



# Marketing of halal meat in the United Kingdom

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halal meat in the  
UK

## Supermarkets versus local shops

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to explore a number of marketing issues, such as consumer buyer behaviour and distribution channels, in relation to buying halal meat (HM) from local shops versus supermarkets in the UK.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A consumer survey (300 participants) and observation of three local halal shops and a Morrisons supermarket were successfully undertaken in London, Brighton and Edinburgh.

**Findings** – The majority of UK Muslims do not trust big supermarkets when buying HM. They will only trust a Muslim selling halal products in their local shops. Most respondents did not know that supermarkets in their local area sold HM.

**Research limitations/implications** – In order to increase the sales of HM ranges, supermarkets need to improve their marketing efforts, for example by advertising in Islamic newspapers, mosques and other relevant sources. Supermarkets need to stock other complementary halal products to get a mass response from this market segment, as well as enhancing/improving their services, for example, there should be sales people who are able to advise customers on particular halal products.

**Originality/value** – The study reveals that the majority of UK Muslims are at odds with most UK shoppers and increasingly prefer to shop at small shops, rather than big supermarkets. The paper helps to emphasise the major issues that frame the current state of marketing HM in the UK; contributes to a better understanding of such an important customer sector; and raises the necessary commitment to restructuring HM business activities in the UK and Europe.

**Keywords** Meat, Consumer marketing, Consumer behaviour, Consumer psychology, Islam, United Kingdom

**Paper type** Research paper

### Introduction

London represents a focal point for most Muslims in the UK, particularly those of Arabic, Asian or African origin. Edgware Road in central London is a good example of the many dramatic changes and developments that have taken place in the last decade, changing the business, entrepreneurial environment in London, here almost all of the shops, restaurants, cafes, money transfer agencies, barbers and estate agencies along the road are, in fact, businesses with ethnic backgrounds, mostly Muslim.

The rapid growth of halal[1] shops and other businesses in London mirrors the wider growth of ethnic minority businesses in the UK. Many also see the increasing Muslim population in the UK and Europe as encouragement to invest in such businesses and industries. There is a desperate need for new suppliers to meet the growing demands of schools, hospitals, hostels, prisons, airlines, restaurants, take-aways and halal food supermarkets for HM, packed meat and other halal



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consumable items, in all areas of the country. Also, there are expanding export markets to other European countries, such as France, Belgium, Holland and Germany (latest statistics estimate that there are 35 million Muslims in Europe).

In response to the increasing demand for HM in the UK, the supermarket chain Morrisons (previously Safeway plc, when Morrisons took over the Safeway group, they adopted Safeway's HM initiative) took the initiative and introduced authenticated HM and poultry to their flagship store in Stratford, East London. There are nearly 20 stores throughout the country that serve Muslim customers. Endorsed by the Halal Food Authority (HFA)[2], in 2003, Morrisons launched a range of HM products with the slogan "Hello to halal". However, a recent article in *The Guardian* (Walsh, 2006) argues that big supermarket chains (such as Morrisons) will start raising prices after achieving saturation point in the high street by wiping out small local shops.

UK Muslims represents about 5 per cent of the UK population but they consume around 20 per cent of British lamb and mutton (UK Government Statistics, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2006; NISRA, 2006; BBC, 2005). British farmers are being urged to consider diversifying into the thriving HM sector as it is a growing market (Jackson, 2001). This demonstrates that the whole halal food market is growing rapidly; the global trade in halal products is estimated to be worth more than £30bn annually (Muslim Council of Britain, 2002).

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has warned that up to 90 per cent of the meat and poultry sold as halal in the UK may have been sold illegally and not slaughtered according to the requirements of the Muslim faith. According to Pointing and Teinaz (2004), trade in illegal HM (Haram) is the third largest illegal trade in the UK, estimated to be worth up to £1bn a year. Such crimes threaten public health, violate people's religious beliefs, abuse their trust and frequently involve cruelty to animals. This is a growing worry that is very important to Muslim communities in Britain. This has led to supermarkets such as Asda, Morrisons and Sainsbury's selling HM with a guarantee that their meat is 100 per cent halal and is authorised by the HFA. This step shows the demand for HM and, moreover, the importance of the authenticity of the products (Riaz, 1996).

