

Awareness and Willingness on Halal Certification of Non-Halal Restaurant Owners in Croatia, with focus on Dubrovnik

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Croatia



Awareness and Willingness on Halal Certification of Non-Halal Restaurant Owners in
Croatia, with focus on Dubrovnik

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ABSTRACT

Having regular restaurants without certifications for people of other religions is not right answer anymore. Certain certificates can improve the whole business and tourism branch overall in every country. The purpose of this paper and the study is to find out how many restaurant owners are aware of Halal certificate and how many of them are willing to have Halal certificate in non-Halal restaurants. The study is based on data collected from restaurant owners in Croatia, Dubrovnik. Previous findings based on this topic do not exist.

Key words: halal, halal certification, awareness, willingness, non-halal restaurants, Dubrovnik

AWARENESS AND WILLINGNESS ON HALAL CERTIFICATION OF NON- HALAL RESTAURANT OWNERS IN CROATIA, WITH FOCUS ON DUBROVNIK

Tourism represents very important part of the world economy. Touristic movements enable the establishment of human connections and getting to know the geographical environment. One of the fastest growing parts of tourism nowadays is known as Halal tourism. Word Halal is an Arabic word and it can be translated as something pure or allowed. According to the website *Croatia full of life* the word “Halal” in the Muslim world represents all touchable and untouchable things that are allowed by Islamic law. In order for food industry to smooth properly nowadays it is important that company have certain standards and norms of production. When the product is made within certain standards then the product can get a certificate from certain agencies. Certificates serve to gain customer trust and to guarantee the quality of the product. That is why having certain certificates can increase the number of guests in food businesses which leads to higher profits and it can help the business grow. One of the strictest standards is including Halal standards. Halal standards were based many years ago. They are written in Kur`an and they require adherence to many rules. If any industry wants to have Halal certificate for a product then they have to complete many documents, finish many educations and pass all inspection. When these requirements are satisfied the company can get the certificate. It is important to emphasize that the whole production from beginning until the end have to strictly follow these standards. In case that the smallest thing is not according to the standards than the certificate can`'t be allowed for the company. Even if the smallest detail does not comply with the standards, the company will not be able to obtain the certificate. Because of the very specific way of producing these products they often have bigger prices. For people who want to continue living within their

religion, and who appreciate the products that are representing their religion and life, is not a problem to set aside substantial sums of money.

The hypothesis of this research is that non-Halal restaurant owners are aware of Halal certificate but they are not willing to invest into gaining Halal certificate because of small percentage of Muslim local people in Croatia.

IMPORTANT MUSLIM WORDS

Before getting into obtaining Halal certificate there are some important terms that have to be known. Some of them were found on *Islamic community in Croatia* website.

Halal – Arabic word that represents food that is allowed for Muslims to eat. Literally it means “untied”. In religious way it represents everything that is permitted by the religion.

Haram – Haram presents everything that is prohibited for Muslims.

Meshbuh – Meshbug represents all suspicious things. Based on Islamic beliefs “suspicion” is everything that does not have real evidences.

Sharia – Arabic word that in literal translation means “law, right path or direction”. It can be defined as a set of Islamic regulations governed by Muslim men and woman. The goals of Sharia are to protect religion, life, honor, property, reason and homeland. The actual task is to fulfill human lives. If any of the goal is compromised for Muslim that means that human life is not fulfilled and impeccable.

Halal certificate – is a document issued and accredited Islamic organization certifying that the products conform to the Islamic law and are usable for Muslims (*Islam & Chandrasekaran, 2013*).

HISTORY

Food is one of the main necessities in human and animal lives since it is essential for survival. Ever since the beginning of humanity, people were looking for new ways of finding food, they were developing new tools, trying out new plants and animals to figure out which food suits them the best. In addition to this, the search for food pushed people from different civilizations, backgrounds, and races to start interacting with each other. Those interactions led to building the base for many cultures we have today among that, people were exchanging their beliefs, practices, moral views, thoughts on spirituality which created the foundations for some religions. Every religion developed its own norms which affect not only behavior and living but their relationship with food as well. By observing some of the most spread religions one of them stands out with its norms and this religion is Islam. Muslims have very specific rules when it comes to the food they consume. They also attributed specific names to differentiate the food that they can and cannot eat. The simplest way to explain Halal is that Halal represents all the food that Muslim people are allowed to consume while Haram is food prohibited for Muslim people.

