Halal Demand in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This project seeks to determine how the Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre (STC) can facilitate halal certification in Hong Kong’s food industry. We gathered information about Hong Kong’s Muslim community and their need for halal food through semi-standardized interviews, online research, non-participant observations, and an online survey. We provide recommendations suggesting which sectors of the food industry are viable for this project, how to educate clients, and how to establish relations the Muslim community. Specifically, we suggest that the STC focuses on the pre-packaged food, meat, and fast food sectors of the food industry, establishes regular contact with Muslim representative organizations, and introduces the concept of halal to potential clients in the food industry.
Acknowledgements

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It was a pleasure working for the Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre (STC). Ivan Law and Candy Chan specifically were exceptional supervisors. We could not have accomplished what we have without the resources, guidance, and opportunities they provided us. The imams and representatives of Muslim organizations we encountered were invaluable in providing us a window into the Muslim community, helping us understand the intricacies of halal and haram food, providing us contacts, and helping us to distribute our survey. The kindness that this community showed us was a wonderful surprise, and something that will stay with each of us for years to come.

Finally, we would like to thank our fellow students, who not only provided assistance, but also made our stay in Hong Kong feel more like home.
Executive Summary

The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre (STC) is a non-profit organization which provides testing, inspection, certification, and technical services for its industry partners. The STC’s goal is to facilitate the halal certification process in Hong Kong’s food industry. Halal is a concept in the Muslim faith that dictates how Muslims live their life, in our context it importantly dictates what they are allowed to eat. Our goal is to determine the best avenue for the STC to launch its halal certification project. To determine approaches for the STC to facilitate halal certifications, we identified the Muslim population in Hong Kong, their current and future need for halal food, and the challenges they face in following a halal diet. To accomplish our objectives, we conducted semi-standardized interviews, online research, non-participant observations and an online survey.

In our findings we observed a few major themes:

- There is a lack of education in Hong Kong about what halal means. Many people think of halal as just meaning healthy and do not understand this religious practice, which makes it difficult for Muslims to trust local food.

- Availability of halal food is the biggest obstacle for Muslims trying to maintain a halal diet in Hong Kong. While different individuals have different priorities on which food to buy, our contacts were consistently looking for certified food.

- Trust is a key element in working with Hong Kong’s Muslim community. We frequently heard concerns about false certifications and misleading practices. This is a small community that is wary of being taken advantage of.

After analyzing the collected data, we determined three food industry sectors for the STC to approach to begin facilitating halal certifications in Hong Kong. Each of the recommendations takes into account the most common desires of the Muslim community expressed in our research.

- We recommend that the STC starts working with local food manufacturers producing pre-packaged goods to certify their products. Currently very few items in common grocery stores are certified, despite many items being intrinsically halal. This approach has the benefits of being comparably quick to implement, having a large number of potential clients, and the ability to make a significant impact on the Muslim community.

- We recommend that the STC works with major fast food chains to establish halal certified branches. McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut have established halal certified branches in many countries with a significant Muslim population. Even while previous attempts failed, our findings indicate that there is a high demand for halal certified fast food in Hong Kong. It is our opinion that certifying branches of major fast
food chains in key locations will be an important step for the growth of the STC’s project.

- We recommend that the STC works with local slaughterhouses to increase the supply of halal meats. Currently there is only one slaughterhouse in Hong Kong with a section for preparing halal meat. Because the proper preparation of halal meat is a very specific process, Muslims often have a hard time trusting halal meat imported from non-Muslim countries. Restaurants will embrace halal options only if there is a convenient and reliable source for halal meat. In order to get a larger part of the food industry certified, the problems with limited supply of halal meat will need to be resolved.

    Additionally, we recommend that the STC establishes relations with the Muslim community. Members of the community have expressed interest that they would like to work closely with the STC. The community wants to make sure that Muslims in Hong Kong are able to follow a halal diet and that products are not being falsely classified as halal.
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1. Introduction

Islam is among the world’s fastest growing religions, accounting for approximately a quarter of the world’s religious population. Muslim communities are primarily concentrated in the Middle East, Central Asia, Indonesia, South Asia, and North Africa. The teachings of the Qur’an serve as the foundation of Islam, and provide the basis of Islamic law. Actions deemed permissible and forbidden under Islamic law are known as halal and haram respectively. The halal lifestyle affects every part of a Muslim’s life, from prayer and family to social norms and food. A halal diet considers the nature and condition of what enters the body, dictating what a Muslim can and cannot consume.

In many predominantly Muslim nations, the social structure and infrastructure are shaped by halal and haram practices. However, non-Islamic societies do not accommodate these practices to the same extent, posing difficulties for Muslims living in these countries. These difficulties exist in Hong Kong, as the Muslim community represents less than 5% of the population. One challenge is following a halal diet, which excludes many Hong Kong food staples, such as pork and shellfish. Additionally, labeling products as halal is not a standard industry practice. Knowing what is halal and what is not halal can be difficult for Muslims living in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre (STC) is cooperating with the Islamic Food Research Center (IFRC) to streamline the process of certifying halal food. To generate the most benefit for Hong Kong’s Muslim community, the STC needs to prioritize the promotion of halal certification where it is needed most. There are no comprehensive profiles of Hong Kong’s Muslim community, and the few sources found do not provide information on the community’s demand for halal food. The current research on this community is too diffuse and limited for the STC’s purposes.

The purpose of our project is to recommend the best avenue for the STC to facilitate halal certification in Hong Kong’s food industry. To achieve our purpose, we have determined the following objectives:
1. Identify the Muslim population in Hong Kong
2. Identify the Muslim community’s current and future need for halal food
3. Identify the challenges of following a halal diet for Muslims in Hong Kong
4. Determine recommendations for the STC to facilitate halal certification
2. Background

The background chapter covers information deemed pertinent to fulfilling the purpose of the project. First, general information on Hong Kong is covered to depict the environment in which the Muslim population resides in. Next, halal food is defined and explained, from its roots in Islam to the various interpretations put forward by different certifying agencies. The migration of Muslims to Hong Kong is then covered, followed by their integration into Hong Kong society. We conclude with information about the project’s sponsor, the STC.

2.1 General Information on Hong Kong

The following section provides an overview of some of the significant characteristics of Hong Kong. This overview includes information about religion, demographics, food, geography, and history.

2.1.1 Religion

According to the Pew Research Center’s religious diversity index, a variation of the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index that measures the degree of religion diversity or concentration (Pew Research Center, 2014a), Hong Kong had the tenth highest religious diversity index, in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2014b). Freedom of religion is a right that distinguishes Hong Kong from mainland China. China’s traditional religions, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism account for 83% of the religious population. Only 43% of the population in Hong Kong practice religion in some form (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2017). Islam in Hong Kong is a religion with only a small presence. In 2016, the estimated Muslim population in Hong Kong was 300,000, which is roughly 9.2% of citizens who practices religion, and 4.1% of the entire population of Hong Kong (Home Affairs Bureau, 2016).

![Figure 1: Data for religions in Hong Kong from Home Affairs Bureau (2016), for Jewish population in Hong Kong from Lazarus (2014).](image)
2.1.2. Demographics

Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places in the world (Smith, 2017). It has a total population of 7.39 million people with a population growth rate of 0.7% per year (Census and Statistics Department, 2017a). In 2017, the male population was approximately 3.36 million while the female population was estimated to be 3.91 million (Census and Statistics Department, 2017a). The largest age group are people 25 to 64 years old (Population Pyramid, 2017).

Most of Hong Kong’s residents live in the New Territories, accounting for 52% of the population. The remaining 48% resides in the Kowloon Peninsula and Hong Kong Island; 31% in Kowloon Peninsula and 17% in Hong Kong Island (Census and Statistics Department, 2017b). The most densely populated region of Hong Kong is Kowloon; it has a total area of 47 square kilometers (Pletcher, 2008) with 2.216 million residents at 47,168 people per square kilometer (Census and Statistics Department, 2017b).

The majority of Hong Kong’s population is of Chinese descent. In 2016 about 92% of the population considered themselves as Chinese. The other major nationalities present in the territory are: Filipinos (2.5% of the population), Indonesians (2.2% of the population), and British (0.5% of the population) (Census and Statistics Department, 2017c).

![Figure 2: Data for nationalities in Hong Kong from Census and Statistics Department (2017c).](image)

2.2. Islam and Halal

The following section provides a general overview of Islam and its relationship with halal food. We discuss first the basis of Islam and Islamic law, followed by information concerning
halal food and its preparation. The information in this section serves as the foundation of our project.

### 2.2.1 Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion that is closely related to Judaism and Christianity. Muslims believe that the Qur’an is the final book of God following the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament. Muslims believe that in 610 C.E the Prophet Muhammad was approached by the angel Gabriel in a cave near the Muslim holy site of Mecca. Gabriel then told Muhammad that he was the next and final prophet of God and began to recite to him the new revelations of God that the Prophet would transcribe as the Qur’an.