This paper attempts to explore a number of marketing issues, such as consumer buyer behaviour, distribution channels, in relation to buying HM from local shops versus supermarkets in the UK. Different influences on consumers when buying HM are examined in order to identify appropriate marketing strategies, which should be adopted by supermarkets when dealing with marketing HM in the UK.

### Literature review

For the purpose of this study, several sources have been consulted, including refereed journals, online databases and governmental reports and statistics. However, it is clear from the outset, that there are limitations on the availability of literature specifically focusing on HM. In general, the picture that emerges from the growing body of literature on halal and Muslim businesses is somewhat vague due, in part, to:

- Tendency towards over-generalisation, that is, viewing the Muslim population as a monolithic group.

- Concentration, almost exclusively, on more historically and economically visible sub-groups, such as Asians.
- Inability to capture the dynamically evolving environment of halal and Muslim businesses. The Muslim map of Britain is continuously evolving, as are the businesses with which Muslims are associated.

The behavior of the consumer is influenced by the buyer's decision process. Buyer characteristics include four major factors: cultural, social, personal, and psychological. Relationships are drawn between the factors (and factor subparts) and the consumption purchases made by consumers. Because many of these factors are deep and long lasting in their effect, the marketing manager should pay special attention to acquiring information about them with respect to the organization's target markets (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006).

Most Islamic business deals are secured on the basis of "who you know" more than any other factor (see Schlumberger, 2000, p. 250). Ali (1996) stresses that Islam is one of the most influential forces that moulds and regulates Muslims' (individual and group) behaviour and outlooks. In addition to Islamic teaching, tribal and family traditions have a strong impact on individual behaviour (Mellahi, 2003). Muslim business activities in the UK are characterised by strong monopolistic features, due to the strong religious imperatives with which most of their products (such as HM) trade. Even in its present unregulated condition, this has kept prices high and traders have enjoyed high margins.

The correct labelling on halal food is essential for consumers, because certain labels can often be misleading (HFA, 2002-2003). This is an issue not just for HM, but for food in general. Riaz (1996) argues that there are very few labels on food items in grocery stores that indicate whether the food product is lawful for Muslim consumption or not. Here we can see that Morrison's introduction of HM with correct labelling could start a trend to correctly label halal food.

This paper is concerned with how and why halal consumers make decisions to shop in certain outlets; in this case, why many shop at local butchers and not at supermarkets. Therefore, it could be argued that labelling of food does not play a major part in purchase decisions, but the significance of this is not known. According to Hermann *et al.* (1997), the first stage of a purchase takes place when the consumer inspects the meat, as well as requesting additional information. This means that an effective label might be a cue for quality, which can lead to a purchase. However according to HFA (2002/2003), labelling is not the answer to consumers' purchase decisions.

Riaz (1996) also argues that, where general local butchers are now in decline, halal local butchers are steadily growing, which is due to the increasing demand for HM. Does this growth in local butchers mean that supermarkets are not a desirable purchase place for halal consumers, or are supermarkets simply not doing enough to make people aware that they are now selling halal products?

To be successful, a business should increase orientation towards satisfying consumer needs and establish trust through the production of intrinsically safe products and reliable and effective communication (Verbeke, 2000). Furthermore, Verbeke highlighted that when people get exposed to communication, this changes

their attitudes resulting in retention of a new attitude. Certain forms of communication by corporations can determine purchase decisions (see Richardson *et al.*, 1994). It could be assumed that perhaps it is the lack of communication that influences people's decisions on where to shop. However, it can also be said that local butchers have an advantage in effective communication, as they rely heavily on word of mouth, which could work more efficiently and cost effectively. Muslim communities are close communities and word can travel quickly. Moreover, another survey (Biong, 1993) found that, although mass media has a positive effect for businesses, attention to personal communication by butchers has some, but far more limited, impact.

