

# Improving Halal Accessibility in India: Identifying Barriers, Adopting Mobile Technology Solutions

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## **Abstract**

This research paper explores the challenges faced by Muslims in accessing halal food in India and proposes a mobile application as a solution to enhance halal accessibility. The study utilizes a combination of secondary and primary research methods, including surveys and literature reviews, to investigate the prevalent issues and potential solutions. The findings reveal that the lack of awareness among non-Muslims, coupled with misconceptions about halal certification, contributes to the limited availability of halal options. Additionally, political tensions and cultural norms further hinder halal accessibility in India. To address these challenges, the paper suggests the development of a mobile application that provides users with information about halal-certified restaurants and products, as well as a platform for community engagement. The proposed app aims to empower Muslim consumers and promote inclusivity within the food ecosystem.

**Keywords :** Halal accessibility, Mobile application, Muslim consumers, India, Challenges

## **Introduction**

The term "Halal" is widely used in Arabic to signify permissibility or acceptability, particularly within the Islamic faith. Halal denotes actions and behaviors that are deemed permissible according to Islamic teachings, while its counterpart, "Haram," signifies actions or behaviors that are forbidden within the context of Islam.

Halal food refers to any food that adheres to Islamic law, as delineated in the Quran. Islamic dietary laws stipulate that all food and beverages are inherently considered Halal unless explicitly prohibited. These laws serve as guiding principles for Muslims worldwide, prohibiting the consumption of pork, alcohol, harmful substances, and unhygienic elements. Moreover, animals intended for consumption must undergo slaughter in accordance with Islamic law, known as Zabihah, recognized as the most humane method of animal slaughter for consumption.

### **What is Halal Certification for Food?**

Halal certification serves as a formal acknowledgment by a reputable organization, indicating that a food product, along with its ingredients and manufacturing process, adheres to the principles outlined in Islamic dietary laws. This certification holds significant importance for Muslims as it provides assurance regarding the permissibility of products for consumption in accordance with Islamic law

### **Halal Food in India**

India's Muslim population is approximately 172 million, ranking it as the third largest globally, trailing only Indonesia and Pakistan. Within India, Muslims constitute the largest religious minority. While in numerous Islamic nations, government bodies oversee the issuance of halal certification, in India, the accessibility of halal products and services has emerged as a pressing concern for the Muslim populace.

Despite the substantial Muslim community within India, the availability of halal options remains constrained and disparately distributed across various regions and sectors. Notably, while the FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) certification is prevalent on a majority of processed foods, it does not encompass halal certification. This deficiency in accessibility presents formidable challenges for Muslims striving to adhere to halal standards, impeding their access to fundamental goods and services that align with their religious convictions.

## Objectives

- Examine the obstacles hindering the access of halal food for Indian Muslims, analyzing the influence of cultural norms, misconceptions, and political tensions on the availability of halal options.
- To propose and evaluate the feasibility of a mobile application as a solution to enhance halal accessibility in India, considering its potential impact on empowering Muslim consumers and promoting inclusivity within the food ecosystem.

## Methodology

This study on halal accessibility is supported by a combination of secondary and primary research. The foundation of this study rests on a thorough review of existing literature and information related to halal accessibility. This includes examining reports and publications from reliable sources to understand the current landscape and contribute valuable insights to the field.

In addition to secondary research, primary research methods are employed to collect firsthand data. Survey is chosen as the primary source of research. This approach enables the study to gather specific and targeted information, such as consumer preferences and challenges faced in ensuring halal accessibility.

**Sampling** -refers to the systematic procedure of choosing a subset of individuals or items from a larger population with the aim of accurately representing the entire group. In research, sampling is crucial for making inferences about the population based on the characteristics of the sample. In this research paper we utilized :

- **Stratified sampling** Stratified sampling entails the segmentation of a population into distinct subgroups, or strata, characterized by specific attributes, such as religion, and then sampling from each subgroup to ensure a representative sample. In the context of halal accessibility research, surveys are sent only to Muslims to capture their perspectives accurately.
- **Snowball sampling** commences with recruiting a limited number of participants initially, followed by requesting them to recommend additional individuals who qualify for participation based on the established criteria.. In the context of the study on halal accessibility, snowball sampling is used to increase the diversity of age groups within the sample. Participants who are initially surveyed may refer others from different age groups, helping to ensure that the sample includes a broad range of perspectives and experiences related to halal accessibility.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, the study relies on trustworthy sources for both secondary and primary research. Information gathered from reputable websites, research papers, and articles forms the basis of the study's analysis. The use of surveys as a primary research method is guided by best practices in survey design, sampling and implementation to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

In studying halal accessibility, it's crucial to acknowledge several limitations that could affect the research outcomes. One key limitation is sampling bias, as the study focuses solely on urban areas, potentially overlooking the unique challenges faced in rural settings. This limitation can impact the generalizability of findings beyond the specific region studied, limiting their applicability to other cultural or regulatory contexts.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Halal Industry and Services Journal: Mohammad Hanzala, Betania Kartika, Nur Hanie Mohd Latiff.**

The article discusses India's Halal industry, citing demand from its Muslim population and challenges like vague guidance. It underscores economic opportunities and the need for government support to excel in the global Halal market. However, it has limitations such as narrow scope, lack of depth, data gaps, potential bias, and limited generalizability.