The roots of Muslim religion are based in Middle East and the religion as itself was founded in 7th century AD. Nowadays Muslim religion represents one of the biggest religions in the world. Muslim holy book is called Ku`ran and in order to be a good believer they have to follow 6 religious provisions and 5 pillars that are written in Ku`ran. The life of every Muslim depends on Ku`ran because it consist of all rules of what is allowable (Halal) and what is prohibited (Haram).

According to Islamic Community in Croatia Muslim people started to interact with non-Muslim countries around 1960s. Because of those interactions more and more Muslim people started to travel around the world. For them, not having Halal food present in the

destinations they visit represents a big problem since they want to remain consistent to their beliefs regardless of their location. After that realization, Halal food and Halal certificates started to develop even in the non-Muslim parts of the world. Demand for Halal food significantly increased in Europe so food productions adapted their offer and production to Halal standards. “It is estimated that there are about 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, and it is estimated that by 2030 there will be about 2.2 billion. Given that 60% of that population is under the age of 30, the demand for halal food is projected to increase over the next ten years.” (Islamic community in Croatia, halal quality certification center).

HALAL IN WORLD

According to New York Times magazine and article “The rise of Halal Tourism” written by Kamin since year 2016. number of Muslim travelers rise up to 30%. In year 2015. “Since 2016, the number of Muslim travelers has grown nearly 30 percent, and a recent joint study by Mastercard and Crescent Rating, a research group that tracks halal-friendly travel, projects that over the next decade that sector’s contribution to the global economy will jump to \$300 billion from \$180 billion.” Halal Travel Guide was invented serving as an online platform that can help any Muslim person to find facilities with Halal certificate.

According to the founder, Mr.Mikhael Goh, of Muslim web sites called Halal Travel Guide and Have Halal Will Travel “We were thinking, why is it in 2015, when there is Yelp and TripAdvisor and so many popular apps and services to tell you where to eat and where to travel, why on earth is there so little information for Muslims? Not just about food — yes, halal food is the basis of a lot of things, but also about safety and prayer. There was a general lack of information out there and the information that did exist was so fragmented.”

After the creation of sites by Mr. Goh this GAP of lack of information started to be smaller. According to New York Times many young Muslim women are running online sites intended to Muslims, such as: Passport and Plates, Arabian Wanderess, and Muslim Travel Girl. “Their goal is not just to make it easier for Muslim travelers to find food, prayer spaces and alcohol-free activities that appeal to them. It’s also to support those travelers to branch out of their comfort zones and feel empowered exploring the world.” (New York Times, 2019).

According to the *World Tourism and Travel Council - WTTC*, Muslim travelers spent \$ 238 billion in 2018, prompting national tourism organizations in many countries to introduce some changes to meet the needs of Muslims, such as applications and gastronomic guides, marking locations where one can perform a prayer or find a halal hotel. (Al Jazeera, 2019).

As highlighted by Al Jazeera top 3 Muslim-friendly countries are: Dubai, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The study by Muslim Travel Index, 2016 showed that Singapore is also shown as very competitive, due to its Muslim community and infrastructure, such as facilities and services for Muslims. It is therefore classified as the most suitable destination for Muslims in 2016. On the 4th place there is Turkey because halal food can be easily obtained, and women with a headscarf or niqab are not the target of discrimination. Al Jazeera highlighted that the most Muslim friendly state is United Kingdom.

