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Halal Food Issue in European Media Coverage

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

1. Conceptualization: Meaning of Halal 3

CHAPTER II

2. Theoretical Background 17

2.1. Identity and public sphere 18

2.2. Media and News Coverage 24

3. Methodology 30

3.1. Research Design 33

3.2. Limitation 34

CHAPTER III

4. Understanding Halal Debate 35

4.1. Halal Food in Global Context 39

4.2. Halal Food in Europe 45

4.2.1. The DIALREL Project 56

CHAPTER IV

5. Findings and Analysis 59

5.1. Halal Food in European News Coverage 59

CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CCTV: Closed-Circuit Television

CEN: European Committee for Standardization

EU: European Union

FCEC: Food Chain Evaluation Consortium

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

JAKIM: Department of Islamic Development Malaysia

MUIS: Islamic Religious Council of Singapore

OIC: Organization of Islamic Cooperation

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Halal food supply chain

Figure 2. Organization chart of DIALREL Project 6 work packages (available in the project's web page)

Figure 3. Top three topics of Halal Food search in Daily Mail

Figure 4. Word cloud of selected news

Figure 5. Breakdown of collected news by newspaper

Figure 6. Different types of labels of Halal Food

Figure 7. A news' picture from the Independent titled "End 'cruel' religious slaughter, say scientists" in 2009

Figure 8. Reference to European Union

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Regional Distribution of Muslim Population

Table 2. Evolution of Halal Industry by Sector (USD)

ABSTRACT

This research intends to analyze halal food debates in the European region and illustrate mainstream media coverage of the discussion. The halal food issue has recently been a controversial topic due to slaughtering method. Slaughter without stunning has been embraced Muslims and Jewish communities for centuries ago, however, nowadays it has been found as cruel and unacceptable by animal rights advocates. In addition to animal rights defenders, far right politicians have targeted Islamic slaughtering method to be banned all across the Europe which is considered as discrimination and intolerance towards Muslims. Since halal is associated with the Islamic lifestyle in terms of nutrition, cosmetics, finances and clothing, it's become an essential component of expressing one's Muslim identity. Furthermore, the superficial correlation between Islam and terrorism, crime and the label of "folk devil" have led to increased intolerance toward the Muslim lifestyle. As such, Muslims have been stigmatized as a cultural threat to the European way of life, including in issues related to traditional cuisine. The media has also been of key importance in labeling Muslims as folk devils, which can directly affect the public and politicians. Therefore, mainstream newspapers were selected to demonstrate whether the media address the halal food issue from a perspective based on marketing and science or from a perspective rooted in politics. According to this study's findings, the majority of news contains socio-political content that assesses halal slaughter as cruel and argues that the method should be banned by European states. Hence, the halal food issue has become intertwined with concerns about animal rights and freedom of belief, which can be observed in the selected news. The halal food debates are ultimately interconnected with one another and form a trilemma that consists of aspects related to markets, scientific evaluations and politics. Each of these aspects should be included in assessments of the topic in order to produce a better solution.

Keywords: Halal Food, Muslim Identity, Media, Europe

ÖZET

Bu çalışma Avrupa'daki helal gıda tartışmalarını ve bu tartışmaların ana akım medyada nasıl yansıtıldığını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Günümüzde helal gıda konusu, özellikle dini kesim yöntemlerinden dolayı, hayvan hakları savunucuları ve aşırı sağ grupları rahatsız eden en tartışmalı konular arasında yer almaktadır. Helal, İslami yaşam tarzı ile sadece gıda konusunda değil aynı zamanda kozmetik, finans ve giyim tarzı gibi pek çok konuda doğrudan ilişkili olduğundan, Müslüman kimliğinin ifade edilmesinde çok önemli bir unsurdur. Buna paralel olarak, İslam ile terörizm arasında kurulan suç ve suçluya benzetilen yüzeysel ilişki, Müslüman yaşam tarzına yönelik hoşgörüsüzlüğü artırmış, hatta İslami yemek kültürü olan helal, geleneksel mutfaklara karşı kültürel bir tehdit olarak algılanmaya başlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, siyasetçiler gibi kamuya ve hedef kitlelere doğrudan ulaşabilen medyanın, bu süreçte Müslüman azınlığı suçlu olarak etiketleme konusunda çok önemli rolü bulunmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada, bölgede ve bulundukları ülkelerde ana akım olarak değerlendirilen gazeteler seçilmiş, bu gazetelerin helal gıda meselesini sektörel mi bilimsel/teknik mi yoksa sosyo-politik/kültürel açıdan mı yansıttığı sorusu sorulmuştur. Araştırma bulgularına göre, seçilen haberlerin çoğunluğu helal gıda meselesini sosyo-politik/kültürel açıdan ele almış ve taraflı bir şekilde helal kesim metotlarının acımasızlığına dikkat çekerek helal kesimin legal düzenlemelerle yasaklanması gerektiğine vurgu yapılmıştır. Bu nedenle, seçilen haberlerdeki gözlemlere göre, helal gıda meselesi hayvan hakları ve inanç özgürlüğü tartışmaları arasında çözümsüz kalmış durumdadır. Nihayetinde, helal gıda tartışmaları gerek ekonomik gerek sosyal açıdan birbiriyle doğrudan bağlantılıdır ve her bir faktör hesaba katılarak değerlendirilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Helal Gıda, Müslüman Kimliği, Medya, Avrupa

INTRODUCTION

The increasing number of Muslims in Europe has led to new debates regarding economic, cultural and religious issues. Production of food according to religious methods and requirements has been among the most controversial issues during this process. In this context, two well-known religious dietary rules became prominent; halal food for the Muslim minority and kosher food for Jews. However, the purpose of this research is to analyze why halal food has become one of the heated debates in Europe and has been treated as a major threat by the media. The debates about halal food are analyzed in European media, where the representation of Muslim groups has become more problematic in recent years. Rather than researching this issue as a whole, I aim to approach the topic more specifically to limit the scope of the research. Even though it appears to be limited subject, the halal food issue has numerous angles to consider, including politics, economics, veterinary/animal science, religion, and theological studies. Due to the lack of scientific studies regarding the halal food issue in the media, this research also seeks to contribute to the literature by posing the following questions:

- What are the primary dynamics of halal food debates in Europe?
- How has media coverage been regarding halal food in the region from 2001 to the present?
- Is halal food addressed as a purely "scientific" issue in the sense that media sources frame the needs of food consumers and producers (e.g., consumer confidence) or is there also a political aspect?