### **Factors Influencing Halal Products Purchase Intention in India: Khan, Adil; Azam, Mohammad**

**Khalid.** The study explores consumer purchase intention for Halal-certified products in India, focusing on the Muslim consumer segment. It finds attitude and perceived behavior control significantly influence purchase intention, while religiosity and subjective norms are insignificant. Limitations: narrow focus on Muslim consumers, limited sample diversity and no longitudinal analysis.

### **A crystallized exposition on Indian Muslims' attitude and consciousness towards halal Rajasekhara Mouly Potluri, Rizwana Ansari, Saqib Rasool Khan, Srinivasa Rao Dasaraju**

The study explores Indian Muslim students' attitudes towards Halal, noting limited exposure but significant interest. It's regionally specific, cautioning against broad generalizations, and offers practical insights for businesses and educational institutions targeting the Muslim consumer segment. The results of this research are, therefore, only applicable to the sampled community.

**The Challenges, Barriers, Motive and Success Factors While Adaptation of Halal Food Supply in Indian**

**Market:Waseem Akhtar** The study explores the challenges, motives, barriers, and success factors of implementing Halal food supply chains in India, highlighting cultural differences and lack of knowledge about Shariah law. Key success factors include strong leadership, organizational culture, government support, and financial resources. Despite growing demand, effective implementation faces challenges.

**Global & Indian Perspectives on Halal Food** The research paper delves into the intricate world of Halal food, examining the relationship between traditional practices and modern regulatory frameworks exploring the evolution of Halal practices, challenges and the impact of Halal certification on the industry. Limitations include lack of quantitative validation and narrow focus on specific agencies

**India – an untapped market for halal products: Yusuf Hassan, Anirban Sengupta**

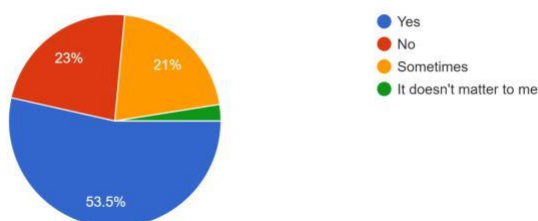
The study examines the halal product market in India, highlighting its growing awareness and demand, addressing safety and environmental concerns. It highlights the success of Islamic branding and the potential of this research to understand consumer behavior in a Muslim-majority country.

**Consumer Perspectives on Halal Food Availability**

The survey revealed compelling insights into the challenges encountered by Muslims in India regarding halal food options. A notable 53.5% of respondents reported consistent difficulties in finding halal snacks, while 21% encountered such struggles occasionally (*Figure 1*). Similarly, the search for halal restaurants posed a formidable challenge, with 53% of participants expressing consistent difficulties and 14.5% encountering occasional hurdles (*Figure 2*).

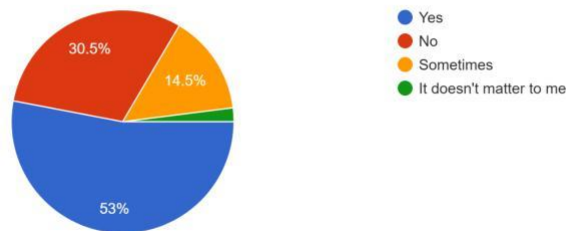
**Figure 1**

Do you have trouble finding halal snacks around you ?  
200 responses



**Figure 2**

Do you have trouble finding halal restaurants around you?  
200 responses



## **Challenges Hindering Accessibility of Halal Food in India**

The development of the halal food segment in India faces significant obstacles due to the widespread difficulty in accessing halal options. This challenge is influenced by various factors, including entrenched vegetarian dietary preferences, misconceptions surrounding halal certification, and the recent surge in Islamophobic sentiments within political spheres. These barriers collectively impede the progress of the halal food industry and limit the availability of halal options for consumers across the country.

In India, Indian food manufacturers don't usually put "halal" on their labels, except for meat products. He mentioned that non-Muslims in India often misunderstand the term "halal," associating it solely with meat. This practice stems from a widespread misunderstanding among non-Muslims, particularly Hindus, who tend to associate "halal" solely with meat products, as Akhtar explained. This misconception poses a significant challenge, especially in a country where approximately 44% of the population identifies as vegetarian.