According to the Pew Research Centre, 49 countries have a majority Muslim population (DeSilver & Masci, 2017). Their 2010 global analysis shows that Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world with approximately 209 million Muslims that account for 87.2% of its population. Closely following are India at 176 million, Pakistan at 167 million, and Bangladesh at 134 million (Wormald, 2015). Combined, 43% of the world’s Muslim population lived in these four countries (Wormald, 2015).

![World Muslim Population Map](image)

**Figure 3:** Data for the Muslim Population around the world (Mahmud, 2009)

Within Islam there are two major branches, the Sunni and the Shia. The Pew Research Centre’s global demographic study breaks down the distribution of these groups:

“Of the total Muslim population, 10-13% are Shia Muslims and 87-90% are Sunni Muslims. Most Shias (between 68% and 80%) live in just four countries: Iran, Pakistan, India and Iraq” (Liu, 2009).

While the differences between these groups have developed over time, the original divide traces back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The now Shia believed that only a blood relative of the Prophet should be allowed to succeed him, and wanted to have Ali ibn Abi Talib, the...
Prophet’s cousin, succeed him. The community leaders however decided that Ali was not a suitable leader and elected a close friend of the Prophet. Following years of revolts and violence these groups live now in persistent opposition.

Figure 4: Data from “Sunnis and Shia in the Middle East” (“Sunnis and Shia”, 2013).

2.2.2 What is Halal Food?

Halal, the Arabic word for “permissible”, refers to all things that are allowed under Islamic law. The outline for the laws and lifestyle that are considered to adhere to God’s will, “Sharia”, is broken into categories known as “The Five Decisions.” An article from the Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Politics outlines them as:

“An act may be mandatory (wājib or farḍ), meaning that it is a sin or crime not to perform it. A mandūb act is recommended, but it is not a sin to omit it. An act that is neither recommended nor disliked is neutral (mubāh), that is, God has no particular opinion about it. If an act should be avoided, but is not an actual sin, it is “despised” (makrūh). Finally, an act that is a sin or a crime to commit is ḥarām.” ("Muslim journeys").

The term “halal” refers to what is considered allowable under these guidelines. While most of these guidelines are clear, there is debate on whether makrūh (despised) actions are considered halal and on the specific interpretations of different rulings.

For meat to be halal, it must follow standards outlined by Islamic law known as Dhabīḥah, meaning slaughter. The Qur’an is explicit on the primary requirements of Dhabīḥah, encompassing preparation, handling, and slaughter of livestock. Animal slaughter must be done by a practicing member of an Abrahamic religion (Islam, Christianity, or Judaism), although some certifiers will only accept slaughter done by a practicing Muslim. Halal meat must be from
an animal that is intentionally slaughtered in the name of Allah, excluding any animals that die of natural means (The Qur’an, Pickthall, 5.3). The method of slaughter focuses primarily on what is considered the most humane. According to the European Department of Halal Certification (EDHC), slaughter should be done via a quick severing of the animal’s jugular using a sharp blade (Department of Halal Certification, n.d.). They further specify that, while not necessarily required, it is ideal that the animal should be in comfortable conditions, slaughter should be as painless as possible, the knife should be hidden from the animal prior to slaughter, and the slaughter should be done out of sight of other animals (Department of Halal Certification, n.d.).

2.2.3 Defining Haram

While there are minor disagreements, the majority of haram (prohibited) foods are uncontroversial. Commonly known restrictions include products involving pork and alcohol. The level to which practicing Muslims are concerned about these rules is a broad spectrum. While some Muslims see halal as a guideline and won’t fret about occasional pork, many Muslims consider it unacceptable to eat on premises that serve haram items for fear of cross contamination.

A study comparing popular halal certification standards shows that they are divided on whether or not a business that serves haram items can be certified to serve halal products (Latif, Mohamed, Sharifuddin, Abdullah, & Ismail, 2014). The halal standard set by the Malaysian government does not allow for haram items on certified premises and is the strictest halal standard according to this study. The precedent of the Malaysian standard has international significance as the Malaysian government has been pushing it to become the forerunner in this industry (Shirin, 2017). An increasing number of independent halal certifiers have been unifying under this standard, including the Islamic Food Research Centre (IFRC), the organization with which the STC is currently working.

2.2.4 Variation in Halal Practices

The Muslim community is divided on whether pre-stunning animals for slaughter is considered halal. While they do not fully endorse pacification and consider it a last resort, the EDHC halal standards permit the stunning of animals before slaughter (shaykh, 2017). The Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM) halal guideline states that stunning is not recommended, but acceptable if it meets their standards (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2009). Advocates of stunning argue that, when done right, it ensures minimal suffering before slaughter and allows for halal food to exist on an industrial scale. The major opposition focuses on the efficacy and humanity of the methods of stunning (Fuseini, Knowles, Hadley, & Wotton,
The DSM criteria for stunning require that “stunning shall not kill or cause permanent physical injury to the animal” and that “The animal shall be alive or deemed to be alive at the time of slaughter” (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2009). As more studies and refinements have emerged on stunning technology that minimize animal suffering, stunning has become far less controversial (Fuseini, Knowles, Hadley, & Wotton, 2016).

2.3 Muslim Migration to Hong Kong

The following section provides a brief overview of the history of Islam in Hong Kong. First, some information about the early history of Muslims in the territory is provided, who they were and where they originated. Then, the formation of the first Islamic community and their integration into Hong Kong is detailed. This section concludes with a breakdown of the Muslim population in Hong Kong.

2.3.1 History of Muslim Migration

Muslim traders of Arabian, Persian, and South Asian origin were the first Muslims to settle in China during the eighth century (Weiss, 1991). These Muslims are often overlooked as having taken part in the early presence of Islam in Hong Kong due to the limited records that exist (O’Connor, 2012, p. 23). Once settled in China, some traders married locals, and their lineage became known as the Chinese Muslims or Hui people (Weiss, 1991, p. 419). Throughout their generations, the Chinese Muslims have merged some of Chinese culture and beliefs with the practices of Islam.

The influx of Muslims into Hong Kong began in the early 19th century following British colonization. South Asian sailors and merchants arrived with the British and settled in what today is known as the Central district of Hong Kong. When the South Asian Muslims settled in Hong Kong, many brought their wives and children to Hong Kong. Some South Asian Muslims married within their new established community, while others married local Cantonese. The term “local boys” refers to the children that were born between the marriages of South Asian Muslims and local Chinese (Weiss, 1991). According to O’Connor, the wealth of South Asian Muslim men made marrying local Chinese women socially acceptable, while the reverse was exceptionally rare.

The South Asian Muslims, particularly the “local boys”, were favored over the local Chinese by the British due to their “excellent Chinese and English language skills” (O’Connor, 2012). This enabled them to become highly respected law enforcement officers and civil servants (Heaver, 2015). They were appointed positions in the police, army, and the bureaucracy, jobs that the British did not want to occupy (O’Connor, 2012, p. 24). These jobs allowed them to act as mediators between the British and the local Chinese. Although the Muslims occupied
important jobs and were able to accumulate wealth, they remained segregated as the mediators between the British and the local Chinese.

By the 1850s, the British colonizers acknowledged the presence of a Muslim community in Hong Kong. The community established the first Islamic organization, the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund (ITICFHK), with representative members from the different Muslim sub-communities. The ITICFHK was granted land by the British so that Muslims could have a place where they could practice their religion. The land was in what today is known as Shelley Street (Weiss 1991, p. 425). Today there sits the first mosque, Jamia Masjid, that was built in Hong Kong. The mosque was first built in 1890 and later on rebuilt and enlarged in 1915 (The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong [ITICFHK], 2015b).

Today, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world (Lipka & Hackett, 2017). From 2010 to 2016, Hong Kong saw an estimated increase of the Muslim population by 80,000 people. In 2016, the total of the Muslim population was estimated to be about 300,000. Half of them (150,000) are Indonesians, mostly female foreign domestic workers. The rest is comprised of 40,000 Chinese Muslims (Hui), 30,000 Pakistanis, and the remaining are non-Chinese individuals born in India, Malaysia, the Middle East, and Africa (ITICFHK, 2015b).

2.4 Muslim Integration into Hong Kong

In this section we discuss the different Muslim organizations in Hong Kong, followed by a discussion of Muslims’ adaptation to the cultural and social dynamics in Hong Kong. To conclude, we provide information about the Indonesian domestic workers.