The main issue regarding halal food has been halal meat production. Halal slaughtering accepts the conventional way of animal killing, which involves slaughtering without stunning. The critical part of the discussion about halal food has been conventional way of slaughter that's found as inhumane treatment toward animals. However, the procurement and consumption of halal food for Muslim communities are also essential parts of the religious lifestyle; certain

conditions must be met to approve the food as halal. For instance, if the treatment and slaughter of animals do not meet the criteria, then the meat may be regarded as unlawful (Haram). The rules related to halal food and slaughter are based on the Holy Quran, Sunnah and Hadith, and views of religious scholars. Apart from nutrition, halal can be expanded and applied to fashion and clothing, personal care products, cosmetics, dietary supplements, banking, insurance, travel and pharmaceuticals. The processes that deal with food can be considered halal in terms of business ethics, production, storage and transportation. Nevertheless, there are many challenges for promoting halal production; however two of them are prominent in Europe: the lack of global standardization and certification processes and religious slaughtering, which is seen as unacceptable in terms of animal rights.

To analyze halal food in the media, six newspapers were chosen according to specific criteria: language, ideological leaning, mainstream and country of origin. Eighty-six news articles were collected from the selected newspapers, and the majority belonged to UK-based newspapers as they were in English. Other countries, including France, Germany and Austria, were added to the analysis; however, less than half of the study's news came from UK newspapers. Tabloid newspapers were not selected, with the exception of the *Daily Mail*. Moreover, local and small publications were not evaluated.

The dissertation is structured as follows: chapter one provides details about the meaning of the halal concept in Islam and halal slaughtering conditions. Chapter two presents a theoretical perspective on the issue, as well as the dissertation's methodology, design and limitations. The answer to the first research question is evaluated in chapter three, which analyzes the dimensions of halal food debates in a global, though primarily European, perspective. The halal food content from the selected newspapers are discussed in chapter four, which also includes media framing. The final chapter concludes the research.

CHAPTER I

1. CONCEPTUALIZATION: MEANING OF HALAL

Halal food has existed for more than 1,400 years, but it has been debated intensively for only a few decades. Throughout history, religion has set the rules and boundaries of human lives. It has also been a main factor in prominent cultural and social behaviors such as "fasting and feasting to patterns of food purchases, taboos in clothing styles" (Bailey and Sood, 1993). Food has traditionally had a distinct place in the Islamic lifestyle (e.g., fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan, sharing and offering foods with the poor, and mosques as places of charity for feeding) (Hoffman, 1995). Religious dietary requirements have strict rules in Islam and other religions as well, including Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Despite the difficulties in following these rules, many people do so. For example, in the United States, 90% of Hindus and Buddhists, 75% of Muslims and 16% of Jews seek proper foods according to their religion (Bonne and Verbeke, 2006).

Halal is an Arabic word that means permitted or permissible, and the concept regulates the Muslim way of life based on Islamic Law (Sharia) and in regard to food, clothing, and other aspects. The opposite of halal is described as haram, which means prohibited. As Alserhan has stated, halal is the norm, and haram is the exception. Food preference as halal and haram began when Adam and Eve ate the apple from the forbidden tree, which was the only haram tree in the heaven (Alserhan, 2011). According to Islam, food has composed a highly important part of life since the beginning of life. In addition to Islam, in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, eating is considered as one of the basic needs of human beings and is placed at the bottom line of the triangle to emphasize its essentiality (McLeod, 2016).

According to Regenstein et al. (2013), there are six issues regarding halal food: "prohibited and permitted animals; prohibition of blood; proper slaughtering of

permitted animals; meat of animals killed by the Ahl-al-Kitab (people of the book); prohibition of alcohol and intoxicants; and halal cooking, food processing and sanitation" (Regenstein et al. 2013, pp.195). The authors give detailed and technical information and include debates regarding those six issues (e.g., the meaning of people of the book). Other than prohibited animals, Muslims can eat anything consumed by Jews and Christians if the food is clean and pure. Therefore, referring to people of the book provides a wider space for Muslims compared to Jews. Conditions for kosher meat are stricter, and the meat is not accepted as kosher if the butcher is Muslim or Christian. According to the Quran, Muslims should be careful about two fundamental rules: consuming "permissible" foods that are healthy and beneficial and avoiding irresponsible consumption of the earth's resources. Aside from these requirements, every plant and animal can be consumed. In addition to foodstuffs, drinks that contain alcohol are strictly forbidden by the Quran, although there are some discussions about the quantity.

Besides faith-oriented food consumption, every culture has a special interest in what should be eaten or drunk which construct the uniqueness of cultural habits and cuisine. The reasons behind halal food's significance and growth are stated in the German Agricultural Society's (The DLG, Deutsche Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft) 2013 report:

> Even though halal foods are nothing new, they are gaining in importance by the day on a global level. This is largely down to the enormous number of Muslims in general, significant changes to the global market, and the increasing focus on predominantly Muslim countries as new "sales markets. (Buckenhüskes, 2013)

Halal is also a legitimization of everything according to Islam, so that if something is not halal, that automatically means it is non-Islamic (Calli, 2014). In general, Muslim concerns about halal tied to religious obligations and to a culture that is a significant part of their lifestyles in Islam. While it is not possible to describe all Muslims as a homogenous community since the population is

comprised of approximately 4 billion people worldwide, some common characteristics can be determined–especially in Muslim-majority countries where halal comprises a highly significant part of the culture. For instance, in Turkey, halal usually refers to ethical issues such as halal money, which means earning compensation without corruption and imposture. Likewise, getting one's consent for his/her fair share (*helallesmek*) is an important cultural behavior as well. The concept can be described as a type of moral debt, and if one gets *helallik* (one's consent), then the debt is written off according to Islamic belief. In addition, another cultural statement particular to Turkey is to congratulate or praise someone for some reason such as a success or moral attitude; this is called as *Helal olsun!* The method of religious slaughtering is not only controversial in western countries. As a leading country that is secular and also has a Muslim-majority population, every Eid al-Adha (Kurban Bayrami in Turkish) in Turkey is celebrated within intense discussions about the slaughter of animals without country-wide control mechanisms. The eid is called "bloody bayram" and is viewed by secular forces in Turkey as a cruel religious obligation and tradition. Because some cliché events always occur such as butcher injury during slaughtering animals and slaughtering of animals in the middle of the streets rather than a slaughterhouse. These events are always reported by the media, and images create a bloody and unfavorable picture of halal food among members of the public. In fact, one of the most important rules of halal slaughtering is to observe cleanliness, and those practices could happen due to carelessness or ignorance of this rule. According to Alserhan (2011), halal is subject to the main Islamic concept of "no harm," which refers to protecting the earth, humans, animals and nature from all possible harms (Alserhan, 2011, p. 78). That is why avoiding harmful attitudes toward animals is considered an essential component of halal. Aside from Eid al-Adha, people slaughter animals if their wishes come true (called as Adak in Turkish). This is not an obligation that every Muslim must perform but rather a personal choice. Numerous examples can be found in Turkish culture, including at funerals, the launch of a new business or even after the

purchase of a car; people sacrifice animals for God and believe that this act could prevent the possibility of future troubles.