HALAL IN EUROPE

In Europe, there are places with the best offer of halal food in the world, which makes it a desirable destination for travel and discovering options available to Muslims. In this way they do not feel lonely in a foreign country. According to Al Jazeera the best thing in Europe

is the ease of traveling from one country to another across the continent, but the only problem is that some destinations are less friendly than others, which can cause concern among some Muslims, especially for women who wear a veil over their faces.

“Sarajevo is very interesting destination because it combines East and West, different cultures of Christian and Muslim world; that is why Sarajevo is recognized as “European Jerusalem”. “ (dr. Lejla Žunić, PMF Sarajevo). Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the tourist destinations with the largest halal offer in Europe. The country abounds in many monuments from the period of the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian rule, as well as sites included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Also worth mentioning is Blagaj, a small Muslim-majority town about ten kilometers from Mostar. Blagaj is recognizable for its natural beauty and Islamic heritage, which characterizes its facilities. Halal food can be found very easily in this place.

According to Aldin Dugonjić 70 % of guests from the halal market come from 16 countries. Therefore there is 37% of Muslim guests from 6 Arab countries, 10% of Muslim guests from 3 countries in Southeast Asia, 16% of Muslim guests are from Turkey and Iran, and 7% of Muslim guests are from 5 Western European countries.

HALAL IN CROATIA

The Islamic community of Croatia celebrated the 100th anniversary of legal recognition in the Republic of Croatia in year 2016. The Law on the Recognition of the Islamic Religion in the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia was confirmed on April 27, 1916. by the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph I and approved by the Croatian Parliament. Since that day Islam became an equal religion with Christianity, after which Austria and

Croatia remain the countries with the most orderly relations with the Islamic community. (Pavičević, 2017).

History of tourism in Croatia goes dates back to 19th century. Ever since then Croatian tourism is on the rise. It had its ups and downs but, generally, Croatian destinations seem to be attracting more and more tourists each year. (*Croatian National Tourist Board, HTZ.HR*)

In the last decade tourism industry has become one of the most important industries in Croatia. If Croatia wants to keep tourism as one of their main profit sources, business owners have to be aware that their offer has to change and adapt constantly. In addition to that, they have to expand their offer so that people from all around the world, with different cultures and backgrounds can feel welcomed. If they want to keep their guests satisfied they need to give them what they need and currently, one of the biggest trends seems to be Halal tourism. For Croatia Halal tourism is new kind of industry and it represents two different things: food consumption in restaurants and conditions for performance of religious rites in accordance with the standards.

Part of the Treaty is the right of a sharia marriage to have the same effect as a civil one. Another important item is the right to seek food in accordance with halal standards in state and public institutions. In order to ensure food in accordance with Shariah norms, the Islamic Community in Croatia has established a Halal Quality Certification Center that takes care of the certification of halal products and services. It is interesting that Croatia is the only country in the European Union that has a halal norm within its official standards. (Botunjić, 2017)

According to the article published in newspaper *Slobodna Dalmatija* (2013.) *Sheikhs and sultans were running away from Dalmatia* because the restaurants did not have a halal certificate. In 2013. there was only one restaurant on the Adriatic that had Halal certificate

and the hotel is known as “Baška” on Krk. Continental Croatia already had some hotels and restaurants that were known for having Halal certificate, such as Hotel Westin.

According to Mr. Radić who is journalist for RTL channel news there are things in which Croatia is among the strongest in Europe - one of those things is the production of halal-certified food - that is, food that is allowed to Muslims. (Radić, 2017.)

CERTIFIED RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS

According to the webpage of Islamic community in Croatia, halal quality certification center there are couple of restaurants and hotels in Croatia and in Dubrovnik that have Halal certificate.