2.4.1 Muslim Organizations

The Muslim community in Hong Kong is represented by various organizations, often organized by nationality. The predominant nationalities are the Indonesians, Chinese Muslims, and South Asians. The major representing bodies of Muslims in Hong Kong are: the Islamic Union of Hong Kong (IUHK) and the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong (ITICFHK) (ITICFHK, 2015a). The most prominent organization is ITICFHK. It is a government recognized organization that oversees the administration of mosques and cemeteries, and acts as a way for Muslims concerns to be addressed by the government (O’Connor, 2012). These Muslim organizations also spread awareness of Islam and connect Muslims and non-Muslims through social events.
2.4.2 Cultural and Social Integration

Historically, the Muslim community’s cultural and religious practices have been respected since their settlement in Hong Kong due to the various important roles they fulfilled. This is reflected by the central locations of the first two mosques, Jamia Mosque and Kowloon Mosque (O’Connor, 2012, p. 30). A folktale tells that the local Chinese would not walk through the area where Muslims had gathered for prayer if they were transporting pork, as an expression of respect.

In recent years, the Muslim community in Hong Kong has experienced increasing discrimination. According to O’Connor, Muslims are discriminated by race, rather than religion. Many people in East Asian countries prefer lighter skin tones because it has been associated with racial superiority, beauty, and better socioeconomic status (Pe, 2016). As a result, negative attitudes towards dark-skinned individuals in Hong Kong are common. The discrimination perpetuates segregation against the Muslim community, who seeks to integrate into Hong Kongese society (Lam, 2012). An example is the push for ethnic minorities to learn English instead of Mandarin or Cantonese. This language barrier hinders everyday communication and limits access to resources/institutions, primarily higher education.

2.4.3 Domestic Workers

The largest portion of the Muslim population in Hong Kong are Indonesians, who are almost exclusively female domestic workers. They are contracted as maids, childminders, and cleaners who live and work in their host family's home. During their days off, Indonesian women can be seen in Victoria Park. They share food, listen to music, read letters, use the internet, and read the Qur’an together and form a support network (O’Connor, 2012, p. 46).

From the 1970s until the early 2000’s, most of the foreign domestic workers came from the Philippines. Hong Kong’s Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic of 2003 caused Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the president of the Philippines, to impose a ban on new foreign domestic contracts between the Philippines and Hong Kong. The need to replace these workers drove the influx of the Indonesian domestic workers (O’Connor, 2012). Indonesians were the best fit due to their general obedience, Cantonese fluency, and willingness to work below minimum wage.

Indonesian domestics workers are often unable exercise their right to practice Islam due to their working contracts and living conditions. Documented cases report domestic workers having to change the way that they practice their religion to accommodate their situation. Some employers would not allow them to pray or wear their hijabs at home, and force them to consume pork (O’Connor, 2012, p. 49). As a result, many of the domestic workers are unsatisfied spiritually and feel discriminated. They are forced to choose between employment and faith.
2.5 Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre

The following section covers information about the project’s sponsor, the Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre (STC). We discuss the STC, its current position in Hong Kong’s testing industry is explained, and ways that their experience and current ventures may be utilized for the project’s objectives are identified.

2.5.1 The STC and its Industry Position in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre is a non-profit organization that specializes in testing, inspecting, certifying, and providing technical services for other agencies and industry partners. STC’s services specialize in the disciplines of chemicals, food, pharmaceuticals, electronics, textiles, toys/children products, and medical devices. STC certified clients can offer competitive products and services, while also building consumer confidence. STC wishes to enter the halal food market to cater to the needs of the Muslim minority by assisting halal food certification to make halal food more available (Hong, 2017d).

STC’s role in industry is rooted since its establishment in 1963. The business relations built since then include mutual recognition agreements with 50 separate agencies around the globe and over 60 international alliances. From this position in industry, the opportunity to initiate and conduct industry changes in standardization and innovation presents itself. STC’s mutual recognition agreements and international alliances grant it leverage in introducing new testing and certifying ventures, while expertise in services such as quality assurance and safety validation conserve client confidence. STC’s Food Science Group works with food manufacturers, processors, restaurants, catering services centers, and fast food vendors to ensure food safety and quality control. The role of STC in industry, their connections, and current initiatives position it well to enter the venture of halal food certification (Hong, 2017c).

STC’s food testing experience, certification alliances, industry connections, and social outreach could serve as a good starting point in enhancing the availability and accessibility of halal food in Hong Kong. According to STC, their food Science Group has a recent history in halal food testing. They use their microbiological lab to test for animal products, microbes, and enzymes; the ability to check for trace amounts of non-halal substances offers another layer of consumer protection. Current testing operations for banned additives could be adapted for halal testing. Pre-shipment inspections could also be conducted as a halal certification service. The ability to test food for food contamination and trace product origins will enable large manufactures to become halal certified easier (Law, 2017).

STC’s networking with food outlets and other certification agencies will ease the certification of halal food and communicating the incentives of doing so. STC is already collaborating with the Islamic Food Research Centre (IFRC) Hong Kong, a member of the
World Halal Council (WHC), to provide a certification program for halal products and act as an overall resource. Having a reputable partner is essential to gaining and retaining the trust of Muslim consumers.
3. Methodology

The purpose of our project is to recommend the best avenue for the STC to facilitate halal certification in Hong Kong’s food industry. To achieve our purpose, we have determined the following objectives:

1. Identify the Muslim population in Hong Kong
2. Identify the Muslim community’s current and future need for halal food
3. Identify the challenges of following a halal diet for Muslims in Hong Kong
4. Determine recommendations for the STC to facilitate halal certification

3.1 The Muslim Population in Hong Kong

We are conducting research primarily utilizing government provided data and local scholars’ publications as our sources. We are collecting general demographic information on the Muslim community in Hong Kong pertaining to population, ethnicity, and economic status. This information helps us identify key locations to conduct interviews and the types of questions that we should be focusing on for our interviews and survey.

We are conducting semi-standardized interviews with representatives of the Islamic Union of Hong Kong (IUHK), the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong (ITICFHK), the Indonesian Muslim Association, and the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia. We are interviewing these individuals because they have direct interactions with the Muslim community. The structure of semi-standardized interviews allows us to have predetermined questions, asked consistently across interviews while still having the flexibility to ask follow up questions. This allows us to gather detailed information about the Muslim community that previous research may not have uncovered.

We are including questions that help us quantify the demographic information of the respondents in the survey that we are using to address Objectives 1 and 2. Obtaining a sample that is approximately proportional to the overall makeup of the Muslim community in Hong Kong is important because it assures that our data represent the perspectives of the different ethnic groups within the community.

3.2 The Current and Future Need for Halal Food

We are conducting semi-standardized interviews with Islamic religious leaders as well as follow-up interviews with those people interviewed in Objective 1. The purpose of these interviews and follow-ups is to fully and completely understand the religious leaders’ and community representatives’ perspectives on the Muslim community and difficulties regarding halal food.
Semi-standardized interviews, conducted with randomly selected individuals from the Muslim community as well as local scholars, will build upon the data collected from our initial interviews. This method helps us identify the food preferences and eating habits of this group. In this way we want to gather more comprehensive information beyond what can be identified from governmental reports.

The survey that we distribute contains questions that will give us an understanding of the community’s interests. The questions that we ask and areas that we target are influenced by the information gathered from Objective 1. This method helps us categorize the current food products that Muslims are purchasing as well as the food products that they want to have halal certified.

We are conducting non-participant observations at Wellcome, a supermarket chain in Hong Kong, to take note of the food products that Muslims are buying. Through non-participant observations, we can identify how actively they are looking for the halal certification stamp without introducing bias. Additionally, we can also identify how often they purchase items without the stamp.

3.3 The Challenges of Following a Halal Diet

We are conducting semi-standardized interviews with the owners of various businesses that sell halal products. This selection includes convenience stores, restaurants, and markets that may or may not sell halal certified products. We are asking these individuals about their perspectives on the Muslim community and the trends they have observed surrounding Muslim customers and halal certified food products. This information helps us identify the concerns that the community may have about the availability of halal food.

The semi-standardized interviews we are using for Objective 2 also include questions relevant to this objective. The existing research does not account for how strictly halal practices are followed. Individual interviews allow us to determine the degree to which Hong Kong Muslims adhere to halal dietary restrictions. Additionally, the aforementioned survey includes questions regarding the difficulty in finding and acquiring halal food.

3.4 Determining Recommendations

After analyzing the data that we collect from the semi-standardized interviews and the survey, we develop a set of recommendations that the STC can pursue to facilitate halal certification in Hong Kong. Our set of recommendations identifies which industry sectors to prioritize, how to convey basic information regarding halal and halal certification to potential clients, and who they should first contact within the Muslim community.
4. Results and Analysis

In this chapter we provide a breakdown of the most important data that we collected from archival research, semi-standardized interviews, an online survey, and non-participant observations. We first detail information regarding the demographics of the Muslim community. Following, we discuss our findings concerning pre-packaged food, meat, and fast food. To conclude, we present the challenges that the Muslim community faces regarding halal food and how halal certification impacts them.

4.1 Demographic Information

As of 2016, there are approximately 300,000 Muslims in Hong Kong. More than half of them identified as Indonesian, followed by 30,000 Pakistanis as the next largest group. The rest is comprised of individuals from India, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Africa (Yearbook, 2016). According to an employee of the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Hong Kong, it is hard to keep track of the Muslim population in Hong Kong since most of them are not permanent residents. Currently, only an approximate population number is known (Appendix B.1).