The perceptions of halal differ from region to region. For example, in the Middle East, halal is linked to meat and poultry. In Muslim-majority countries in southeast Asia, halal is associated with all consumption goods, ranging from pharmaceuticals to cosmetics. Islamic finance is also considered of high importance in countries such as Malaysia, where halal finance mainly prohibits interest in financial affairs. Although there is no Islamic financial system in Turkey, conservatives have emphasized halal financing by using "participation or saving banks" or the purchase of shares from some conservative holdings and companies, which were called "green capital/money." In addition, global banks such as Citibank and HSBC have opened Sharia-compliant branches that offer Islamic financing/Sukuk to Muslim customers in countries such as Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. The differences in perception create blurred conceptualizations about halal and thus lead to several diverse approaches to standardization. In some regions, religious values become the predominant factor in consumption choices, which is used by marketing campaigns and strategies. Having a positive impact in Muslim communities is an advantage for some country-specific products. Brands of the UK have a better image than those of the US or the Middle East. For example, French water is selected more than local brands, and dairy products from Denmark were preferred until the cartoon crisis and the related anti-Islamic imagery (Alserhan, 2011).

Islam guides divine and spiritual issues for believers and provides a lifestyle with borders and rules. The borders are determined according to halal and haram. Since food is one of the basic needs for individuals, it becomes a highly important part of life. As Che Man and Sazili (2010) have argued:

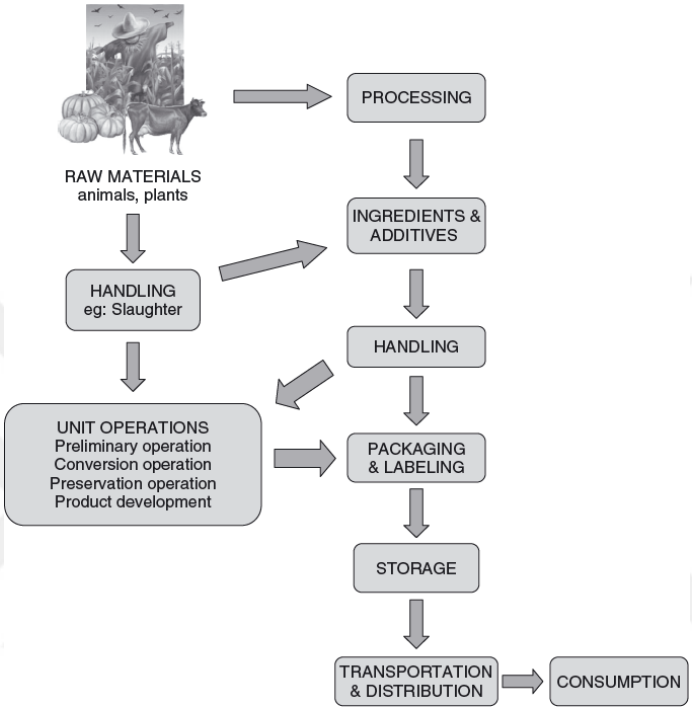
> Muslims are always concerned about the halal and haram status of their food. Islam takes into consideration the source of the food, its cleanliness, the manner in which it is cooked, served, and eaten, and the method of its disposal (Che Man and Sazili, 2010, p.189).

Although different schools of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) have diverse perspectives about halal as a religious obligation (Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi'I as Sunni sects or Shia sect interpretations), many of the Muslim communities in Europe have accepted halal slaughter if it is performed by "the people of the book" (Ahl al-Kitab). These people could be Muslims, Jews or Christians. In fact, the halal slaughtering method is described as:

> The method of slaughtering animals consists of using a well-sharpened knife to make a swift, deep incision that cuts the front of the throat, the carotid artery, windpipe, and jugular veins. The head of an animal that is slaughtered using halal methods is aligned in direction to the Mecca. In addition to the direction, permitted animals should be slaughtered upon utterance of the Islamic prayer "in the name of God" (Journo, 2013, p.6).

Meanwhile, concerns about animal welfare have shaped debates about halal slaughter in recent years and have complicated the issue further. As can be seen in Figure 1, the halal food supply chain does not seem particularly different from non-religious slaughter practices, except in regard to stunning. However, as Che Man and Sazili (2010) have illustrated, the process has numerous details and conditions that make halal difficult for Muslims to follow. Detailed conditions and rules can be considered a challenge as well. If halal practices were simplified and clarified by the authorities, this could be a solution to the fragmentation among Islamic schools. Another area that creates consumer skepticism is the lack of national or regional regulations.

Figure 1. Halal food supply chain (Che Man and Sazili, 2010, p.192)



In Europe, governments are not willing to become involved in the faith-oriented food market, including kosher items. Even though some products are labelled as halal, it has not been enough to persuade Muslim consumers. According to Journo (2013), approximately 5 to 10% of the halal meat production in France is in compliance with the Quran's requirements (Journo, 2013). Nevertheless, the only way to currently make judgments and trust that the products are halal seems to be labelling, and so the majority still look for halal labels despite their suspicions.

Animal rights supporters have been criticized that their "biased" reactions to halal slaughter and pretended as the only brutal and bloody method. In industrialized production methods, many animals are slaughtered without stunning, regardless of halal or non-halal. They are sent to the market without respect such as in cases of

the rapid growth of chickens or the force-feeding of ducks and geese for the famous French cuisine “foie gras.” Activists for animal welfare are also concerned about Islamic slaughter, since it has special rules and rituals that involve slaughtering. According to Dhabihah, an Islamic law term which describes animal slaughter and allowed animals based on Holy Quran. Animals should be slaughtered separately, and they must not see each other at the time of slaughtering in the slaughter houses. Furthermore, an animal’s blood should be drained as it is forbidden to consume the blood. The rules of what is forbidden to Muslims is mentioned in the Quran:

> Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and [those animals] killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you [are able to] slaughter [before its death], and those which are sacrificed on stone altars, and [prohibited is] that you seek decision through divining arrows. That is grave disobedience. (Quran, 5:3).