Hotels in Croatia- ESPLANADE OLEANDER d.o.o. (Zagreb), Grand Hotel Adriatic d.d. (Opatija), Milenij hoteli d.o.o. (Opatija), Hotel Aristos Zagreb (Buzin), Hotel Turist (Varaždin), Le Meridien Lav Split (Split), Sheraton Zagreb Hotel (Zagreb), Valamar Riviera d.d. (Poreč), Westin Zagreb Hotel (Zagreb)

Hotels in Dubrovnik – Libertas Rixos d.o.o., Valamar Lacroma Dubrovnik Hotel,

Restaurants in Croatia – Podravka d.d. - Restoran Podravska Klet (Varaždin)

Restaurants in Dubrovnik - Restoran "Proto" and restaurant “Konavoski Dvori”

PROCESS TO GET HALAL CERTIFICATE

In order for a company to get Halal certificate there are certain steps and rules that have to be followed. Production has to be in accordance with Halal standards and the process of getting the certificate has to be determined with procedure of certification. According to

Islamic community in Croatia, halal quality certification center there are eight steps that have to be followed in order to get Halal certificate.

First step for company is to send certification requirement (application). Certification requirement has to be delivered to the Center for certification. Not only certification requirement but also documentation that proves that the company business is operating in accordance with legal regulations and that the company can meet certain requirements for Halal quality.

The second step is to check delivered documentation. Documentation is checked by the Center in details. After the check is finished the Center sends price offer for certificate and they are inform client for steps that have to be done next.

The third step is signing of the contract. After the client is informed about price and after client accepts the price that was offered the Center and the client have to sign the contract.

The forth step is Education of the employees. The Center educates employees in order for them to follow Halal norms and rules in the company.

The fifth and sixth step are known as Certification audit Phase 1 and Certification audit Phase 2. In Phase 1 company prepares documentation that consists of all processes of production and checks that were made on all raw materials that are going to be used in creating Halal products, while in Phase 2 the Center is the one that checks if the company have fulfilled all requirements that are needed to get the certificate.

The seventh step is known as Certificate Award Commission. After Audit is done all required documentation is proceeded to Certificate Award Commission. Based on the documentation that was checked Commission determines if the Audit was conducted according to the requirements of Halal standards.

The last step is Certificate award decision. In this step Commission makes a decision whether the company will get the certificate or not.

METHOD

The purpose of this research was to find out how many restaurant owners of non-Halal restaurants in Dubrovnik are aware of Halal certificate and if they would be willing to invest their money into obtaining the certificate. In addition to that, the research explored their willingness on gaining Halal certificate as well as their familiarity with the Muslim culture and Halal food standards. The data was collected through quantitative survey which consisted of one-ended question and multiple choice questions. The survey was conducted among non-Halal stand-alone restaurant owners in Dubrovnik.

In order to assess the awareness and willingness of the non-Halal restaurants purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling allows the sampler to decide who will or who will not be included in the sample (Mendenhall et al., 2014). The sample size was 18, among which 14 of them were male and 4 of them were female. Majority of them have 11-20 years of experience (33,3%) while no one has under 2 years of experience. Survey was conducted electronically in March 2021.

This survey consists of 11 different questions. 4 multiple choice questions designed to be answered through Likert scale that had 5 options going from 1- not willing/not familiar/know nothing up to 5-extremely willing/extremely familiar/know everything. Possible answers were on scale from 1-5 where 1 represented *Not familiar at all* and 5 represented *Very familiar*. Other 4 questions were YES and NO in which participants were asked about their willingness and interest in investing. 2 other questions were multiple choice questions since the survey explored their gender and years of experience in their business. The

last question was open-ended which allowed the participants to share their thoughts through leaving a comment.

RESULTS

The survey is divided into two parts; the first part is based on the level of awareness of participants. Participants were asked to give themselves the level of awareness they have based on Muslim religion and standards. The second part was focused on participants` level of willingness. They had to provide the answers based on their willingness about investing into their business and investing into Halal certificate.

18 different restaurant owners from Dubrovnik participated in this survey. Data that was collected was analyzed and as well as compared with hypothesis.