The data of our survey demonstrate that the ethnic distribution of our sample is approximately proportional to the actual distribution of the Muslim population in Hong Kong. It is important that the survey data match the general demographic information because it ensures that our sample represents the different perspectives of the ethnic groups within the community. As can be seen on Figure 5, most of the responses came from Indonesians, followed by Pakistanis, and then Indians. The “Other” portion groups together the other ethnicities from our sample such as the Bangladeshis and Malaysians.
4.2 Pre-packaged Food

There is a demand for more pre-packaged goods to become halal certified. When asked whether certifying pre-packaged food products or restaurants would be a higher priority, one imam we interviewed claimed that pre-packaged food products were more important (Appendix, Imam One). Other interviewees corroborated this claim (see Appendix B.6 and Appendix B.1 for details). When asked how often they purchase pre-packaged foods, 47% of survey respondents answered “Frequently” or more often. When asked what specific products they would like to see certified, 26% of answers mentioned some sort of pre-packaged product (Appendix D).

Figure 5: Responses to the question: “With which of these groups do you identify?”

Figure 6: Responses to the question: “How often do you purchase pre-packaged foods (sealed food contained in cans, boxes, wrappers, …)"
In our non-participant observations (refer to Appendix E), customers that we identified as Muslim typically checked the packaging of the products they were buying. It appeared to us that they were either looking for a halal certification or checking the ingredients. 94% of survey respondents answered that halal certification makes them trust that an item is halal. When asked how strictly they follow a halal diet 65% of respondents answered “I only eat food I am certain is halal”. These data indicate that many Muslims in Hong Kong are highly concerned about their products being halal certified.

Most of our interviewees gave us the impression that they were more interested in having a large quantity of items be certified than a specific good. For example, Wellcome currently only has one brand of halal certified milk (Appendix B.1). Representatives of the Islamic Union of Hong Kong claimed that even though food products such as bread, yogurt, and biscuits could easily be halal certified, there are very few that are (Appendix B.8). When asked about specific pre-packaged items that the survey respondents would like to see certified, the most common answer was “Bread”, but responses covered a very large range. Answers included simple items like “butter” and “cheese”, convenience products like “frozen food” and “instant noodles”, and treats like “chocolate” and “ice cream”.

4.3 Meat

There is a high demand for halal meat in Hong Kong that is not being fulfilled. 80 - 85% of the halal meat in Hong Kong is imported, notably from Brazil and Mainland China (Appendix B.4). Although, the meat from these countries has a halal certification stamp, the Muslim community is skeptical about its integrity, according to an imam we interviewed (Appendix B.4) and several of our survey responses (refer to Appendix D). The community cannot verify if a foreign food manufacturer is following the halal requirements. Muslim leaders lack communication and means of travel for personal reassurance. We determined that Hong Kong Muslims do not trust the meat from China due to a lack of reputable Chinese certifiers. There are Chinese owned meat markets that sell halal meat, however the Muslim community worries that the owners of those meat markets may use the term halal just to make a sale, according to an imam we interviewed (Appendix B.4). Additionally, multiple interviewees claimed that Chinese food is questionable because Chinese food culture is based significantly on pork, a haram (non-halal) ingredient. The other 15 - 20% of the meat is slaughtered in Hong Kong with live animals imported from mainland China. There are four licensed slaughterhouses in Hong Kong and only one, Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse, produces halal meat in any capacity (Appendix F). The Sheung Shui slaughterhouse lends space to Muslim butchers so that they can perform ritual slaughter (Appendix B.4 and Appendix G) as dictated by the Quran. The meat is then distributed to multiple halal meat markets around Hong Kong (Appendix F).
The price of halal meat is another obstacle for the Muslim community. Domestically produced meat is much more expensive, according to one of the imams we interviewed (Appendix B.4). This is a result of skepticism of imports, while the domestic meat supply is limited to a single slaughterhouse (Appendix F). To cope with the shortage and expense of halal meat, the Muslim community has largely adapted in two ways. Some Muslims with a looser halal diet adherence settle with non-halal meat (still excluding pork) (Appendix B.3 and B.1), while others follow a halal diet more strictly. Some Muslims become vegetarian to avoid that risk, but still need to be wary of food cooked with pork oil or alcohol when going out to eat (Appendix B.2 and B.8).

4.4 Fast Food

Halal certification is not a new concept for many major fast food chains. In countries with a significant Muslim population, fast food chains have some or all of their branches certified. For example, all branches of McDonald’s in Bahrain, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates are halal certified (McDonald’s Bahrain, 2017; McDonald’s Indonesia, 2018; McDonald’s Malaysia, 2018; McDonald’s Saudi Arabia, 2017; McDonald’s, 2013; McDonald’s Turkey, n.d.; McDonald’s United Arab Emirates, 2018). While most of these are predominantly Muslim countries, Singapore only has a 15% Muslim population (Singapore, 2011).

Some of the large fast food chains in Hong Kong are aware that the Muslim community wants them to be certified. In 2013, the chief imam of Hong Kong attempted to convince Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Pizza Hut, and McDonald’s to certify certain outlets (Carney, 2013). However, these chains did not think there is enough of a market for halal certified fast food (Appendix B.4). A local scholar (Appendix B.2) told us that while he believes that the Muslim community would benefit from having halal certified fast food outlets, fast food chains might not put in the effort to become certified unless they are convinced that there is a profitable market.

To determine the Muslim community’s interest in halal certified fast food we asked them “How often do you eat fast food? (McDonalds, KFC, …)” and “How often would you eat fast food if it were halal certified? (McDonalds, KFC, …)” on a scale from one to seven.
On the question about current fast food consumption, 72% of respondents answered “Never” or “Rarely” (Appendix D). However, 61% of respondents indicated that they would consume fast-food “Frequently” or more often if it were certified (Appendix D).

4.5 Challenges

Currently, the availability of halal food is the biggest obstacle to maintaining a halal diet. Survey respondents were asked to select either availability (86%), knowledge (12%), or finance (2%) as the most significant barrier to halal food (Appendix D). Thus, availability was the primary concern by a wide margin. Many food items are industrially produced but are not halal certified, limiting choices for Muslims. Muslim consumers often check ingredient lists to watch for haram components in lieu of certification (Appendix B.5). However, this is far from ideal since ingredient lists may use unfamiliar technical names, rarely specify ingredient sources, or the producer may use haram materials in the manufacturing process, making the products questionable. (Appendix B.5). When prompted to indicate what made them trust a product was halal, survey respondents indicated that they trust “certification labels” the most. The second highest rated option is “checking the ingredient label”, trailing by a wide margin of more than 24% (Appendix D).
There is a strong desire for more food in Hong Kong to be halal certified. One question asked respondents to self-report how closely they follow a halal diet, and over 86% selected “Usually” or “Every time”, indicating a strong preference for following a halal diet strictly (Appendix D). Therefore, the central question becomes how significant certified products are to a Muslim’s diet.

Figure 8: Responses to the question: “What fraction of the food products that you buy is halal certified?”

64% of our survey respondents indicated that at least 60% of their diet consists of halal certified food products (Appendix D), despite the limited variety and supply available. The percentage of non-certified products might be in part due to fresh produce and simple food/ingredient items that do not need to be certified. Furthermore, nearly all interviews conducted stressed the need for more certified halal food.

The adoption of newly introduced halal products by the community may be hindered by the lack of consumer trust. An imam (Appendix B.5) and a member of the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong (ITICFHK) stated that they were unable to personally verify the halal integrity of numerous products since many are imported from overseas. Personal verification is important to them because their responsibilities include offering guidance on how to maintain a halal diet. So far, the Muslim community’s efforts are limited to researching obscure food ingredients, ingredient sources, and communicating with halal certification bodies of imported goods (Appendix B.4). The ITICFHK and imams act as an information hub to collect and share this information.

While responses to the survey question “What makes you trust that a product is halal?” indicate certification and checking ingredient labels are sufficient for most, 33% of responses were shared between “recommendations by religious leaders”, “Muslim organizations”, and
“friends & family” (Appendix D). These members seek a personal element of reassurance that industry currently does not provide.

4.6 Certifications

According to the data from our survey, over 94% of our respondents check for a halal certification stamp to make sure that the food products they buy are halal (Appendix D). The halal certification stamps that our survey respondents are the most familiar with are the ones from Halal Malaysia, the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund, the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, and Majelis Ulama Indonesia. These are also the halal certifiers that the respondents trust the most. Although more than 60% our survey respondents indicate that there are not any halal certifiers that they do not trust, the second most common response is that they do not trust Chinese certifiers (Appendix D). A Muslim individual that we interviewed claimed that members of the community tend to not trust the Chinese certifiers because in the past the certifiers have falsely placed their stamp on products, despite the ingredient list clearly indicating otherwise (Appendix B.6).
5. Recommendations and Conclusions

The following chapter outlines the recommendations and conclusions that we provide to the STC. Each recommendation is given separately in the following five subsections. The first three of these regard different sectors of the food industry that the STC should approach. The last two recommendations are about how the STC should educate their prospective clients and advise them on how to work with the Muslim community. For each recommendation we explain their importance and detail the conclusions that they are based on.