Animal rights and welfare is one of the major concerns of anti-halal groups. Whereas stunning before slaughter cannot be acceptable for some Muslims, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was established in 1969 and brought together the majority of Islamic world, has released regulations on halal slaughter. According to halal food regulations, stunning in halal slaughter can be acceptable in certain circumstances as described below (Halal World Institute, 2009, pp.4-5):

- Poultry shall be alive and in stable condition during and after stunning (loss of consciousness) and upon slaughtering,
- The current and duration of the electric shock, if it is used, shall be as specified,
- Any poultry that dies before the act of slaughtering shall be considered as dead and unlawful,
- Shall be proven to be humane,
- Shall not reduce the amount of blood after slaughtering.

The regulations and rules are explained in detail in the report and address issues that include packaging, labelling and retail placement. Together with the Quran, Muslims follow Hadith, which are the prophet Muhammed's teachings on halal food and slaughter. The consensus among Islamic schools regarding these two main sources forms the third process for halal food (Regenstein *et al.* 2013). In total, there are four sources that determine and define what halal food is: the Quran, Hadith, Ijma (the consensus of Islamic scholars) and Qiyas (deduction by analogy) (Che Man and Sazili, 2010). It is ultimately compulsory for a Muslim to consume halal foods and avoid those with Haram ingredients. Even though different interpretations make the issue highly complex, the main idea is to eventually assess halal and haram based on generally accepted rules and interpretations. For instance, there could be few differences between Sunni and Shia interpretations, but since the Sunni faith comprises 90% of the world's Muslim population, those differences could be ignored by Shia Muslims. Likewise, kosher food can be purchased by Muslims in some cases and in the absence of halal food although it does not always meet halal conditions. More details regarding technical information about halal slaughter could be provided (e.g., such as within how many seconds the animal can be stunned and still stay live), but this research focuses on socio-political aspect of the debate. Hence, the next section presents a theoretical analysis of Muslim identity in the public sphere and media theory respectively.

The environmental effects of animal farming or livestock are another side of the discussion. Demands for meat and milk have been increasing steadily across the world as they are fundamental food sources. Agriculture has been an important player in environmental issues such as "climate change, land degradation, water pollution and biodiversity loss" according to FAO (FAO, 2013, p.1). Total emissions from global livestock represent 14.5% of "human-indicated emissions (FAO, 2013, p.15). Cattle are the leading species that contributes to these emissions, while pigs, buffalo and chickens follow respectively. Even though some claim that livestock could be more dangerous than cars, planes or other

vehicles, carbon dioxide constitutes 82% of greenhouse gas emissions (EPA, 2015). However, due to energy absorption, methane is more potent than carbon dioxide, and the agricultural sector has been one of the primary contributors to climate change. This thesis does not include these developments and facts. Similar to the issue of animal welfare, the environmental side of the livestock sector could be analyzed in other studies since environmental concerns could be applied to non-halal farming as well.

Halal concept in the food market

Halal is also a field of ethnic marketing in which cultural beliefs, symbols and practices should be recognized by business leaders in the market. According to Calli (2014), individuals tend to consume under the influence of their faith as can be observed from the majority of Muslims who prefer to consume halal foods as their first choice. In recent years, ethnic marketing that features halal food has appeared on TV or on other commercial ads. In that sense, it is possible to claim that halal marketing has grown in correspondence with increases in population (Calli, 2014). As indicated before, the Muslim community is not homogenous, but many Muslim consumers consider Islamic rules especially when they make decisions about things such as dietary rules (AtKearney, 2007). Maamoun (2016) also notes that halal market is not unified, though there are “certain values” which are shared by the majority of the Muslim community (Maamoun, 2016). Regarding the behavior of consumers, Koeman et al. (2016) state that there is no common consensus among ethnic minorities about cultural product choices. According to in-depth interviews in their study, the first generation of ethnic minorities in Belgium tend to seek ethnic origin products on the market, while the young generation is not interested in this (Koeman et al. 2016). Even with this distinction, the study confirms the importance of religion in consumption habits and states:

> … our respondents with ethnic backgrounds confirm that religion is one of the most important factors behind the consumption of ethnic products, as their religion offers guidelines for the way they should live their lives. (Koeman et al. 2016, p.175)

In fact, the younger generation is called the "fast food generation," showing that their preferences and behaviors as consumers differ from the first generation. For instance, in another study that covers the UK region; young people would like to see halal food options such as a halal Big Mac at McDonald's (Wright, 2015). The author further claims that religion does not have a direct effect on the consumption choices of young Muslims rather halal choice becomes as a part of their cultural lifestyle and worldview. Therefore, even though the desire for halal differs, both generations prefer to consume and access halal food easily.

Alserhan (2011) also pays attention to the heterogeneous structure of the Muslim community. For instance, he claims "some Muslims consume alcohol or dine in non-halal restaurants and even more commonly not using Islamic banking but conventional banks" (Alserhan, 2011, p.79). Nevertheless, in a Muslim supermarket, finding haram products is difficult, especially if the store is located in a Muslim-majority neighborhood. As such, it is possible to claim that there is pressure on Muslims who prefer not to observe halal in their lifestyles. Muslims who consume haram products are usually alienated in public due to the "massive cultural pressure" (Alserhan, 2011, p.79). In the community, it is seen as a bad habit and can, for example, affect the reputation of a Muslim who consumes alcohol. Furthermore, Alserhan (2011) distinguishes Muslim consumers into two groups: culture-compliant and Sharia-compliant. The main concern of culture-compliant Muslims is how they will be looked at by their society rather than the violation of their religion's teachings. In contrast, Sharia-compliant Muslims are aware of Islamic teachings, and they adhere to these rules and conditions. The author claims that the second category of Muslims represents the vast majority of the Muslim world.

The generational distinction has been studied by other scholars as well. According to Journo (2013), Muslim consumers are divided into three main categories. The first group is referred to as “seniors” or the first generation to immigrate to Europe. They tend to buy traditional foods from local or ethnic supermarkets and halal butchers. The second group of Muslims, who are above their 40s, is identified as being less conservative than the first generation. Their desire is to find halal food outside of their locations, and they prefer shopping in supermarkets. The third group is the young generation which looks for fast-food, processed, frozen or ready-to-eat products. Even though they are not as sensitive as the other two groups, they prefer to see halal certified indicators on products (Journo, 2013). The same consumer behaviors are seen in other European countries such as in the Netherlands, where the first generation prefers to buy halal food from small shops and local butchers. The young generation seeks labelling and tends to shop in supermarkets. Yet, halal food is not essential and mandatory for some Muslims, while some of them agree that it is a moral or technical necessity (Kurth and Glasbergen, 2016). Bonne and Verbeke (2006) studied halal food preferences in Belgium and argue that Muslims purchased halal meat based on the following objectives respectively: “health, faith, and respect for animal welfare, enjoying life and care for family.” These objectives represent an overall result, since the priorities vary according to age, generation and gender (Bonne and Verbeke, 2006).