Results for awareness are following:

Figure 1:



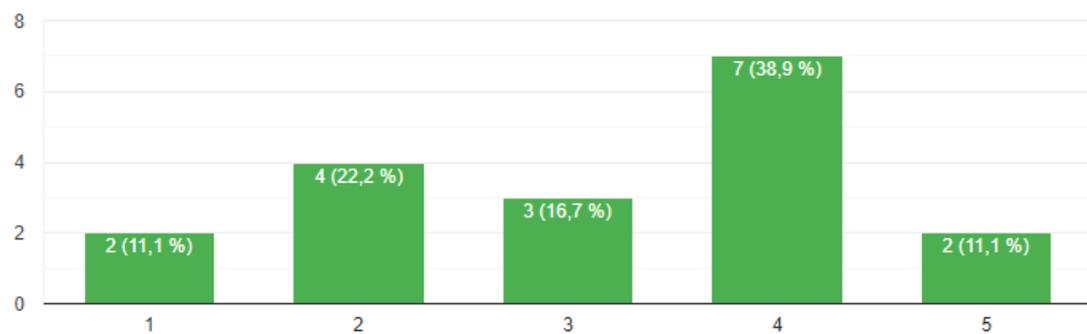
Source: Author

Based on the answers, none of the participants was fully confident in their knowledge about Halal food and Halal culture. 6 out of 18 were familiar, 5 out of 18 were in between, 3 out of 18 were not very familiar, and 4 out of 18 were not familiar at all. Majority of them are not very familiar about Halal food and Muslim culture.

Figure 2:

How much do you know about which foods are permitted for Muslims?

18 odgovora



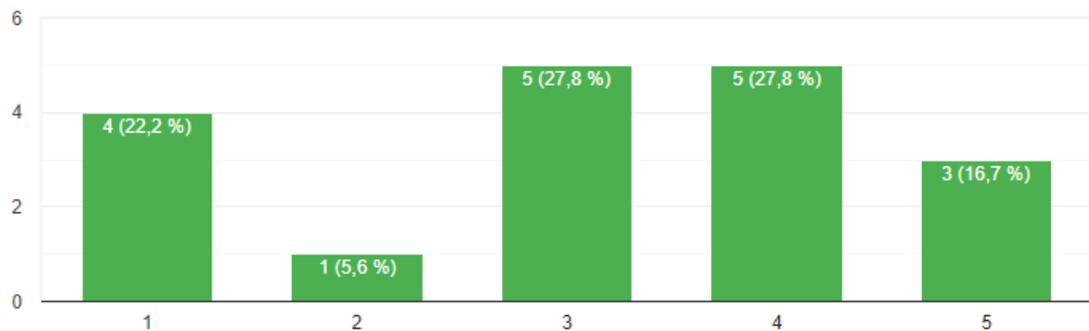
Source: Author

For second question just 2 out of 18 participants rated themselves to have a lot of knowledge about permitted food for Muslim people, 7 out of 18 participants were confident enough to answer that they know which food is permitted, 3 out of 18 were in between, 4 out of 18 do not know enough, and 2 out of 18 know nothing. Data collected for second question shows that participants can be divided in two equal groups where 9 of them do not really know about permitted food for Muslims and 9 of them do know.

Figure 3:

How familiar are you about food inspection and certification process?

18 odgovora



Source: Author

Based on the third question collected data shows that 3 out of 18 participants are very familiar with food inspection and certification process, 5 out of 18 are confident enough to say they know something, 5 out of 18 are in between, 1 out of 18 does not know much and 4 out of 18 know nothing about it. Based on the survey it can be said that 10 out of 18 participants are not that familiar with food inspection and certification process while 8 out of 18 are familiar with it. Overall the graphs shows that majority of participants are not very familiar with food inspection and certification process.

H1: non-Halal restaurant owners are aware of Halal certificate

According to first 3 questions within the survey that were connected to awareness, first hypothesis showed as wrong. Based on numerical numbers and graphs there is no high number of restaurant owners who are aware of Halal certificate and the meaning of the word Halal.