5.1 Pre-packaged Food Products

Pre-packaged food can serve an important role in supporting a halal diet, while also being comparatively easy to certify. The family-oriented, cook-at-home lifestyle common in the Muslim community could be supplemented by having convenient pre-packaged products (Appendices B.3, B.4, and B.6). The STC has many industry contacts with partners from their regular food health and safety programs, enabling the introduction of the STC's halal certification program fairly quickly through the quality control department. Former and current STC clients may be more inclined to participate because pre-packaged goods tend to be easy to certify, since many do not involve any haram products. Furthermore, the newly certified goods would spread throughout Hong Kong if adopted by a major retail chain, making them easily accessible to the Muslim community.

Therefore, we recommend that the STC considers pre-packaged food products as a possible avenue to start their halal certification project. There is a good mixture of available resources, opportunity, and ability to impact the Muslim community. Considering these variables and the data collected, we suggest looking into certifying baked goods and dairy products first since they have the highest demand in this category (cf. Section 4.2 Pre-packaged food).

5.2 Meat

The halal meat supply is a major issue in Hong Kong. The Muslim community does not have many options for obtaining trustworthy halal meat. They either have to trust that the imported meat is actually halal or buy the expensive locally produced halal meat. Therefore, we recommend that the STC approaches the managers of the three other slaughterhouses to provide space to slaughter the animals following halal requirements. The STC should introduce the concept of halal and halal certification to the managers and should offer to help them establish a halal certified space.
5.3 Fast Food

There appears to be a high demand for halal certified fast food in Hong Kong. The chief imam of Hong Kong has already asked major fast food chains to become certified because he believes that there is a demand for halal certified fast food. This is supported by the results of our survey. Based on this, we recommend that the STC reaches out to major fast food chains to convince them to get specific branches certified.

Starting by certifying branches of major fast food chains should be a relatively easy approach. Many major fast food chains such as Pizza Hut, McDonalds and KFC already have halal certified branches in other countries. These chains were previously not interested due to perceived lack of demand. The growth of the local Muslim population and the demand indicated by our data should be used to make a strong argument for a market for halal certified fast food. Starting by certifying branches near areas with a significant concentration of Muslims, such as Victoria Park or Kowloon Mosque, should also help alleviate concerns about demand. Working with major fast food chains might also help the STC to add momentum to the certification scheme. The publicity from partnerships with popular fast food chains will likely help convincing other businesses to consider halal certification.

5.4 Connecting to Industry

Regardless of which of the three recommendations the STC decides to implement, they will first have to educate their clients about what halal is and what the halal certification process entails. The STC asked us to create a brochure to help introduce clients to halal certification. The target audience are industry partners with little to no knowledge about the practice of halal certification. The brochure contains information on what halal is, why they should certify their products, the role of the STC, how the halal certification process works, and contact information (see Appendix G for the brochure). The brochure enables the STC to quickly convey basic information to many recipients, independent of which sector of the food industry reader may be part of.

Outreach to clients may require approaches and information tailored to specific food industries. Pre-packaged food manufacturers have to be informed about the possibility of cross contamination with non-halal ingredients. These manufactures will have to verify that they are not using non-halal ingredients in any of their products or procedures. The items being certified must be produced in facilities that do not produce or store any non-halal items to avoid cross contamination. Fast food restaurants face similar concerns about cross contamination. Restaurants are allowed to have only a section of the kitchen certified if they also intend to serve non-halal items, however they have to be diligent about cross contamination with non-halal products. Additionally, restaurants have to verify that any potentially non-halal ingredients are
from halal certified suppliers. Similar to restaurants, slaughterhouses need to designate space to be halal certified. There is a high risk of cross contamination in these facilities, necessitating a strict separation between all tools and items used for the halal and non-halal meat. The slaughtering of the animals needs to be performed by Muslims to be considered halal. Any workers handling the animals prior to slaughter have to treat them humanely.

5.5 Connecting to the Muslim Community

Having the trust of the Muslim community is integral to the success of the STC’s venture. It is our understanding that most Muslims in Hong Kong will not eat food that they do not trust as halal. Our survey indicates that certification alone is sufficient for most members of the Muslim community, but some certifiers are more recognized and trusted than others. The certification body that the STC is working with currently, the IFRC, follows the halal certification standard promoted by the government of Malaysia. This is the standard most frequently trusted by our survey respondents. This standard also has stricter requirements than most other popular halal certifying standards (Latif, Mohamed, Sharifuddin, Abdullah, & Ismail, 2014). Using a reputable standard should help facilitate the adoption of newly certified goods by the local Muslims and tourists. Furthermore, if the STC plans to expand their program into Mainland China, Halal Malaysia’s reputation will help dislodge the belief among the Muslim community that Chinese goods, even if certified, are not trustworthy. We recommend that the STC maintains its partnership with IFRC for this purpose, while being open to working with other certifiers following either the same Halal Malaysia standard or another reputable, locally recognized standard.

The STC-IFRC joint program provides an opportunity to introduce direct relations between the Muslim community and food manufacturers as a means to build trust and accelerate adoption of newly certified products. If the religious leaders and organizations are satisfied, it is feasible for them to put word out to followers. This will reassure industry clients of STC that their product will be taken up. Muslim-operated stores are also more likely to stock newly certified products if recommended by leaders of the Muslim community. The incentive for Muslim religious leaders and organizations to participate is that they have responsibilities to guide followers, (i.e., helping them maintain a halal diet), which could be greatly assisted through the STC’s venture. For example, imams could establish connections with local manufacturing plants to address questions, visit sites for occasional check-ins, and provide feedback to the industry directly. We recommend that the STC establishes relations with the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong. The Trustees have connections and influence throughout the Muslim community, and are the only certifiers based in Hong Kong to date.
6. Limitations

In this chapter we discuss the limitations of our research. These include areas that we did not have the time and resources to research, flaws in our data collection, and subjects that we decided were beyond the scope of our project.

6.1 Survey

Due to the limited sample size of our survey, we cannot make generalizations about the Muslim population in Hong Kong. We are only able to use the data as supporting evidence and trend indicators.

6.2 Pre-packaged Food Products

We have limited information on local pre-packaged food suppliers due to difficulty getting in contact with them. Because of this, we do not have the perspective of any of these suppliers, and we are not aware of any opinions or concerns they might have about halal certification. The information regarding pre-packaged food in this paper is largely based on the Muslim community’s perspective. Asking local pre-packaged food suppliers for their perspective on halal certification would be advisable.

6.3 Meat

Although we were able to collect some information on the slaughterhouses in Hong Kong, there is still much we do not know. Our limited time prevented us from gathering information on how much halal meat is produced daily. It would have been ideal to know how the designated space for the Muslim butchers in Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse functions to know how to expand this space and/or create halal butchering space at other slaughterhouses. From the general information that we gathered, we only learned about the slaughterhouses’ locations and the operators. We were not able to learn if operators and managers of these slaughterhouses are aware of halal certification and the limited supply of halal meat in Hong Kong. We were also unable to determine the nature of the relationship between these slaughterhouses and the government of Hong Kong. Moreover, the language barrier between us and the Muslim owners of meat markets prevented us from gathering more detailed information about their halal meat supply.
6.4 Fast Food

While we have persuasive data on the demand for halal certified fast food, we have little information on the major fast food chains that we discuss. None of our efforts to contact these organizations were successful. Most of the information we have on this subject comes from an article and an interview that corroborates this information (Carney, 2013 and Appendix B.4). This article claims that the chief imam of Hong Kong reached out to Pizza Hut, McDonald’s, and KFC about possibility having some of their products become halal certified. These three businesses responded that there was not enough demand. Because we were unable to contact any fast food chains, we are unaware of their current stance on halal certification. Additionally, we are unable to account for any other reasons that these organizations may have considered to not become certified.
Bibliography


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Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. (2018). *Names of the existing operators of the three slaughterhouses in the territory and information on their


Appendix A: Interview Protocols

Before starting an interview, we are going to provide the following information to our interviewee:

- The purpose of our project
- Who our sponsor is and what they want to achieve
- What information we want to get from the interview
- How the data collected is going to be used
- That their answers are going to be anonymous

Listed below are sample questions which provide a general overview of what each group is going to be asked:

**Muslim Organizations**
- How strictly does the Muslim community follow halal practices?
- How easy is it for local Muslims to maintain a halal diet?
- Are there any changes that would make halal food more accessible for the community?
- How does halal certification impact the Muslim community?