Even though there are some similarities between halal and kosher food rules, Jews have been more organized in the food market. When we ask why kosher is more institutionalized and unified in comparison with halal on the market, the primary answer would be the vast ethnic diversity in the Muslim world. Furthermore, when we compare territories where Jewish people live, the areas are much more limited than ones occupied by Muslims. The proliferation has been rapid and diverse in Islam. This has led to different interpretations of Islamic teachings, primarily regarding the divide in beliefs between the Sunni and Shia sects. Each

of these sects has many sub-sects as well. Apart from a Muslim presence on almost every continent, ongoing immigration flows toward non-Islamic countries have been accompanied by different cultures and lifestyles. The term "Ummah" refers to all Muslim communities in the world, but there are several fragmentations among Ummah regarding the concept of halal. According to some, the reasons for fragmentation can be described as "varying interpretations of what is meant by the term halal, huge differences in disposable income in the various countries, differing attitudes, religiosity and ethnic identity" (Buckenhüskes, 2013, p.2). It would not be wrong to claim that different interpretations and a lack of consensus about halal markets are a result of diverse ethnic, cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds. The absence of a central authority is also considered as a challenge for halal as suggested by Kurth and Glasbergen (2016):

> Yet, the lack of one central authority in Islam, the diversity in ethnical background and degree of religiosity, as well as demographics, such as age, gender and education create diverse views on halal worthiness (Kurth and Glasbergen, 2016, p.104).

The authors explain that the diversity in Islam regarding halal food can be understood on three levels: "religious-institutionally, societally and individually" (p.106). The diverse approaches and interpretations within Islamic schools are considered part of the level of religious-institutionally which means the lack of one single authority in other words. Because of differences in culture, history and political situations, Muslims interpret halal food according to their background. This also makes the issue more complicated since all of Muslims reflect those elements into their lifestyle. Furthermore, even Muslims who share the same culture have different opinions about halal, and so internal differences are defined as religious-individually (Kurth and Glasbergen, 2016). This points out that it would be wrong to consider all Muslims as one, even if they come from the same cultural background. However, there is an observable market demand for halal

food at both global and regional levels, which allows us to assume that the majority of Muslim population seeks halal.

If halal is absent in the market, Muslims usually prefer to purchase kosher or vegan foods (Fischer, 2008). Some multinational companies produce halal products and provide those to Muslims. This arrangement creates a win-win situation; these companies secure the loyalty of Muslim consumers, and Muslims feel relief when they buy their products. However, it is still rare to find halal-labelled products outside of Muslim ethnic shops and communities. The number of halal products is limited in comparison to the 100,000 kosher brands available in supermarkets (Alserhan, 2011). That is why many Muslim consumers prefer to buy meat from independent halal butchers, because they can build long and loyal relationships, establish reliability and receive special service. According to some reports, Muslims choose to eat vegetarian foods or fish when dining if there are no halal options (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2011). Some European countries have diverse ethnic population and therefore ethnic entrepreneurships such as the largest markets for ethnic foods exist in the UK, France and Germany. However, in case of halal food, all leading countries from the UK to Germany have Muslim populations from multiple regions, and they have different eating habits. This scenario creates a heterogeneous structure in the region as well (Journo, 2013).

Halal business can be analyzed from an ethnic entrepreneurial perspective, which refers to "businesses connected to a certain immigrant group, functioning on a closed basis and dependent on a certain community" (European Commission, 2008, p.6). To accomplish and promote ethnic businesses, all groups of a society should participate and be involved in the process. Because almost half of Europeans would like to be employed rather than pursue self-employment or entrepreneurship, European institutions tend to increase this ratio by involving migrants. Although ethnic entrepreneurship usually refers to the "nationality" of business owners, there are other factors which can affect ethnic enterprise. As

Volery (2007) indicates, those factors can be “education, generation, local population, economic situation, job opportunities, location, cultural and religious differences, and the origin” (Volery, 2007, p.30). In addition, the political history of European countries, including the colonial history of the UK, have shaped this situation; there have been diverse ethnic businesses, whereas guest workers in Germany established their own businesses. Nonetheless, halal appeals to diverse ethnic groups, and there is no single homogenous group that launches businesses. However, it should not be certain that every ethnic business sells or produces halal. Likewise, not every halal supplier or consumer should be assumed to be Muslim or a migrant. Therefore, halal issues seem to go beyond ethnic entrepreneurship, but religion could be one of the influential factors as previously mentioned.

Because the concept of halal has different dynamics, including political, social, economic and religious, the definition of halal has become more complicated. That is why this complexity affects standardization and certification endeavors and thus creates confusion (Euromonitor International, 2015). In addition, consumer behavior of Muslims has been associated with identity which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The relationship between the media and religion has been examined from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives, including sociology and political theory. Since media become a social phenomenon and play critical role in public, it has transformed into an actor that shapes public opinion. In this context, some scholars have shed light on the idea that the media become more effective in the public in the areas "in which public/audiences have no direct knowledge or experience" (Happer and Philo, 2013). Furthermore, they have stated that media effects could diminish if the audience has direct experience with a specific issue. Since the media have the power to legitimize some social and political elements, it would not be wrong to claim that people follow and investigate areas in news and reports rather than experiencing these issues first hand. In that sense, what is presented in the news is significant, whether it legitimizes perceptions or shapes and changes viewpoints in another direction. One of the most influential factors that can alter perceptions is scientific arguments or evidence in the news. Therefore, when we look at the case of halal food in this research, the lack of sufficient scientific evidence in the news can be the most challenging aspect in addition to the fragmentation among Islamic Ummah regarding halal practicing (Happer and Philo, 2013).

Theoretical discussions on halal food have been evaluated from different points of views despite being widely studied in financial and business analyses. However, this paper will focus on perspectives related to politics and communication. Hence, two major approaches have been investigated and include identity and the public sphere as well as media theories. Since the research intends to analyze news coverages on halal food, the media's role will be illustrated from a theoretical perspective.