Traditional butchers, rather than supermarkets, play a very important role in several European countries. Over 60 per cent of the Irish, German and Italian respondents in a survey usually purchased beef at the butchers, but in contrast, supermarkets are the main places to purchase beef in Sweden and in the UK (Becker *et al.*, 1998 and Glitsch, 2000). These findings suggest that in the UK supermarkets are the main suppliers of meat to shoppers, but, as hypothesised in the introduction, HM buyers prefer to use local butchers, contrary to the findings in the Becker's report.

Caswell (1992) and Issanchou (1996) argue that consumer decisions can be influenced by organisations and suggest that if assurance of the meat is established, then the buying decision can be favourably influenced. This is significant as meat consumers put much emphasis on the safety of meat. Consumers will be more attracted to purchase from a place where traceability can be assured (Mousavi *et al.*, 2002). This factor is of great importance to purchasers in general, as the safety issue is one priority of meat consumers nowadays. More attention is paid to health now than ever and it is not surprising that this issue is cited in most studies.

In conclusion, the quality and safety of the meat are considered to be the most significant influencing factors when purchasing meat and, according to Verbeke (2000), place of purchase has a major role to play when people are looking for quality cues.

### Research method

Several methods were considered for collecting primary data for this study. However, after careful consideration of all possible methods, such as focus groups and surveys, taking into account the limitations of each, it was decided that observation and questionnaires were the two most appropriate and most feasible methods for this study.

#### Observation

The observation method used is "participant observation", in particular the role of a complete observer. This means the researcher's identity is concealed (see Saunders *et al.*, 2007). This process involves both primary observation – where the researcher notes what happened or what was said at the time – and secondary observation – involving the observers' interpretations with more emphasis on discovering the meanings attached to people's actions.

The observations were carried out on Fridays, as this is a very busy day after lunchtime prayers (Jumma). The aim was to observe when the shops were busy rather than empty, to see how people buy HM and the interactions in the shop. It was decided

that observing one local butcher was insufficient, because it would be hard to draw general conclusions from what actually happens in local halal butchers across the UK. The observation was therefore carried out at three local halal butchers in different cities in the UK. However observing one Morison's branch was seen as sufficient, as most branches are similar in layout and physical environment.

#### *Questionnaire design*

The study used questionnaires as a quantitative approach for descriptive and explanatory research. Questionnaires work best with standardised questions that will be interpreted the same way by all respondents (Saunders *et al.*, 2003, p. 281). By using questionnaires, the views of a number of consumers on the issues surrounding the purchase of HM can be examined. When designing the questionnaires, it was very important to use clear wording for questions, using terms that are likely to be familiar to, and understood by, respondents, as this will improve the validity of the questionnaire (Saunders *et al.*, 2003, p. 292).

A series of detailed (interview-based) surveys were implemented in order to generate the data required to investigate all of the factors relating to why HM purchasers prefer to buy from traditional local butchers rather than supermarkets (Morrisons) in the UK. Most of the questions (multiple choice and scale type questions) in the survey were in relation to the causes of this type of consumer buyer behaviour among the Muslim consumers. Self-administered questionnaires were designed so respondents could easily complete the questions[3] on their own.

#### *Sampling structure*

East London was selected to represent London and the UK Muslim population. Around two fifths of UK Muslims (38 per cent) live in London. East London, in particular, accommodates the highest percentage of Muslims in the UK (36.4 per cent in Tower Hamlets and 24.3 per cent in Newham). The choice of London was also dictated by the spatial concentration of British Arabs, accounting for about 95 per cent of the UK total population. Brighton and Edinburgh were also chosen for the study to represent the South East and Scotland, respectively. The sampling included 300 Muslim consumers (150 from London, 75 from Brighton and another 75 from Edinburgh) selected randomly.