Recent political developments, characterized by a rise in Islamophobic rhetoric and sentiments, exacerbate the challenges faced by the halal food sector. Instances of anti-Muslim activism, such as protests against the usage of halal meat and social media campaigns advocating for the boycott of halal products, amplify tensions in the already delicate Hindu-Muslim relations in the country. Strained Hindu-Muslim relations in India also create challenges for food manufacturers, with tensions prompting caution in including halal labels on products sold domestically. Incidents of consumer protests against the use of halal labeling in the Indian market underscore the delicate nature of this issue. These challenges emphasize the complexities businesses face in balancing religious and political sensitivities while navigating the halal food segment.

The lack of standardized labeling and information regarding halal certification complicates the process of identifying suitable food products and dining establishments. This ambiguity leaves consumers uncertain and often hesitant to consume certain food items, amplifying the challenge of accessing halal options.

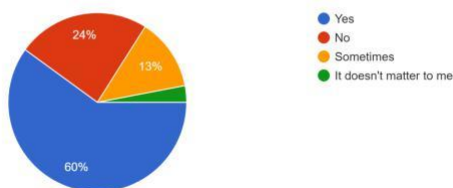
Societal norms and cultural perceptions further influence the availability and accessibility of halal food. In regions where non-vegetarian cuisine predominates, the dominance of certain dietary preferences may overshadow the demand for halal options, resulting in a lack of diversity in culinary offerings and exacerbating the challenges faced by Muslim consumers.

### **Social and Emotional Impact of Halal Accessibility Issues**

The survey revealed that 60% of individuals consistently feel frustrated due to the lack of accessible halal food, while an additional 16% experience occasional frustration in this regard (*Figure 3*). Similarly, a significant portion of respondents, comprising 56%, indicated that halal accessibility issues directly impact their social life, with an additional 13% reporting occasional social frustration stemming from the same cause (*Figure 4*).

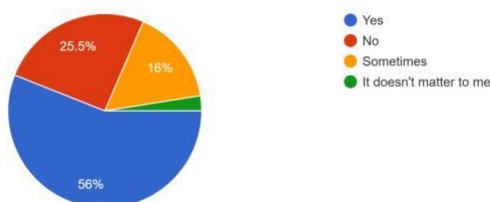
**Figure 3**

Have you ever felt frustrated NOT having halal food conveniently available to you ?  
200 responses



**Figure 4**

Does it effect your social life?  
200 responses



These statistics shed light on the pervasive nature of the challenges faced by individuals adhering to halal dietary practices. The frustration stemming from the unavailability of halal food suggests a persistent struggle to maintain dietary preferences in everyday life. This frustration can manifest in various ways, including difficulty in finding suitable food options, feeling restricted in culinary choices, and experiencing inconvenience in meal planning and preparation. Such challenges can significantly disrupt individuals' dietary routines and contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction and disconnection from mainstream food culture.

Moreover, the impact of halal accessibility issues extends beyond individual dietary habits to influence social interactions within Muslim communities. The survey findings indicate that over half of the respondents perceive a direct impact on their social life due to halal accessibility issues. This impact could manifest in several ways, including limited participation in social gatherings, avoidance of non-halal dining experiences, and feelings of exclusion from mainstream social activities. Additionally, the survey highlights that a notable portion of respondents experiences occasional social frustration, indicating that halal accessibility issues intermittently affect their social interactions and experiences.

The intersection of halal accessibility issues with social life underscores broader challenges faced by Muslim individuals in navigating societal norms and structures. The inability to access halal food options not only poses practical difficulties but also affects individuals' sense of belonging and inclusion within their social circles. It may lead to feelings of isolation, cultural alienation, and the perpetuation of social barriers that hinder meaningful engagement and interaction.

### **Mobile App Solution for Enhancing Halal Accessibility**

In response to the multifaceted challenges encountered by Muslims in India concerning halal accessibility, the proposition of a mobile application presents a comprehensive solution. This app aims to redefine the navigation of the halal landscape for Muslim consumers by providing an integrated platform facilitating convenient access to halal-certified restaurants, food products, and services across India's diverse regions. Through the incorporation of innovative features and functionalities, this mobile app endeavors to equip users with the necessary information and tools to make informed decisions and enrich their halal experience.



## **Features and Functionality:**

### ***Halal Restaurant Locator***

- The mobile app boasts an advanced restaurant locator tool leveraging geolocation technology to identify halal-certified restaurants within the user's proximity.
- Users can personalize their search criteria based on parameters like cuisine type, halal certification status, pricing, and user ratings.
- Detailed profiles of listed restaurants furnish comprehensive information including halal certification status, menu offerings, operational hours, contact details, and user-generated reviews.