2.1. Identity and public sphere

Identity often refers to race, religion, gender and other characteristics that determine the group affiliation of individuals. Thus, halal has become the most visible and tangible expression of Muslim minorities' religious identity in European countries. Halal does not apply only to food, hijab or finance, but rather, it is a combination of numerous factors that comprise a "lifestyle." Therefore, religious identity and its expression in the public sphere have become highly complex in recent years. In fact, Fischler (1988) defines the relationship between food and identity in his pioneering study, *Food, Self and Identity*:

> Food is central to our sense of identity. The way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organization, but also, at the same time, both its oneness and the otherness of whoever eats differently. Food is also central to individual identity (Fischler, 1988, p.275).

He further claims that food and identity have become integrated components of the "sense of collective belonging." Food has been a symbol that can distinguish one from others and determine who has membership in a group or culture. With the industrialization of food, eating has become more complicated as modern food cannot be identified as easily as in the past. Even with globalization, food has become only an "edible object," and the necessity of "re-identification" appeared by labelling, certification, ingredients and all other information which could remove uncertainties. Throughout history, there have been different food cultures, whether as religious requirements or as reactions to uncertainty, which can show themselves in several types of diets such as vegetarianism (Fischler, 1988).

The increasing influence of religious identity is one of the most discussed and controversial issues in the public sphere. Religion and modernity are considered opponents, and the relationship between them has been mostly a subject of sociology. Leading scholar J. Habermas has described the concept of the "public sphere" as a place where individuals meet in common issue and independently

from state authorities (Habermas, 2006). The public sphere "is a space in which public opinion can be formed, characterized by inclusivity and disregard of status" (Lövheim and Axner, 2011). The separation of religious and state institutions is also essential in the public sphere. Nevertheless, according to Lövheim and Axner (2011), perspectives on the public sphere, including Habermas's, have missed the media's role. They state:

> Mediatization has significant implications for the public presence of religion, implying a shift from religious institutions as the primary sources of religious content in the public sphere to a situation where religious themes or symbols are produced by the media themselves (p.61).

Furthermore, they add that media can shape public opinion by stereotyping religion in negative ways, such as referring to practitioners as fundamentalists, violent individuals or folk devils, which are contrary to western and European values, including equality, freedom and fraternity and tolerance (Lövheim and Axner, 2011). Because halal represents a belief system and is essential to the daily lives of Muslim, it has been considered a major threat to modern European lifestyles. This fear has been used in the media to encourage anti-Islamic discourses. When we look at the commercial side of halal, paying taxes for halal consumers does not seem acceptable to anti-halal supporters, but it would not constitute a problem if Muslim citizens pay taxes for non-halal products (Thomas and Selimovic, 2015). Therefore, due to increasing news coverage of Islamic terror, immigration flows and criminal cases prevent the European public from making rational assessments. According to Fox (2014), food composes the centrality of our lives, which is why it is the subject of rituals or religions. He further adds that "food taboos mark off one sect or denomination from another" (p.18).

There has been a direct relationship between food and cultures (Chester, 2017). Some also claim that the connection between food and identity is linked to migration. For instance, in Spain, because of "reliance on pork," Muslim food culture represents "otherness" (Riesz, 2016). Moreover, the author claims that:

> In fact, anti-Semitism also contributed to placing Muslims in ill favor because their foodways were seen as having been "Judaized" (Riesz, 2016, p.38)

While anti-Semitism created this perception in Spain, politicians in Germany do not interfere with the halal food issue. Halal slaughter has not been considered a significant threat to German culture by the public in contrast to France and the UK. Even though Germany has one of the largest Muslim populations, the halal market could not be developed. It would not be wrong to claim that Germany stays away from potential discussions in both negative and positive manners. For example, in the case of making a negative statement about halal slaughtering, another discussion could emerge about anti-Semitism since kosher slaughtering is similar to halal.

In addition to religious identity and food relations, it is significant to examine national identity and food relations to understand intolerances toward halal food. National identity is defined in this context as a "collective phenomenon," which contains "shared norms, values, beliefs, symbols, myths, and traditions." Therefore, food, which represents the cultural heritage of a nation, has been "an important arena where national boundaries and identities are often contested" (Wright and Annes, 2013, p. 399). For instance, the European Union's policy on geographical indicators for specific products that originate or are produced in particular regions could be considered an initiative to protect those food items. Within the framework of this policy, these products (e.g., wine and cheese) can be recognized with legal logos, such as a protected designation of origin, a protected geographical indication or a traditional specialty that was granted (European Commission, n.d.). Therefore, protecting traditional foods has long been part of national heritage and thus part of governmental policies.

Food or what people eat is considered a social phenomenon that can distinguish themselves from "others." For instance, according to studies on the early Jewish era, eating pig referred to a habit of the other (in this case, the Roman Empire in Palestine) and not eating to "self" (Rosenblum, 2010). In addition, Fox (2014)

highlights this “outsider status” by claiming that if a person does not know about the appropriate eating culture of a society where he or she lives, that leads to the failure of his or her integration. Individuals must eat and share “food etiquette” with those people, because this would otherwise be the only way to mark someone as other (p.3). Even though there are some technical and faith differences, this can be applied to Muslim halal food and the alcohol ban. In addition to religious and national identities, other characteristics such as gender, class and status, and ethnicity could allow us to analyze eating habits and foods. In that sense, culture as a general approach came to the forefront for some scholars, whereas for others, the political economy of food is as vital as cultural dimensions. The political economy of food should not be neglected and should be analyzed from micro to macro levels, where they refer to household and state structures (Caplan, 1997). Food habits that are shaped by religion construct group boundaries within multicultural societies. It is also an important component for religious expression and cultural identity; additionally, food habits help build a bridge to reconnect with the “original culture” of immigrants (Kurth and Glasbergen, 2016).