#### *Data collection*

Building on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, the secondary data collection focused on the derivation of appropriate testable hypotheses linked to the research objectives above. A number of key databases were used to extract published and comparative data focusing on marketing of HM, consumer buyer behaviour, and distribution channels, amongst others.

The primary data collection was based on fieldwork undertaken in London, Edinburgh and Brighton between December 2004 and December 2005. During the study, time was allocated for checking and clarifying the completed questionnaires, correcting any information or descriptions while the details were still clearly remembered, as well as gathering all relevant literature. After incorporating corrections, six students were interviewed for pre-testing of the questionnaire. The

final version of the questionnaire was then produced accordingly and data were gathered from the different locations as designated.

A total of 300 questionnaires were successfully completed and successful observations were undertaken at three local halal butchers in London, Brighton and Edinburgh and a Morrisons branch in Stratford (East London). It was very difficult to make notes at the time, as all local shops were quite crowded.

In all three shops visited, notes were taken on a note pad disguised as a shopping list to other shoppers. There were times when notes were hard to take and so they were noted at a later stage. The time spent in each shop was around 45 minutes, it was not possible to spend too much time in the shop as the shopkeeper would begin to offer his products and there was no intention to buy. The atmosphere was very busy in most of the shops visited. In two shops (London and Brighton) there were too many staff-serving customers to allow notes to be taken. Morrisons was fairly busy and notes were taken on a pad with ease. Every detail was observed and the researchers spent around 30 minutes in the store. They were also able to speak to a few people behind the counters in the meat and poultry section. The observation went undisturbed and most things were noted at the time without the need to add notes later.

## Results

This part of the paper presents the data collected from primary research (results from the questionnaire and notes during observation).

### *Questionnaire*

All of the 300 questionnaires were completed by the respondents. The results of the questionnaires are presented below.

- All respondents (96 per cent male and 4 per cent female) do buy/consume HM.
- Age groups range from 18-25 (24 per cent); 26-35 (38 per cent); 36-45 (34 per cent); 46-55 (4 per cent); and none from the 56 and over group.
- The majority of respondents (96 per cent) buy their HM from local butchers and only (4 per cent) buy from supermarkets.
- Only (16 per cent) of the respondents ask for authenticity (asking the butcher to prove it is halal) when buying their HM, while the majority (84 per cent) never ask for authenticity to be proven.
- The respondents were asked to clearly identify the importance of certain factors when buying their HM. While the majority in the previous question never ask for authenticity to be proven when buying their HM, all respondents consider authenticity to be the most important factor when buying their HM (Table I).
- While (42 per cent) of the respondents think supermarkets are trustworthy for buying HM, the majority (90 per cent) did not know that Morrisons or Sainsbury's in their local area was selling HM.
- Respondents were then asked to compare between supermarkets and local butchers when buying HM in terms of "price", "hygiene" and "quality". The results (Table II) show that 48 per cent, 94 per cent and 90 per cent of the



respondents think that supermarkets are more expensive, more hygienic and sell better quality HM than local butchers, respectively.

- However, despite the results in Table II, the majority of respondents (80 per cent) are still unlikely to buy their HM from supermarkets such as Morrisons and Sainsbury's. There were several reasons given by respondents, which are discussed in more detail in the next part of the paper (analysis and discussion). These demonstrate some interesting aspects of Muslim buyer behaviour when buying HM. The analysis and discussion also note several reasons given by the respondents that determine where they shop for their HM.

### Observation

Table III summarises the different notes taken from observing three local butchers (London, Edinburgh and Brighton) and Morrisons supermarket (London-Stratford).

## Analysis and discussion

### Questionnaires

The study reveals that all respondents completed the questions and that only 12 were females. This was because questionnaires were completed after Friday Prayers and most mosques do not have the facilities to accommodate female worshippers.