Table 1: Level of awareness

	Mean	St.Dev.
Awareness of Muslim culture	2,72	1,178511302
Awareness of permitted Muslim food	3,16	1,268973647
Awareness of food inspection and certification process	3,11	1,347655917
TOTAL:	2,99	0,2409010862

Legend: 1 – not familiar at all, 2 – not familiar as much, 3 in between, 4 – familiar, 4 – extremely familiar

Source: Author

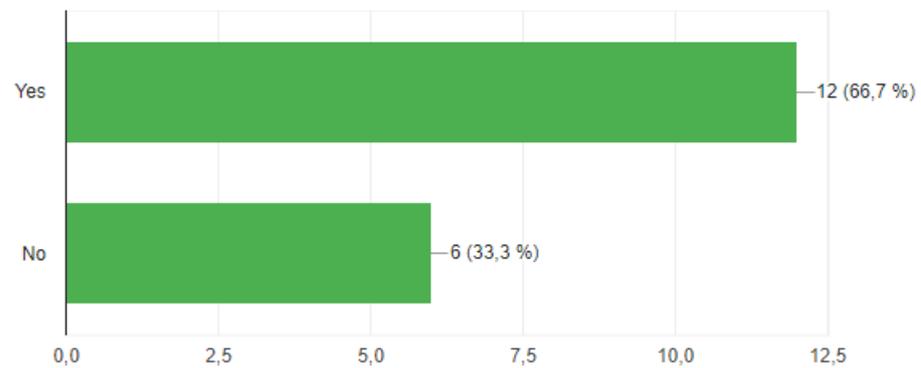
Based on Table 1. restaurant owners were not very aware of Muslim culture, permitted Muslim food nor food inspection and certification process. This indicates that non-Halal restaurants are not aware of Halal requirements and needs. For the first 3 questions mean shows as 3 with standard deviation of 1,178511302. This shows that participants' level of awareness is low.

Results for willingness are following:

Figure 4:

Are you interested in having separate menu?

18 odgovora



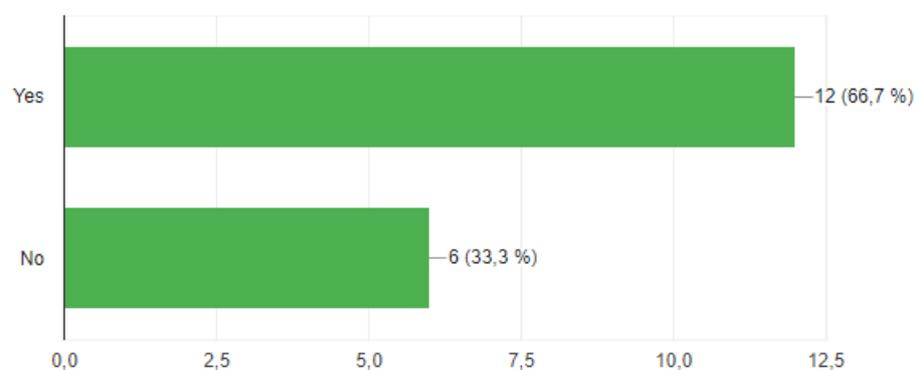
Source: Author

Based on the first question “Are you interested in having separate menu?” that is connected to willingness of the participant, 12 out of 18 participants showed interest into having separate menu, while 6 out of 18 did not show interest in having separate menu.

Figure 5:

Are you interested in training staff?

18 odgovora



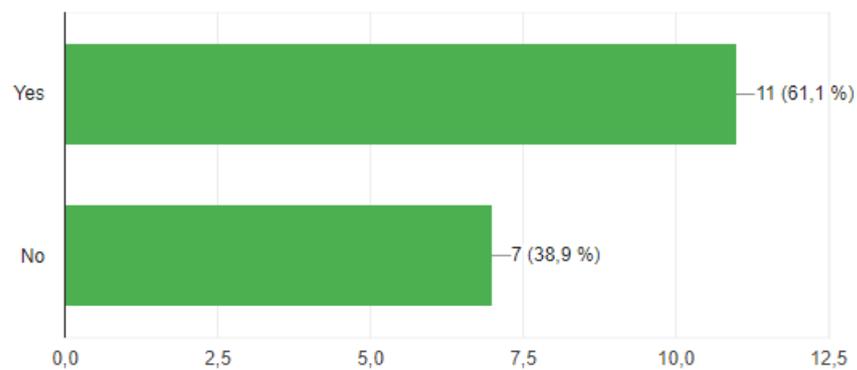
Source: Author

Based on the second question “Are you interested in training staff?” that is connected to willingness of the participant, 12 out of 18 participants showed interest into having separate menu, while 6 out of 18 did not show interest in having separate menu. The result is the same in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

Figure 6:

Are you interested in having all physical equipment needed?