As can be seen, the relationship between identity and food could be examined from different perspectives. For instance, “gastro-nationalism” was developed by DeSoucey (2010) and is worth adding to the theoretical discussion as well. Gastro-nationalism is defined as the “use of food production, distribution, and consumption to demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of nationalist sentiments to produce and market food” (DeSoucey, 2010, p.432). Food has been considered one of the most significant cultural heritages for nations such as Italy and France. Wright and Allen (2013) show in their study that launching a halal hamburger was perceived as a threat to the French nation and French identity. Hence, it can be argued that food is more than dietary; it is a significant arena in which people express their national identities. Gastro-nationalism can shape the food market as well. For instance, according to Lelieveldt, it is expanding across Europe where people tend to prefer and demand food products that are pursuant to their “national sentiments” and

assume that “domestically produced food is to be safer than food imported from abroad” (Lelieveldt, 2016). It has become important for consumers to see their country’s stamp on packages, which makes the product preferable and more reliable to them. Likewise, the halal stamp on products provides confidence for Muslim consumers, while other consumers choose not to buy the products because of the stamp. Indicating the origins of food production–especially for key products such as meat and milk–has been embraced by some European countries, a move which can be controversial regarding “free market” policies. It also contradicts anti-protectionism and the “free flow of goods” across Europe. France and Italy have led the local-producer and local-market products priority in the region. According to DeSoucey (2010), gastro-nationalism also legitimizes national exceptionalism as a political strategy in terms of national interests. Furthermore, it appeals to a collective identity and determines the “boundaries between insiders and outsiders.” She specifically conducted research on foie gras, which is France’s traditional cuisine, and stated that foie gras represents an ideal example of “protectionist policies and the theoretical significance of institutionalized cultural resistance to globalism.” In addition, with gastro-nationalist policies, it would be possible to protect cultural markets from outside threats and bolster self-identification. As cuisine has become a globally recognized component, it can be a source of international and national pride. Therefore, food has been used as an apparatus for national identity, and gastro-nationalism “meshes the power and resources of cultural, political, and economic identities as they shape and are shaped by institutional protections” (DeSoucey, 2010, p.448).

National and cultural issues have often been on the agendas of populist and right-wing parties and politicians in their campaigns. They fuel the discussions on immigration, which is frequently put forward as a major threat to nations and cultures. Nevertheless, the initiatives that support national productions by regulations and policies remain at the state level in Europe.

Food has a key role in terms of "reaffirming national socio-political boundaries." Furthermore, it has the power to unite and separate people nationally, racially and ethnically (Wright and Annes, 2013). For instance, primarily republicans view halal food as a national threat to French citizenship and cultural heritage. The discussion about preventing pork from being served to Muslim pupils in France, which was handled by Front National, shows the dimensions of food and nationalism in Europe. However, Lever states that "European Muslims reinforce their identity in response to global pressures and they become distinct group of consumers in their own right" (Lever, 2013, p.3).

While the link between food and nationalism may not be realized in daily life, this does not diminish the importance of its impacts on "domestic and global politics as well as dialectic relationship with nationalism" (Ranta, 2015). From an anthropological perspective, some scholars have studied food and eating habits and taboos. Robin Fox (2014) claims that "you eat what you are," when he refers to food identification (p.2). The leading food identifications are ethnic, religious and class oriented. According to him, food determines our place in society since people socialize when eating. Furthermore, food choices are not affected by nutrition, which means people do not always prefer the healthiest or available foods. Instead, their culture is an important factor in these preferences. Not only religious-oriented consumption, but every culture have taboos about food; "the English do not eat horse and dog; Mohammedans refuse pork; Jews have a whole litany of forbidden foods (see Leviticus); Americans despise offal; Hindus taboo beef – and so on" (Fox, 2014, p.2).

Likewise, Ranta repeats the saying of Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, who was a French gastronome: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are." As such, food has been a symbolic tool to demonstrate belonging to a certain group or the desire to join those who belong (Ranta, 2015). In addition, German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach responded to Kant's anthropological question of "What is Man?" with the answer that "Man is what he eats" (Coff, 2006).

Feuerbach's viewpoint is too materialistic and positivist to answer such a philosophical question in only a food science way. According to Coff (2006), eating classifies people in a substantial sense or materialistic way but also in cultural manner. Hence, because cultural values have been a significant determinant in food consumption, "food is related to identity and self-understanding" (Coff, 2006, p.11). Moreover, some leading scholars such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and social theorist Roland Barthes have gone even further and suggested that particular food habits, manners, diets, and tastes reflect the structure and culture of particular nations (Ranta, 2015). Promoting cultural food heritages has been national policy for some governments, such as in cases where there have been competitions for particular foods such as hummus, whether it is Israeli or Lebanese, as indicated by Ranta (2015):

> For many, food represents the nation's attachment to its land, history, and culture. As a result, in the case of hummus, the debate over its ownership is part of a wider dispute over borders, refugees, appropriation, and occupation.

Studies also show that both national and religious identities are essential components in determining consumer habits. Even brands or labels that belong to a specific nation construct an image and increase the "perceived value." Therefore, the relationship between food and identity has been a significant subject among anthropologists for many years.

2.2. Media and news coverage

Since media has become a social phenomenon, news has become more visible and can reach more people, which has created the idea of rising religious attitudes more than in the past. The transformation of religion in modern societies has been manipulated by the media according to Hjarvard (2012). Since media is significant in terms of providing information to a society, it also has the power to transform religious institutions and secular approaches on the contrary. For instance, "religious media" which is controlled by religious institutions such as

churches or secular media organization affects society as happened with the Danish cartoon crisis. News coverage of Islam has increased, and the stories have been mostly framed in relation to “immigration, crime and terrorism.” Sometimes media reflects religion implicitly in the news, TV shows, novels, dramas, soup operas, and other forms of entertainment with “supernatural” and spiritual phenomenon, which is called banal religion (Hjarvard, 2012).

The media have power to help people in difficult conditions and removing them from the real world. This can be illustrated by today’s reality shows, which are amusing audiences and thus contributing to ignorance for real problems such as unemployment, civil wars or even daily problems of the masses. In addition to sociological perspectives, psychologists also contribute to media studies. The most controversial approach has been behaviorism, which claims that human behavior is predictable and measurable. Furthermore, criminology has contributed to this approach by remarking on genetic/biological characteristics. These positivist approaches mainly claim that media could directly affect people’s behavior in terms of images/content and manipulations of values and realities. However, some scholars completely reject positivist and behaviorism arguments by saying that the direct effect of media on people’s behavior has not been clearly identified. Furthermore, they argue that rather than media, social factors should be focused on issues such as poverty, housing, or behavior of the family. This positivist approach is also criticized because of their assumptions that people act collectively and share the same feelings, opinions, and cultural and social backgrounds; thus, manipulated media images can lead them to becoming extremists. Because of this assumption or generalization, the arguments of behavioral positivists are viewed as vague but also effective in terms of the regulation of media or pressures on policy makers. The media effect has been considered from points of view other than the behaviorism approach. From the political perspective, conservatives complain about degenerating moral and religious values by the mass media, while right-wing intellectuals (liberals) think that the media deform high cultural pursuits such as literature and the arts. In

contrast, left-wing intellectuals emphasize media ownership, hence they believe that media should be controlled by hegemon power or ruling elites as a propaganda tool to control the masses. Antonio Gramsci, the most well-known philosopher from the Frankfurt School, suggests that media reflect the hegemon class's view; therefore, media could play a significant role, especially in terms of daily practices.