All respondents in the study have bought HM, as the main focus is to examine the buyer behaviour of this segment. The majority of the respondents bought their HM from local halal butchers and only 12 respondents used the supermarket for their purchase. This demonstrates that this group of people made decisions based on more than one element, such as price. It could also be seen that 90 per cent of respondents were not aware that Morrisons was selling HM. From this, it can be concluded that the majority of these respondents did not try Morrisons for their HM, because they were not aware of it. It is very important for a business to make potential purchasers aware of their product ranges or result in loss of valuable trade (James, 1998, p. 23). However, this result can also be viewed from a different perspective, that the promotion was not at fault, but rather, these particular respondents did not take any notice of the promotions. Moreover, it could be said that even if these customers were aware of the

| Factors      | 1st (%) | 2nd (%) | 3rd (%) | 4th (%) |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Price        | 0       | 38      | 48      | 14      |
| Authenticity | 100     | 0       | 0       | 0       |
| Quality      | 0       | 58      | 36      | 6       |
| Location     | 0       | 4       | 16      | 80      |
| Others       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       |

**Table I.**  
Important factors when  
buying HM

| Factors                                  | Supermarkets (%) | Local butcher (%) |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Who do you think are more expensive?     | 48               | 52                |
| Who do you think are more hygienic?      | 94               | 6                 |
| Who in your view sell better quality HM? | 90               | 10                |

**Table II.**  
Comparison between  
supermarkets and local  
butchers when  
buying HM

**Table III.**  
Observation of three local butchers (London, Edinburgh and Brighton) and Morrisons supermarket (Stratford, London)

| Location              | Physical environment  | Service environment <sup>a</sup>   | Customers <sup>b</sup>  |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| Shop – A<br>London    | Very big (almost the size of a small supermarket)<br>Well presented, but still there were vegetables scattered around<br>Fairly spacious<br>Not very clean<br>Noise levels were minimal in the shop front, however at the back where meat and fish were sold it was very noisy with machinery operating<br>Low interaction between customers  | Chicken, meat, rice, exotic vegetables, spices and other complementary products<br>The staff cutting meat and fish were wearing all white; however staff at the front had shirts and trousers on<br>Few customers asked when the fish had come in and if it was fresh<br>There was one staff member that talked to customers who needed any questions answered<br>Fish and meat were cut according to the customers' requirements. One customer wanted his lamb chops cut really thinly<br>Chicken, meat, rice, exotic vegetables, spices and other complementary products<br>Staff wearing all white<br>Few staff had beards<br>Very helpful<br>It seems most people were regular customers, as they were called by their names<br>Customers were helped by staff in selecting different products<br>Customers were advised when certain stock had come in<br>Chicken and other meat was cut according to customers' requirements and not portioned in advance<br>Three customers placed orders that were delivered to their houses later | Mainly Asian and African origin<br>Quite a few young people, with majority being in their late 40s<br>Quite a lot of women were shopping, but majority of shoppers were men<br>One customer had his leg of lamb cut into medium pieces but later decided he did not want it – the staff were happy for him to change his mind |
| Shop – B<br>Edinburgh | Out of date decoration<br>No effort in the stocking arrangements.<br>Vegetables were scattered around<br>Very limited space to move about as the shop was full of stock<br>Not very clean<br>Not very hygienically kept<br>Meat and fish were being cut by same machine<br>A friendly environment, everyone seem to know one another<br>Quite noisy (mainly the noise of the machine that cuts the meat and fish) | Mainly Asian origin<br>Majority aged over 30<br>Majority male<br>Some customers were wearing Islamic dress<br>Some were socialising rather than shopping<br>Some customers were drinking tea, while waiting for the orders to be prepared<br>Some customers were reading newspapers, while chatting to the staff in the shop   |   |

