should be noted that organic certification cannot be achieved via non-stun slaughter.

Figure 1 and 2

Fig. 1 Word cloud about knowledge of certification bodies and logos

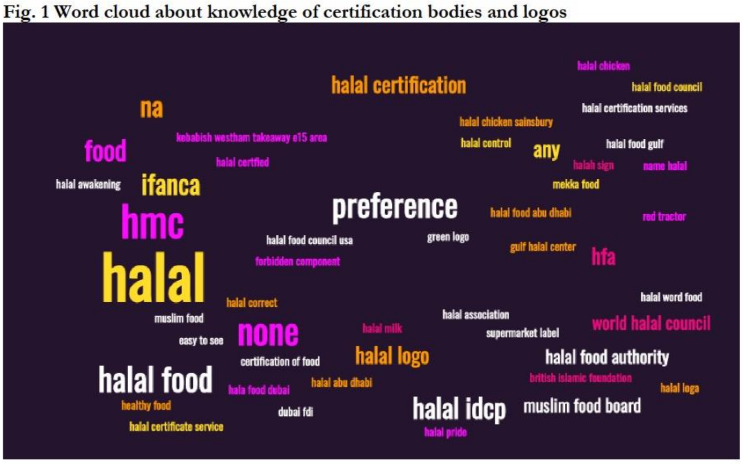

Fig. 2 Knowledge and use of halal labels: word-cloud representation.

Tab 1a-e, Tab2, Tab3

Tab. 1a Gender (%)

Region	*Male (%)*	*Female (%)*	*Total (n.)*
UK	53	47	330
UAE	60	40	330
Total	57	43	660

Tab 1b Age groups (%)

Region	*< 25*	*25 – 34*	*35 - 44*	*45 – 54*	*> 54*	*Total (n.)*
UK	13	43	25	13.	5	330
UAE	14	36	29	17	3	330
Total	13	40	27	15	4	660

Tab 1c Religious Identity (%)

Region	*Secular*	*Religious*	*Conservative*	*Total (n.)*
UK	24	53	23	330
UAE	45	48	8	330
Total	34	50	15	660

Tab 1d School of thought (%)

Region	*Hanefi*	*Shafi*	*Maliki*	*Hanbali*	*Shiaa*	*Other*	*Total (n.)*
UK	25	16	12	8	12	28	330
UAE	20	33	22	15	9	1	330
Total	22	24	17	12	10	14	660

Tab 1e Income US $

Region	*< 500 (%)*	*500 – 1,000 (%)*	*1,000 - 2,000 (%)*	*2,000 – 3,000 (%)*	*> 3,000 (%)*	*Total (n.)*
UK	10	12	26	29	22	330
UAE	2	11	42	38	7	330
Total	6	1	34	34	14	660

Tab. 3 Acceptability of Stunning in halal slaughter

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">UK(%)</td><td colspan="4">UAE (%)</td><td colspan="4">Total (%)</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">All Checked</td><td colspan="2">Sample Checked</td><td colspan="2">All Checked</td><td colspan="2">Sample Checked</td><td colspan="2">All Checked</td><td colspan="2">Sample Checked</td></tr>
<tr><td>Certs in Slaughterhouse</td><td colspan="2">53</td><td colspan="2">47</td><td colspan="2">63</td><td colspan="2">37</td><td colspan="2">58</td><td colspan="2">42</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Yes</td><td colspan="2">Prefer Manual</td><td>No</td><td>Yes</td><td colspan="2">Prefer Manual</td><td>No</td><td>Yes</td><td colspan="2">Prefer Manual</td><td>No</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mech. Slaught.
Poultry</td><td>35</td><td colspan="2">41</td><td>25</td><td>60</td><td colspan="2">35</td><td>5</td><td>47</td><td colspan="2">38</td><td>15</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Yes</td><td colspan="2">No</td><td colspan="2">Yes</td><td colspan="2">No</td><td colspan="2">Yes</td><td colspan="2">No</td></tr>
<tr><td>Christian/
Jew
Meat</td><td colspan="2">63</td><td colspan="2">37</td><td colspan="2">95</td><td colspan="2">5</td><td colspan="2">79</td><td colspan="2">42</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Yes</td><td>No</td><td>Prefer Not</td><td>It Depends</td><td>Yes</td><td>No</td><td>Prefer Not</td><td>It Depends</td><td>Yes</td><td>No</td><td>Prefer Not</td><td>It Depends</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stunned Poultry</td><td>34</td><td>36</td><td>23</td><td>7</td><td>54</td><td>16</td><td>30</td><td>0</td><td>44</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stunned
Bovine</td><td>34</td><td>46</td><td>17</td><td>3</td><td>65</td><td>22</td><td>13</td><td>0</td><td>49</td><td>34</td><td>15</td><td>2</td></tr>
</table>

Tab. 2 Comparison of UK and UAE consumers

	UK (%)		UAE (%)		Total (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Primary Foods Consumed						
Western PF	64		15		40	
Eastern PF	40		12		26	
Other PF	22		2		24	
Knowledge and search of halal certificatio						
Food Logo Check	75	25	51	49	63	37
Cosmetic Logo Check	42	58	12	88	27	73
Trust Non-Muslim Cert	70	30	96	4	83	17
Trust Certification	92	8	99	1	95	5
Halal certification needs accreditation	76	24	86	14	81	19
Muslim-Only Accreditation	45	31	55	32	50	31
Willingness to pay a premium price for halal	66	34	84	16	75	25
Others						
Acceptance of non halal additives in food	47	53	73	27	60	40
GMO is halal	48	52	82	18	65	35
Acceptance of alcohol in Food	58	42	94	6	76	24
Acceptance of alcohol in cleaning products	60	40	67	33	64	36
Acceptance of alcohol as drink	44	56	52	48	48	52