**Meat Markets**
- How difficult is it for the Muslim community to find halal meat?
- Where does the meat come from?
- Do you supply restaurants or local customers or both?
- Do you know what the halal certification is?
- Does it make a difference to halal certified?
- How strictly does the Muslim community follow halal practices?
- Are there any changes that would make halal food more accessible for the community?

**Muslim Individuals**
- How strictly do you follow halal practices?
- How easy is it for you to maintain a halal diet?
- Are there any changes you would like to see that would make halal food more accessible?
- Does halal certification have an impact on your life?
- How do you find places to eat?
- Which haram products do you explicitly avoid?
- What are some food products that you would like to see be halal certified?
Appendix B: Interview Notes

Each of the following interview notes informs the name of the organization, market, or relationship to the Muslim community of the interviewee as well when the interview was conducted and its time frame.

Appendix B.1: Employee of the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Hong Kong

Date: January 29th, 2018
Time: 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

*We first introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the project.
*The interview consisted of the interviewee providing some of the relevant information that he knows.

- Does not know exactly how many Muslims there are in Hong Kong since the Indonesians are not permanent residents
- Approximately 175,000 Indonesian nationals
  - Approximately 159,000 of them are domestic workers
  - If they are not domestic workers, then they work in banks, in the government of Hong Kong, own restaurants, etc.
  - 85% of the domestic workers are Muslims
  - 90% of the total population are Muslims
- There are several restaurants that serve halal food
  - There are a couple of Indonesian restaurants close to the consulate
- It can be quite difficult to find halal food, but if you know where to find it then no
- There is a halal meat shop in Bowrington
  - A lot of the individuals will get their meat there to cook at home
  - The meat has a certification stamp
- If there are not halal options available, then they eat non-pork meals, vegetarian food, or non-halal chicken
- Domestic workers are not forced to eat pork
  - If they are, then they can file a complaint with the consulate
    - Then, the consulate will talk with the agency that hired them to try to solve the problem
  - Domestic workers can let the consulate know about any of the problems that they have
- Indonesians buy cosmetics in shops that sale halal products
  - The shops are located depending on where certain percentage of the population is in
- Domestic workers find the stuff that they need during their day off
- There is a large population of Indonesian tourists in HK
  - Shopping in HK since it is tax free
• There are hundreds of thousands of tourists per year

• Fish is always halal

• The Muslim community want more products to be halal certified especially meat

• There is only 1 milk brand that is halal certified that is found in Wellcome

• There seems to be no difference in prices between halal meat non-halal meat

• It is easy to find halal certified products if they know the area and know the people
  
  • It is more difficult in the suburbs
  
  • Tourists just google the places

• Places known to Indonesians where they can easily find and purchase halal certified products are: Victoria Park and the area around the consulate

• Having more restaurants and food products certified would benefit the Muslim community
  
  • Restaurants if they are affordable since most of the population does not have a large income
  
  • Food products: better in the long run because they can cook them

• $4,410 HKD is the approximate income of the domestic workers
Appendix B.2: Local Scholar

Date: January 18th, 2018
Time: 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

*We first introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the project
*The interview consisted of the interviewee providing some of the relevant information that he knows.

- Did research on Muslim youth in HK about 10 years ago
  - Has published other articles on and off about the Muslim community in Hong Kong
- Only knows about the bad things of what the Muslim community faces regarding to halal food
  - Has a great problem with Chinese food
  - Muslims can sometime turn a blind eye at some of the things
    - Chicken that is not slaughtered the right way
- Muslims have to make a huge effort to not eat pork or haram byproducts
- Most Chinese food some way or another has pork in it
  - Muslims can love the culture but not the food
- Trying to avoid pork essentially means not eating Chinese food
- Even the halal restaurants are not really safe since they are not really certified
- Not even the vegetarian food is safe
  - Muslims do not tend to be vegetarian
- Within the Pakistani community halal is very important
  - They are more judgmental about whether or not a Muslim specifically follows the halal requirements
- Going out of the Pakistani community gets easier because individuals are not as judgmental
- Chinese Muslims are more concerned about not eating pork
- Indonesians make their salary last
  - They still eat during Ramadan because it is their time off from work
  - Not as judgmental between each other about how they follow Islam
    - Very open with each other
- Bulk of the Muslim population is perceived to be poor
  - Hong Kong’s government gets away with not catering to them since they are such a small demographic
- Something like McDonald’s should be halal
  - McDonald’s is already halal certified in Indonesia, it can be done in Hong Kong too
  - But it will not because Muslims are already going there
    - They do not see a benefit of becoming halal certified
- There is confusion as to what is halal
• “Halal” restaurants have pork
  o They have some options for local Muslims and others for non-Muslims to see a better profit
• The community questions why some Muslims would want to consume something that is not usually halal such as turkey bacon
• Surveying Islam Team (SIT) tried to make a strict halal procedure a couple of years back
  o They had their own standards which were stricter than the ones from the Trustees
  o They have left to other countries
• Muslims tourists want to come and eat Chinese food but Chinese food usually has pork
• Local Muslims have their own methods and know how to compromise and where to get their food
  o Buy chicken from Philippines instead of chicken from China
• There needs to be more local knowledge about halal food
  o Businesses need something simple that would educate them because they do not know the religious context and need
• We need to determine how business would benefit from becoming halal certified
• Changing habits is an important concept
• We have to visit halal restaurants to see how they did it, become certified
  o Ask locals about the restaurants that Muslims go to
• Local Muslims cannot eat out frequently because the restaurants are expensive
• Is this commercially viable? → a question we have to ask ourselves
  o So far, it does not look like it is commercially viable
  ▪ If it were, it would already be done
• Talk to a butcher in Causeway Bay
• The Chinese Muslim community is more conservative
  o They are considered to be “dormant” Muslims
  ▪ Religion becomes important when they become old
  o Not as commercially important since they do not seem to want to become as involve in the community
• CUHK (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) → Muslim students make their own food
• The meat that CUHK buys is halal, however the employees there do not know how to prepare/handle food
  o Go there to talk to someone since they have a Islamic Studies department
• Ebenezers is definitely a place to investigate they have without a doubt been the most successful
• Pakistani family makes about $10,000 HKD a month
  o Low income
  o Only 1 person works, usually the man
  o Usually more than 2 children
  o Do not go out as much to restaurants
• Indonesians
  o Do not make much either
  o Can compromise with halal food
• Chinese
  o Not in the picture as much
  o Do not have the culture barrier that the others do
• South Asians = Pakistanis
• Indonesians = female domestic workers
• Chinese = not really bothered by the whole thing
• Mainland tourists = associate halal with health
  o Might be interested in halal food because it can be considered:
    ▪ Exotic
    ▪ Healthy
    ▪ Oriental
• Indonesians seem to be the best audience
  o Especially the everyday things that they’ll need
• What is popular in HK changes fast
• "I hope they [professors] realize this is a challenging project. It is a hugely fractured market"
• STC process
  o Seems to make the certification process easier
  o Helps all parties: certifiers, STC, customers
  o Up to how much the Muslim community would want to manage it
    ▪ Would they just want to micromanage the entire process
• It seems possible
• Hotels want to be halal certified for tourists
• A challenge might be how to determine how halal a product is or can be
• Needs to be able to reach the Chinese Muslims of Hong Kong
• Saudi Arabia contacts → they have the money and more contacts
Appendix B.3: Member of the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong

Date: January 15, 2018
Time: 12 PM - 1 PM

1. How concerned are the Muslims about the certifications? Do they check a lot for the certification stamp?
   - Halal business (a lot of it) comes from tourism
   - People look for the certifications
   - They do not usually go to self-acclaimed restaurants, the ones that say that they are halal but are not certified
   - Most Muslims in HK are concerned about the halal certification stamp
   - There is evidence that the demand is being fulfilled, but at a slow rate
     - Hotels are slowly becoming halal certified to better accommodate the tourists

2. What kind of items or places should become halal certified?
   - Restaurants
   - Food factories
   - Hotels

3. Are there many meat suppliers?
   - There are a lot
   - The meat has the stamp, but the company does not
   - So far that is enough for the community
     - To make it better, they would wish to know where the exactly the meat comes from and the halal standards that exists there
   - In China, there are other associations which certify some items

4. How do tourists find out about halal certified restaurants and products?
   - Contact Muslim organizations
   - HK tourism board has a list of halal certified restaurants
   - Ask for a list from a recognized certified body such as he Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong

*The rest of the interview consisted of the interviewee providing some of the relevant information that he knows.