(continued)



| Location               | Physical environment  | Service environment <sup>a</sup>   | Customers <sup>b</sup>  |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| Shop – C<br>Brighton   | Very contemporary decoration<br>Well presented<br>Fairly spacious<br>Clean and tidy<br>Very noisy (mainly the noise of the machine that cuts the meat and fish)<br>All customers were interacting with one another (the staff seem to know customers by their names)<br>Food handling was not very hygienic | Chicken, meat, rice, exotic vegetables, spices and other complementary products<br>Staff wearing all white<br>Staff were friendly but quite formal<br>Customers were helped by staff in making selections, in two cases the owner of the shop gave his personal assurance that the products are of high quality and could be returned if not<br>Everything is portioned according to the customers' requirements<br>Two elderly customers were helped to carry their orders to the car<br>Chicken, meat, fruit, vegetables, confectionery and various household goods<br>Helpful when requested<br>People were left to make their own decisions<br>Very fast and efficient at the till<br>They have their customer service team if help is needed or if you are not happy with a product | Mainly Asian and African origin<br>Majority aged over 30<br>Around ten male customers and six female<br>One customer bought half a fish, as the whole was too big for his family<br>One customer placed an order for a whole lamb that was being portioned according to his preferences |
| Morrisons<br>Stratford | Very up to date<br>Very well presented (good layout), very hygienic and spacious and also very busy<br>Staff were all wearing the Morrisons uniform<br>The HM range were all pre-packed<br>All products had labels stating facts about the particular product<br>No interaction amongst customers and staff | People were left to make their own decisions<br>Very fast and efficient at the till<br>They have their customer service team if help is needed or if you are not happy with a product  | A mix of the population<br>Majority aged over 30 but there were lots of young people too<br>It was difficult to say whether there were more women or men at that time<br>Only one person bought some halal lamb chops during the survey   |

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup> The shop, shopkeeper, staff, products, etc. (services that were provided); <sup>b</sup> Customers/people in the shop

availability of HM in Morrisons and other supermarkets, they might be reluctant to shop there. This point is supported by other results of the survey, 80 per cent of respondents said they will stay with their local butchers even though they are now aware that Morrisons sells HM. This result could be seen as contradictory, because 94 per cent of respondents thought supermarkets were more hygienic in comparison to only 6 per cent who thought local butchers were. This raises more questions as to why people use local butchers if supermarkets are more hygienic, suggesting that these respondents were not worried about hygiene. Further questions are raised by the fact that 90 per cent of respondents think that supermarkets sell better quality meat.

Why do the different issues in favour of supermarkets not attract these people? The answer could possibly lie in another question that was asked. Supermarkets were considered to be more expensive than the local butcher by 48 per cent of respondents. Although this is less than the number of respondents that thought local butchers were more expensive, it is still a large number of people and the original assumption in this paper was that majority of people would have found that supermarkets offer better prices. It could be that people simply think they get better prices with their local butchers.

Another question was asked to investigate the previous result. The findings show that it is probably not the price, but more a trust issue. According to this survey, a majority of people simply do not trust supermarkets for HM. This was considered earlier in the paper, the background study showed how important it was that HM was slaughtered by a Muslim person. People take this further and only trust a Muslim selling HM.

It was discussed in the introduction that Morrisons guarantees the traceability of its HM and also tackles the trust issue by authenticating its brand by HFA. It is possible that Morrisons needs to make people aware that this authenticity is genuine and win public trust. According to the results of the next question Morrisons could find marketing HM a difficult process, 84 per cent of respondents do not ask their local butchers where the meat has come from.

The factors determining where the respondents buy their meat was considered further, with the question "What, in your view, are the most to least important factors when purchasing HM?" The result was directly opposed to that which had been anticipated. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2005) and Kotler *et al.* (2005), the three main elements when a purchase is made are:

- (1) availability of the product;
- (2) price of the product; and
- (3) the quality of the product.

However, the results from this study show that all 300 respondents selected authenticity of the meat as the most important factor. This is quite understandable, as these are HM buyers and, regardless of the price, they will only buy genuine HM. The second most important element was quality, which was selected by more than 50 per cent of respondents. Price was the third concern, according to this research. People were less concerned about the location of the product and rather more concerned with whether the meat is halal or not! This is a very important finding from the point of view

of Morrisons, because it is more capable of providing authenticity information than some of the local butchers.

The final two questions were open ended and allowed scope for some exploratory research. From these, several views were noted. Some of the interesting and relevant responses are discussed here.