18 odgovora



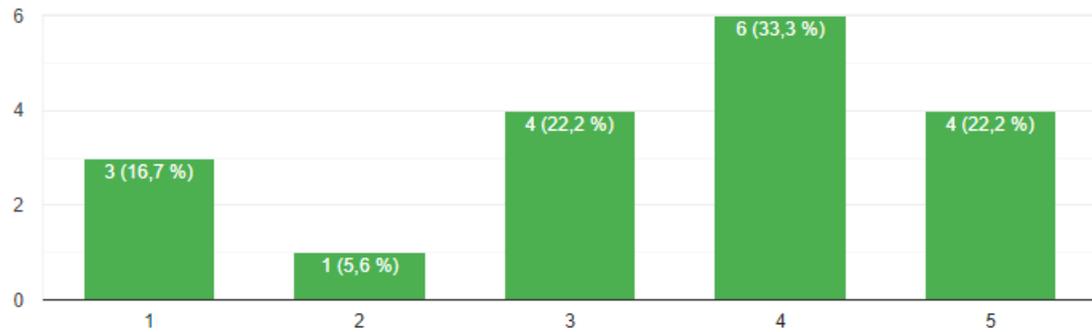
Source: Author

While comparing Figure 6 with two previous figures (Figure 4. And Figure 5) 11 out of 18 participants are interested in having all physical equipment needed, while 7 of them are not.

Figure 7:

How willing are you to change food in order to meet the needs of a Muslim guest?

18 odgovora



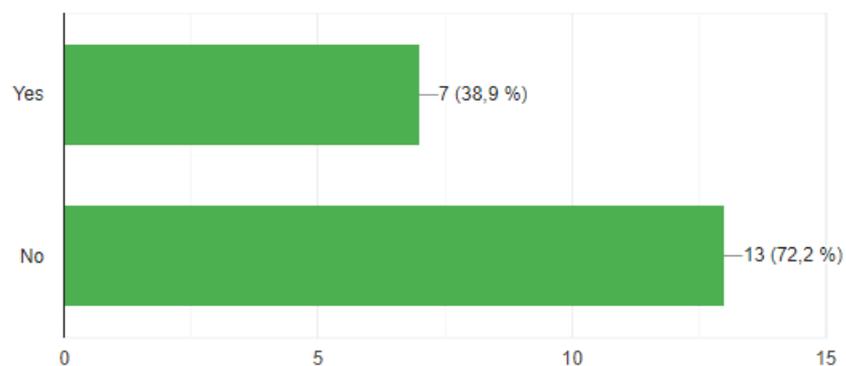
Source: Author

Question number 7 revealed that majority of participants showed willingness to change food in order to meet the needs of Muslim people. 10 participants out of 18 were confident enough to say that they are willing to change while 4 out of 18 of them were not willing at all and 4 of them were in between.

Figure 8:

Are you willing to invest money into Halal certificate?

18 odgovora



Source: Author

This is one of the main questions regarding second hypothesis. Even though participants showed big interest into investing in separate menu, training staff and physical equipment they did not show interest in investing into gaining Halal certificate. 2 answers are considered as limitation because of answering on both yes and no.

H2: Restaurant owners are not willing to invest into Halal certificate because of small percentage of Muslim local people in Croatia.

Based on last 5 questions from survey this hypothesis is confirmed. Most of the restaurant owners are not willing to invest into gaining Halal certificate.