### ***Halal Product Scanner***

- An embedded product scanning feature enables users to swiftly verify the halal certification status of food products by scanning barcodes or QR codes.
- Drawing from an extensive database of halal-certified products, the app furnishes instantaneous feedback on scanned items.
- In instances where a product lacks halal certification, alternative halal options are suggested along with information on nearby stores or online retailers stocking them.

### ***Halal Certification Database***

- The app houses a robust database encompassing information on halal-certified products, brands, and manufacturers available in the Indian market.
- Users can navigate and explore the database to access detailed insights into specific products, encompassing certification particulars, ingredient lists, nutritional content, and allergen advisories.
- Regular updates ensure the database's currency and relevance, with fresh certifications and product listings continually integrated.

### ***Community Engagement***

- Users engage in dialogue, share personal experiences, pose queries, and proffer advice or recommendations concerning halal dining, culinary practices, and shopping.

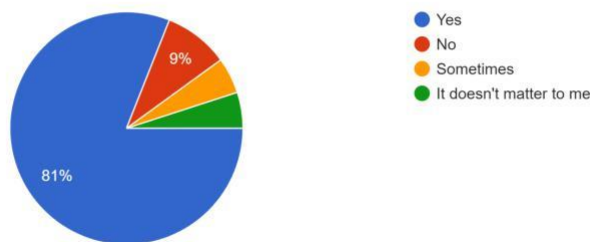
- Community members contribute reviews, ratings, and visual content showcasing their preferred halal establishments, products, and culinary creations, fostering a dynamic and user-driven platform.

## **Implications and Impact of the Halal Accessibility Mobile App**

The introduction of the halal accessibility mobile app holds the promise of empowering Muslim consumers by providing them with unprecedented access to halal-certified restaurants, food products, and services. With 81% of respondents expressing belief in the app's potential to solve the halal accessibility issue (*Figure 5*), it is evident that such a solution resonates strongly with the needs and preferences of the Muslim community. By offering a centralized platform for halal information and resources, the app equips users with the tools to navigate the halal landscape with confidence and convenience, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life.

**Figure 5**

Do you think an app that caters to your halal needs will solve this issue?  
200 responses



Moreover, the adoption of the halal accessibility mobile app stands to benefit halal-certified businesses by increasing their visibility and patronage. As 81% of respondents endorse the app's efficacy, businesses can leverage this platform to expand their market reach and cater to the growing demand for halal products and services. This not only stimulates economic growth within the halal sector but also fosters a more inclusive and diverse marketplace that accommodates the dietary needs and preferences of diverse religious and cultural communities.

Furthermore, the promotion of inclusivity and diversity within the food ecosystem is a significant outcome of the adoption of the halal accessibility mobile app. By catering to the dietary needs and preferences of

diverse religious and cultural communities, the app fosters greater understanding and appreciation for different culinary traditions. The majority of respondents expressing confidence in the app's ability to solve halal accessibility issues suggests its potential to bridge cultural divides and promote social cohesion.

From a technological standpoint, the development of the halal accessibility mobile app represents a significant advancement in leveraging technology to address complex socio-cultural issues. With 81% of respondents endorsing the app as a potential solution, its implementation sets a precedent for the integration of technological solutions in enhancing food accessibility and inclusivity. This not only signifies progress in addressing halal accessibility challenges but also opens doors for further innovations in leveraging technology to address societal needs.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the challenges hindering the accessibility of halal food in India stem from a complex interplay of cultural, social, and political factors. The vegetarian culture, coupled with misconceptions surrounding halal certification, creates barriers that limit the availability of halal options for Muslim consumers. Additionally, the recent surge in Islamophobic sentiments exacerbates these challenges, further hindering the progress of the halal food industry.

The survey findings highlight the pervasive nature of these challenges, with a significant proportion of respondents expressing consistent difficulties in accessing halal snacks and restaurants. These challenges not only impact individuals' dietary choices but also have social and emotional repercussions, leading to feelings of frustration and isolation within Muslim communities.

However, the proposition of a mobile application presents a promising solution to address these challenges. By providing a centralized platform for halal information and resources, the app empowers Muslim consumers to make informed decisions and enhances their access to halal-certified products and services. Moreover, the adoption of such technology promotes inclusivity, diversity, and social cohesion within the food ecosystem.

Moving forward, it is essential to continue advocating for greater awareness and understanding of halal practices among non-Muslims, as well as to address the underlying socio-political tensions that contribute to halal accessibility issues. By doing so, India can create a more inclusive and accessible food landscape that caters to the diverse needs of its population

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