Respondents were asked why they would not purchase HM from Morrisons if their previous response said this. One respondent said his “dad’s been using their local butchers for years” and he did not wish to change that. This could be said as being a cultural issue where “I would do what my father did”. There were other responses, such as Morrisons would not stock all of the fish and vegetables from the customer’s country of origin and that they would prefer to purchase everything at the same time in one place, rather than shopping around different places for different grocery items. This response was repeated by almost 60 people in different ways. This response is something that is true of supermarkets, such as Tesco, people shop there for the convenience of finding everything under one roof. Consumer behaviour has changed dramatically and people are always looking at ways in which they can save time.

Quite a large number of respondents said they felt that they would not be able to buy the exact portion they wanted, as Morrisons pre-ports and packs its products. These respondents also expressed their preference for “the personal touch” where they ask for what they want and then their orders are packed according to their requirements. It can be seen here that people feel they have more flexibility when they shop in their local butchers and that they get a personal service. Also, a fairly large number of people, again in their own ways, expressed that they feel the atmosphere in their local halal shop suited them better, as they know who they are dealing with. A few respondents went on to say that they get refreshments (coffee or tea) offered by the shopkeeper and said that this was something Morrisons cannot provide them. Also, a few said they are able to get their meat and vegetables delivered to their houses when they wanted, free of charge, with the confidence of knowing they will get the right products. A few respondents said they felt that the language spoken in their local butcher was very important, because it makes them more comfortable and they feel that they are buying from their own people who they can trust. Quite a lot of respondents, however, said that they will probably try the meat at Morrisons one day and that they might purchase there on an occasional basis. However, when asked what will determine where they shop, similar views to the above were expressed.

There were some different views where respondents said that the quality and the price had to be right and it had got to be halal. A few respondents said:

... it’s got to be halal and we have to feel comfortable with the atmosphere as we prefer asking questions in regards to the freshness of the product.

#### *Observation*

Three local butchers (London, Edinburgh and Brighton) and Morrisons (London-Stratford) were visited.

The observation from the three local butchers showed that the atmosphere in the shop can have an effect on people when they buy their HM. For example, it was observed that all three shops had many things in common (unlike Morrisons) such as:

- a friendlier atmosphere where most customers were known by names;
- customers were sitting having refreshments (coffee/tea), reading newspapers and socialising;
- customers engaged themselves in conversations while shopping.

In contrast to this culture, in Morrisons there is less interaction between customers and staff, and almost no interaction between shoppers. It could be said that this is purely because the local butchers are used by more regulars and local people, which is not the case for Morrisons. But equally, Morrisons also has regular customers, in which case why are customers not known by name by the staff and why is there not more interaction between them? This is simply a difference in culture between the way people shop in local shops and supermarkets. This statement can be said true for most supermarkets and local shops. However, it seems that for HM buyers, the service at a local butcher is preferred, here the staff even help people select their products and carry bags to elderly peoples' cars.

Similar observations to the findings from the questionnaires were made, such as customers ordering portions according to their exact needs. There was one person who bought half a fish, that would not have been possible in the supermarket. One important point was observed, which was expressed by quite a large number of respondents in the survey through questionnaires, Morrisons would not sell other products that they wanted when buying their HM. It was observed that a large number of customers bought fish from Asia and various vegetables while shopping in their local butchers. However, in Morrisons these products are not sold. This could be a decisive element when people decide where to purchase their meat. As some said, they would rather buy everything they want from one place and Morrisons might find it very difficult to overcome this issue.

Having observed the factors that encouraged the HM buyers into their local butchers, it was thought that when it comes to quality and hygiene Morrisons would score higher than some of these local butchers. It was observed that Morrisons halal range was correctly labelled, e.g. where it was from, authenticated by HFA, etc. In contrast the local shops rarely had any labels on their meat products. At the time the observation was carried out in Morrisons, only one person bought the HM chops and it was therefore difficult to analyse the buyer behaviour at that time. Morrisons, in contrast to these local butchers, was much better presented and the staff were helpful when assistance was requested.