5. A lot of the issues in expand is with the resources and the processes
   - The ones for restaurants are harder b/c random inspections must be done to make sure that they are adhering to the standards
   - Everything needs to be checked properly

6. The meat supply is a big issue

7. Other products such as cosmetics are not as important as the meat supply

8. Pesticides are not a big issue
9. Cosmetics is a complex issue because it is made from different chemicals
   o There is a big demand for it too
10. Exportation, halal products brought from Muslim countries and the middle east, is an
    issue too
11. Everyday products found in convenience stores can have gelatin and other haram
    ingredients
    o Examples of those products include: chocolates, cosmetics, drinks, and bread
    o Is an issue because those items are not usually certified
12. Certifying more products will be more useful
    o Muslims are more family oriented
    o The demand for halal certified restaurants is not as big
      ▪ There is a sufficient amount for tourists
11. Interviewee recommends that we visit the IFRC
12. Visiting all the mosques is not going to be very useful
    o Kowloon Mosque is the biggest mosque
13. The Trustees run the mosques
14. In Sham Shui Po, there is a halal meat market
15. The Muslim community is a very diverse community
16. The Indonesian domestic workers are only temporary residents
17. Domestic workers are not accommodated very well in the homes that they work at
18. Once IFRC or STC gain enough reputation they would be able to do something about it
    o It is more w/ the government
19. The Trustees do not have updated information on the Muslim community
    o We need to find the information
    o Find out the population of the domestic workers from the government
    o For the “local” Muslims, it is harder to find population numbers
20. There are designated mosques, small praying halls
    o We need to contact the representative of the small praying halls
Appendix B.4: Imam One

Date: January 29th, 2018
Time: 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

*We first introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the project

1. **What does halal mean?**
   - Halal means what is permissible, what can be consumed, by Muslims
   - The differences in standards and how people belief in them can be a very sensitive issue
   - Also linked with the behavior

2. **General Information of halal food in Muslim community**
   - Muslims only look for halal food
   - More than 100,000 Indonesian helpers
   - 150,000 - 200,000 of Muslim residents

3. **Are there any other certification bodies in Hong Kong?**
   - Only the trustees are offering the certification in Hong Kong

4. **Do you know how many restaurants are halal certified?**
   - More than 50 restaurants are halal certified
   - There are halal certified restaurants in hotels that are 4-5 stars
   - Ocean Park and Disneyland have the biggest halal food restaurants

5. **Where does most of the meat comes from?**
   - Halal meat comes in different ways
   - 85% of halal meat is in imported
   - The rest are from slaughterhouses

6. **Do the slaughterhouse distribute the meat to the markets?**
   - The butchers go directly to the slaughterhouse and slaughter the animal there

7. **Is there a problem with halal meat in Hong Kong?**
   - Getting halal meat in Hong Kong is definitely a problem since there’s a limited amount

8. **What foods would the Muslim community benefit from most if more products were halal certified?**
   - Meat, cooking oils, and products with animal derived ingredients
   - Vegetables do not need to be halal certified
9. Are cosmetics a concern?
   o Cosmetics that are not halal certified should not be used
   o Products such as lotions and soaps that are not halal certified can be used since they will be washed away
   o Toothpaste and makeup is critical
   o Life-saving medicine does not have to be halal
   o Products used commonly, daily, need to be halal

10. Has the Muslim community contacted fast food restaurants and discussed about halal certifications?
   o Yes, however they replied that there is not a market
   o There is a misconception with the halal food requirement and the term of halal

11. Do Muslim families eat more in restaurants or in their own houses?
   o Most Muslims are family oriented
   o They like to cook their own food
   o They do eat 2 - 3 times in restaurants

12. Do Muslims eat in halal certified restaurants that also serve alcohol?
   o They are not supposed to
   o The Trustees only certify the kitchens to facilitate the tourists coming to Hong Kong
     ▪ The rest of the restaurant is not usually certified

13. Is halal meat expensive in Hong Kong?
   o Yes, the halal meat in Hong Kong is the most expensive one that I’ve ever seen

14. Does the Muslim community trust the halal meat imported from Brazil?
   o They do not trust it because we cannot verify if manufactures are following halal requirements. The meat already comes with a halal certification stamp.

15. Does the Muslim community trust Chinese products?
   o They do not trust Chinese meat shops that sell meat because they claim that it is halal without knowing what it is.

16. Would you say that most or all the halal products that are sold in the supermarkets are imported?
   o Most of them are imported, locally only few items like garden breads, nestle yogurt, and local restaurants.
Appendix B.5: Imam Two

Date: January 29th, 2018
Time: 2:30 PM - 5:00 PM

*We first introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the project
*The interview consisted of the interviewee providing some of the relevant information that he knows.

- Having food products produced and processed in Hong Kong would be ideal (see “follow ups”)
- The imported meat is not inspected at the facility where it is produced or processed
- Focusing on supermarket goods would in the long run be more beneficial to the Muslim community
- Having personal visits (follow ups) by the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong and imams on site is critical to building trust
  - Imams will promote the items when once they meet the standards
    - They will also update bulletin boards in mosques
- The ingredient list of pre-packaged products is not always comprehensive! Trust issue
- Industry may use haram materials even if not an ingredient (i.e., alcohol bakes off in cooking or used as equipment disinfectant)
- Where food is made (non-Muslim nations, China) brings skepticism
- Praismart sells halal (Malaysian, Indonesian, etc.) goods
- Imam/Trustee approval, halal label, ingredient list, country of origin (company and production site) ALL are considerations in purchase
Appendix B.6: Muslim Individual

Date: January 29th, 2018
Time: 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

*We first introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the project.

1. **How often do Muslims eat out?**
   Not as often, they like to cook their own food. Muslims are more family oriented and like to share meals.

2. **Is following the halal requirements important to you?**
   Yes, even for my entire family.

3. **Do you think that there is a demand for halal certified cosmetics?**
   I would say so, but not really sure about it. Some of my family members and friends wear makeup more often than I do.

4. **Between restaurants and food products, which would be more beneficial for the community to have more that are halal certified?**
   Food products. Especially items from 7-Eleven and other convenience stores. I would personally like to have more snacks be halal certified.

5. **Are there any things that you don’t trust even if they are certified?**
   There are some products. We don’t usually trust products that are certified by Chinese labels. There are cases where they falsely place the halal stamp on things and if you check the ingredients, it says otherwise.

6. **Do a lot of the younger people from the community think the same thing as you?**
   Yeah, I would believe so because we can’t really have the regular cookies, chips, or cakes.
   Bakery items would be also be good to have. There are a lot of bakeries, but I haven’t seen any with halal products.
Appendix B.7: Owner of Meat Shop

Date: January 29th, 2018
Time: 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM

*We first introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the project.

1. **How difficult is for the Muslim community to find halal meat?**
   It is easy to find halal meat in Hong Kong.

2. **Where does the meat come from?**
   The meat comes from mainland China. They take the animal to a slaughterhouse in "Sheung Shui". All the meat shops in this area and the one in Bowrington Market as well gets its meat from that slaughterhouse. The slaughterhouse divides the space depending on the market that it is sending the meat. They write down numbers on the animals that identifies the various shops.

3. **Do you supply to both restaurants and local customers?**
   We supply halal meat to restaurants, Muslims customers and non-Muslim customers.

4. **Do you know what is halal certification?**
   Yes

5. **Does it make a difference to be halal certified?**
   They do not care if it is halal certified. The Muslim community trusts them because they are Muslim, and they are the ones who slaughter the meat. Therefore, it does not make a difference if the slaughterhouse is halal certified or not because it is done by Muslims. The meat markets are the same since the people already know that they are Muslim owned, and they trust their own people.
Appendix B.8: Representatives of the Islamic Union of Hong Kong

Date: January 12th, 2018
Time: 3 PM - 4 PM
*We first introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of the project

- They don’t have exact numbers about the population of the Muslim community
  o Advised us to visit the consulates
- Most of the halal restaurants are owned by non-Muslims
  o There’s an increase in the demand for halal food since it’s considered healthy and everyone can eat it
    - The increase in the demand results in opportunities to make money
    - The owners of the restaurants don’t really do it to help the Muslim community
- We should talk to the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong about halal food since they handle the halal certifications

*Informed us that we can ask them more general questions and if they can’t answer them, then they will guide us to the right place and/or people

- In general, the interviewees are happy that we are reaching out to them and getting to know the community
  o Later, we can email them more questions
- Asked us if there’s a chance of having a board of Muslim representatives to better establish a relationship between the STC and the Muslim community
- They want the company who is going to be doing the testing and certifying to be Muslim
  o They do not want the halal certifications to become a way of making money
  o They would prefer if a non-profit organization were to be doing the halal certifications
  o They want to verify that the whole food process is following the halal requirements and standards.
- Supermarkets do have halal certified products to an extent
  o Products that are certified that can be easily found are bread, yogurt, and biscuit
  o Vegetarian options are convenient for the Muslim community since there’s no meat involved
- In general, there’s an increase in demand for halal food because of the increase of the Muslim population
Appendix C: Survey

The flyers and the survey were translated into Chinese and Indonesian, including English; the languages most prominent in Hong Kong’s Muslim community.