Table 2: Level of willingness

Mean:

St.Dev.

Willingness to change food in order to meet needs of Muslim guests	3,38	1,411611511
Willingness on having separate menu	YES 12	NO 6
Willingness on training staff	YES 12	NO 6
Willingness on equipment needed	YES 11	NO 7
Willingness to invest money into certificate	YES 5	NO 11

Source: Author

Legend 1.: 1 – not willing at all, 2 – not very willing, 3 – in between, 4 - willing 5 – extremely willing

Legend 2: YES/NO

Based on the first question that was made through Likert scale mean is 3,38 with standard deviation of 1,411611511. This means that participants were slightly willing but not completely willing into changing food in order to meet needs of Muslim guests.

Remaining 4 questions with yes/no answers were mostly answered with yes and only one was answered with no. Last one half confirmed the second hypothesis and it remains that restaurant owners are not willing to invest into Halal certificate but for other reasons. Since the last question was open ended type of question there were three answers regarding not investing into Halal certificate and those are:

1. Not ready to adapt, more focus on other objectives, but believe there will be businesses that will do the changes.
2. Due to the lack of space needed for having two kitchens, we have no possibility of adapting our establishment to meet special halal rules and demands.
3. I would add a menu section for Muslims the same as for vegetarians

Level of awareness and willingness

	Mean	St. Dev.
Awareness of Muslim culture	2,72	1,178511302
Awareness of permitted Muslim food	3,16	1,268973647
Awareness of food inspection and certification process	3,11	1,347655917
Willingness to change food in order to meet needs of Muslim guests	3,38	1,411611511
Willingness on having separate menu	YES 12	NO 6
Willingness on training staff	YES 12	NO 6
Willingness on equipment needed	YES 11	NO 7
Willingness to invest money into certificate	YES 5	NO 11

DISCUSSION

Naturally Halal comes from Islam and Islam comes from East countries, but throughout the years Islam has spread and developed in other countries as well. Halal is not only considered as a main instrument for Muslim people but it is also considered as very important and trustworthy instrument to many other people. Since Halal is considered as a “clean” food from the start until the end of processing, having Halal certificate creates positive relationship with people. Nowadays there are 30% of Muslim tourists in the whole world. In order to keep them satisfied and engaged in their travelling people should consider investing into Halal certificate.

The main purpose of this research was to determine the level of awareness of restaurant owners on Halal certificate as well as Halal food and Muslim culture. Furthermore, the author wanted to explore the level of willingness of restaurant owners of non-Halal stand-alone restaurants in Dubrovnik into investing their money in order to obtain Halal certificate. Considering COVID-19 situation author completely moved from interviewing participants to electronic survey and purposive sampling. Since the participants had to be non-Halal stand-alone restaurant owners’ purposive sampling was used because the author was able to decide who will or who will not be included in the sample.

Based on first 3 questions connected to awareness results showed that restaurant owners are not very aware of Muslim culture, permitted Muslim food, nor food inspection and certification process. Based on next 5 questions connected to willingness the survey results showed that participants are mostly not willing to invest into Halal certificate. Even though restaurant owners are willing to invest into menu, training staff and equipment, they are still not ready to invest into gaining Halal certificate. Furthermore, the only multiple choice question for willingness showed that restaurant owners are slightly willing to change food in order to meet needs of Muslim people. The reason behind is not the fact that there is a small

percentage of Muslim local people, but the fact that the owners are limited with space or not prepared for adapting.

One of the hypotheses of this research showed as completely wrong with negative attitude of the participants and the other one showed slightly positive but not completely. First hypothesis “*non-Halal restaurant owners are aware of Halal certificate*” in the end showed as wrong with negative attitude. It was determined with first three questions from the survey. Second hypothesis “*not willing to invest into gaining Halal certificate because of small percentage of Muslim local people in Croatia*” showed that participants are slightly willing of to change food in order to meet needs of Muslim guests, but they are not completely willing. Remaining 4 questions with yes/no answers were mostly answered with yes and only one was answered with no.

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