After looking at both the results and findings of the questionnaires and observations it could be concluded that more than one element determines why HM buyers prefer using their local butchers to the supermarket. It was assumed at the outset of this study that it could be that the marketing of HM by Morrisons was ineffective, however this research has drawn a completely different picture.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The main conclusions and recommendations of this study are as follows.

Muslim consumers will only buy HM when they are certain that they are buying genuine HM. Although quality of HM is the main influence when purchasing HM, it is still not clear why Muslims are buying their HM from local shops and not bigger

supermarkets, knowing that the latter is more hygienic and the quality of HM is likely to be better.

The majority of respondents were not aware of big supermarkets selling HM. In order to increase the sale of their HM ranges, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and other main supermarkets need to improve their marketing efforts, such as advertising in Islamic newspapers and other relevant sources. Supermarkets will need to stock other accompanying halal products to get a mass response from this segment.

HM consumers prefer a personal service, which Morrisons and Sainsbury's will need to enhance and improve. Also there should be sales people who are able to advise customers on particular halal products. If these steps are taken then Morrisons and Sainsbury's will be able to improve their sales of HM.

It is important to assess the future of HM business very carefully in the UK and Europe, particularly as Western-style dietary habits are having an increasing influence on many UK Muslims (see British Nutrition Foundation, 2000). Younger members, in particular, are increasingly abandoning some of the best aspects of their traditional diets in favour of the worst British dietary habits!

There is an urgent need for more work to be carried out in this topic, as the availability of HM literature (in marketing) is very limited and further studies can help to develop this topic.

Finally, it is obvious that economic and marketing analysis alone will not provide a satisfactory solution to the type of consumer buyer behaviour presented in this paper. These issues and problems also have religious, traditional, ethical and industrial relations dimensions. Therefore, proposed solutions must seek to change the behaviours of individuals and institutions. To do this, it is necessary to recognise all the dimensions of consumer buyer behaviour and trends and to seek to deal with them. Therefore, it is hoped that the outcome of this study will help to outline the major issues that frame the current state of marketing HM in the UK and contribute to a better understanding of such an important business sector, raising the necessary commitment to restructure HM business activities in the UK and Europe.

## Notes

1. The Arabic word halal means lawful. In the Holy Quran, Allah commands Muslims and all of mankind to eat only HM. Among the many verses of the Quran that convey this message: Animals such as cows, sheep, goats, deer, moose, chickens, ducks, game birds, etc, are Halal, but they must be Zabihah (slaughtered according to Islamic Rites) in order to be suitable for consumption. The halal slaughtering procedure is as follows (see HFA, 2002 for more details): the animal must be slaughtered by a Muslim; the animal should be placed on the ground (or held if it is small) and its throat should be slit with a very sharp knife to make sure that the three main blood vessels are cut; and while cutting the throat of the animal (without severing it), the person must pronounce the name of Allah or recite a blessing which contains the name of Allah, such as "Bismillah Allah-u-Akbar".
2. HFA endorses and audits meat and poultry from slaughterhouse to portioning plant to the participating store, with full authenticity of halal and traceability assurance from Morrisons for all their labelled products that carry HFA logo (HFA, 2003).
3. Examples of the questions (a combination of open and closed questions) asked in the questionnaire include: Do you buy HM?; Where do you buy your HM from?; Do you ask for authenticity (can the butcher prove it is halal) when buying your HM?; Which factor is more

important when buying your HM?; Did you know Morrisons does HM?; Do you think supermarkets are trustworthy for buying HM?; Who do you think are more expensive? Supermarkets OR local butchers?; Who do you think are more hygienic? Supermarkets OR local butchers?; Who, in your view, sells better quality HM? supermarkets or local butchers?; Are you likely to shop for HM in Safeway Morrisons /Sainsbury's (if you don't already do so) now that you know they do HM?; and What will determine where you shop for HM?

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