Flyer
“We are a group of students working to improve the availability of halal food in Hong Kong. Could you help us by answering this short anonymous survey?”

https://tinyurl.com/y9mvaw87

Survey
“We are students researching on the Muslim community and the accessibility of halal food. This questionnaire will collect some general data about the community. The collective data will be published online, however your answers will be anonymous. You have the option of leaving some questions blank if you don’t feel comfortable answering them. This questionnaire should take approximately 8 minutes to complete.”

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?
   - 18-24
   - 25-34
   - 35-44
   - 45-54
   - 55-64
   - 65-74
   - 75+
   - Prefer not to say
3. With which of these groups do you identify?
   - Indonesian
   - Pakistani
   - Indian
   - Chinese
   - Filipino
   - Prefer not to say
   - Other
     - Fill in
4. What is your occupation?
   - Domestic work
   - Full-time student
   - Travel agency or reservation
   - Hotel
   - Business owner
   - Retail or trade
   - Restaurant
   - Architecture or engineering
   - Legal, accounting, or auditing
   - Information technology or advertising
   - Other producer services
   - Financial services
   - Trading or logistics
   - Other
     - Fill in
5. What is your household income per month? (in Hong Kong Dollars)
   - $0 - $5,000
   - $5,000 - $10,000
   - $10,000 - $20,000
   - $20,000 - $40,000
   - $40,000 - more
   - Prefer not to say
6. About how much do you spend on food per week? (in Hong Kong Dollars)
   - $500 or less
   - $500 - $1,000
   - $1,000 - $1,500
   - $1,500 - $2,000
   - $2,000 - more
   - Prefer not to say
7. How strictly do you follow a halal diet?
   *Likert scale from 1-7
   - 1 - I don’t follow a halal diet
   - 7 - I only eat food I am certain is halal
8. Do you actively search for halal certified food products?
   - 1 - Never
   - 2 - Rarely
   - 3 - Occasionally
   - 4 - Sometimes
   - 5 - Frequently
   - 6 - Usually
   - 7 - Every time

9. How often do you purchase raw or fresh food? (uncooked meat, fresh fruit and vegetables …)
   - 1 - Never
   - 2 - Rarely
   - 3 - Occasionally
   - 4 - Sometimes
   - 5 - Frequently
   - 6 - Usually
   - 7 - Every time

10. How often do you purchase prepackaged foods (sealed food contained in cans, boxes, wrappers, …)
    - 1 - Never
    - 2 - Rarely
    - 3 - Occasionally
    - 4 - Sometimes
    - 5 - Frequently
    - 6 - Usually
    - 7 - Every time

11. How often do you eat fast food? (McDonald’s, KFC, …)
    - 1 - Never
    - 2 - Rarely
    - 3 - Occasionally
    - 4 - Sometimes
    - 5 - Frequently
    - 6 - Usually
    - 7 - Every time

12. How often would you eat fast food if it were halal certified? (McDonald’s, KFC, …)
    - 1 - Never
    - 2 - Rarely
    - 3 - Occasionally
    - 4 - Sometimes
    - 5 - Frequently
    - 6 - Usually
    - 7 - Every time
13. What makes you trust that a product is halal? (check all that apply)
   - Halal certification stamp
   - Check the ingredient label
   - Recommendation by Muslim organizations
   - Recommendation by religious leaders
   - Recommendation by friends and family
   - Muslim owned stores
   - Muslim owned brand
   - Online research
   - Other
     ▪ Fill in

14. Where do you buy halal food? (check all that apply)
   - Wellcome
   - Indo Market
   - PARKnSHOP
   - 7-Eleven
   - Non-chain convenience stores
   - Street markets
   - Online stores
   - I do not buy my own food
   - Other
     ▪ Fill in

15. What fraction of the food products that you buy is halal certified?
   - 0% - 20%
   - 20% - 40%
   - 40% - 60%
   - 60% - 80%
   - 80% - 100%

16. Which halal certifiers are you familiar with? (check all that apply)
   - Halal Malaysia
     ▪ Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund
- Islamic Da’wah Council of the Philippines

- Islamic Co-ordinating Council of Victoria

- The Central Islamic Council of Thailand

- Halal Control

- Korean Muslim Federation Halal Committee

- Majelis Ulama Indonesia
17. Are there any halal certifiers that you don’t trust?
   - Fill in

18. What are products that you currently use that you wish were halal certified?
   - Fill in

19. What is your greatest difficulty accessing halal food?
   - Finance
   - Knowledge
   - Availability
   - Other (Fill in)

20. The following question is for domestic workers: Are you allowed to process and eat your own food?
   - 1 - Never
   - 2 - Rarely
   - 3 - Occasionally
   - 4 - Sometimes
   - 5 - Frequently
   - 6 - Usually
   - 7 - Every time

21. The following question is for domestic workers: Are you allowed to practice the religion that you believe in your employer's home?
   - 1 - Never
   - 2 - Rarely
   - 3 - Occasionally
   - 4 - Sometimes
   - 5 - Frequently
   - 6 - Usually
   - 7 - Every time

After clicking “submit”, the following message is going to appear:
Please share this survey with other members of Hong Kong's Muslim community. You can share the link or QR code shown below. Your help is appreciated!
Appendix D: Survey Results

Responses to Question 1: “What is your gender?”

Responses to Question 2: “How old are you?”
Responses to Question 3: “With which of these groups do you identify?”

Responses to Question 4: What is your occupation?”
Responses to Question 5: “What is your household income per month?” (in HKD)

Responses to Question 6: “About how much do you spend on food per week?” (in HKD)
Responses to Question 7: “How strictly do you follow a halal diet?”

Responses to Question 8: “Do you actively search for halal certified food products?”
Responses to Question 9: “How often do you purchase raw or fresh food? (uncooked meat, fresh fruit and vegetables …)”

Responses to Question 10: “How often do you purchase prepackaged foods (sealed food contained in cans, boxes, wrappers, …)”
Responses to Question 11: “How often do you eat fast food? (McDonald’s, KFC, …)” (green)
Responses to Question 12: “How often would you eat fast food if it were halal certified? (McDonald’s, KFC, …)” (blue)

Responses to Question 13: “What makes you trust that a product is halal? (check all that apply)”
Responses to Question 14: “Where do you buy halal food? (check all that apply)”

Responses to Question 15: “What fraction of the food products that you buy is halal certified?”
Responses to Question 16: “Which halal certifiers are you familiar with? (check all that apply)"

![Bar chart showing familiarity with halal certifiers](chart1.png)

Responses to Question 17: “Are there any halal certifiers that you don’t trust?”

![Bar chart showing trust in halal certifiers](chart2.png)
Responses to Question 18: “What are products that you currently use that you wish were halal certified?”

Responses to Question 19: “What is your greatest difficulty accessing halal food?”
Responses to Question 20: “The following question is for domestic workers: Are you allowed to process and eat your own food?”

Responses to Question 21: “The following question is for domestic workers: Are you allowed to practice the religion that you believe in your employer's home?”
Appendix E: Observation Protocols

For our non-participant observations, we are only observing individuals whom we assume to be Muslim. The predominant characteristics that we are basing our assumptions on are whether or not they are wearing hijabs, burqas, thobes, and if they are actively searching for halal food products. These observations only include taking photographs and notes of the food products that the individuals seem to be purchasing. The observations are going to be conducted at Wellcome, 7-Eleven, and the Indo Market around Victoria Park on January 21, 2018 at 3 PM.
Appendix F: Halal Meat Supply

From our research, we gather information about the local slaughterhouses and halal meat markets throughout Hong Kong.

Slaughterhouses

- Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse
  - Owned by the Government of Hong Kong
  - Managed and operated by Ng Fung Hong Limited

- Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse
  - Owned and operated by the Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse Limited (TSWSL)

- Cheung Chau Slaughterhouse
  - Owned by the Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse Limited
  - Operated by the Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse Limited and Cheung Chau Meat Merchant Association

- Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market
  - Owned by the Government of Hong Kong
  - Operated and managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries, Conservation Department

Markets

- Chakwal Meat Shop (Kwai Chung)
- Chakwal Meat Shop (Tsim Sha Tsui)
- Halal Meat Shop (Sai Wan Ho)
- Halal Meat Shop (Yuen Long)
- Ocean View Butchery
- Shaheed Muslim Meat Shop
Figure 9: Slaughterhouses and Halal Meat Markets in Hong Kong
Appendix G: Brochure

**Potential Difficulties**

**Reasons for rejections**

- Premise produces or stores non-halal products
- Involves processed products from non-certified sources
- Product name implies that is not halal
  - E.g. “100% halal pork buns” is not acceptable
- Product doesn’t follow regular health and safety standards

**Non-halal ingredients to look out for**

- All meat and animal by-products must be halal certified
  - Contact your certifying body for recommendations on halal certified meat sources
- Alcohol content in finished product must be less than 0.3%
  - Less than 0.01% is preferable

*Figure 10: Front side of “Halal Certification Process” brochure*
Figure 11: Back side of "Halal Certification Process" brochure