The political economy and media ownership also play a key role in determining the process of news coverage. Newspaper owners are no longer journalists as they were in the past but are holding owners. As a result, the quality of news coverage has diminished gradually, because it has become a business that seeks profit and circulation as primary goals. As a result, this situation eased government intervention and censorship. The commercialization of media has been studied by Herman and Chomsky who explain in their book *Manufacturing Consent* (2002) that institutions and corporations are using media to get the consent of the public. They invented the "propaganda model" as an analytical explanation and state:

> … the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy (p.10).

Ownership and control are defined as structural factors, which also depend on other sources such as advertisers. They simply focus on mutual interests between the media and those who have the power to define and determine newsworthiness. Corresponding with this explanation are the three pillars of the definition of "news," according to Jewkes (2010). He argues that official sources, experts and journalists work together to define what is news or newsworthiness.

By the end of the Cold War, the market-based capitalist economic model was embraced all over the world. Even for Fukuyama, this was the end of the history in which socialism was abolished; the hegemon ruling elite model declined and

competitive pluralism ascended. Contrary to left-wing scholars, the privatization and deregulation of media have created more competitive and diverse sources. In addition to the sector's primary definers, there emerged oppositions to challenge, and they could find rooms to create alternative definitions in such a system unlike in the past. Development of advanced communication technologies such as the Internet, social media, and smart phones has brought more diversification in culture and sources in the media. While the traditional media industry is still dominated by a small group of people, the so-called new media have come to hold a considerable amount of importance regarding the definition of news. However, despite the diversification of media, stereotyping, criminalizing and labelling are still dominant in the contents of news. The stereotyping of a certain group of people according to characteristics such as their look, race, religion, or gender remains a present condition.

As the largest immigration group in Europe, Muslims have been persistently stereotyped by the media as representatives of "other" and as unable to adapt to western values and lifestyle. In this context, the media use certain stereotypes to show groups of individuals as deviant, criminal or as folk devils. In Europe, the Muslim population is currently at top of this list. Because halal is directly related to the Muslim way of life and visible in the public sphere, according to Thomas and Selimovic (2015), "it has become an indicator or litmus to test to the West's un/willingness to accommodate and integrate Muslims" (p.333). Based on the news coverage study in Norway, most of the halal-linked news by two different Norwegian newspapers have been shown to be in the "category of crime, threat and terrorism" (Thomas and Selimovic 2015, p.339). Another study on the perception of Islam in France has been examined by some scholars. For instance, Wright and Annes analyzed the French public sphere and the Muslim presence in that country. They claimed that because French citizenship has been determined by republican ideology, "Muslim immigrants are constructed as the other those unable to adopt French republican ideals but imposing their religion on French

society" (p. 392). French republicans see themselves as superior and the real representatives of citizenship rather than others, especially Muslim citizens.

Lever (2013) argues that the colonial past of European countries is also a determinant factor of halal food market development. For example, in France and the UK, the halal market has developed more than in Germany due to the high rate of Muslim immigration over the years. While the ban of halal meat is considered an act of discrimination, secular groups and right-wing nationalists especially oppose halal food because according to them, the proliferation of halal food chains is discrimination against non-halal food consumers. Therefore, this dilemma evokes Huntington's well-known clash of civilizations argument (Lever, 2013). The problematic perception of Islam in global politics makes the halal concept more controversial because of its visibility and application to lifestyles; thus, seems to represent Muslim identity much more than other characteristics.

The media are not isolated from biases and mostly reflect the realities in parallel with particular political directions. The presentation of religious issues in the media can also be generally biased, since according to Lövheim and Axner (2011), objectivity is the most important ethical rule of journalism; thus, journalists tend to skeptically approach religion, which is a subjective phenomenon. They add that "religion is perceived to be something completely different from a secular, rational world view" (p.70). Therefore, in their case study, which evaluated a TV program in Sweden, Islam has been discussed distinctly as an "acceptable religion" or as "extremism" in the public (Lövheim and Axner, 2011). This can also be argued for other European countries which see Islam as the major threat to their societies.

In addition, the media have become a well-known agenda setting apparatus, which can determine public discussions by suddenly initiating or removing them. To understand how this could happen, it is stated in Happer and Philo's study that:

> The relationship of media content to audiences is not singular or one way. Policy makers, for example, can both feed information into the range of media, and also attempt to anticipate audience response to the manner in which policy is shaped and presented (Happer and Philo, 2013, p.322).

The media can also create "doubt and confusion" in a discussion in the public sphere by contesting counter-arguments and creating complexity. Overall, it would not be wrong to reach the conclusion that the media have been key in affecting public opinion or the production/construction and reflection of news. Even though it would be controversial to claim a specific effect alone, along with social-economic, cultural and demographic factors, the media continue to hold considerable influence on public attitudes. While the case study of this research could be evaluated from other theoretical approaches, religious and national identity and their mediatization are the best fit for the arguments and theories in this analysis. To investigate the media's attitude toward halal food, leading newspaper articles from Europe were selected for this dissertation. The next chapter highlights the methodology and research design of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

Content analysis has been dominated by the positivist paradigm due to its quantitative structure. Dominick defines what content analysis is, which is the study and evaluation of communications in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner. It aims to measure certain messages and variables (Dominick, 1978). The definitions of content categories are directly related to content analysis, and the validity of these definitions should be taken into consideration. This dissertation examines and distinguishes contents according to food and nutrition concerns, which include ritual slaughter. There is also a comparison to other religious based diets that are considered "kosher," despite other critical research areas such as the financial and market side.

Content analysis has been used in interdisciplinary areas such as psychology, communication, anthropology, history and education. Therefore, despite the challenges and discussions regarding methods, it has been one of the most frequently used tools in research. Because of the wide range of research fields, there are different definitions regarding content analysis. For instance, whereas Krippendorff (1981) defines it "replicable and valid" data outcomes, Neuendorf (2002) describes content analysis as a systematic and quantitative scientific analysis of contents from TV programs or films or of word usage in sources such as the news or political speeches (Neuendorf, 2002, p.10). According to Krippendorff, content analysis should provide knowledge and future insights, so objectivity and reliability are vital. Krippendorff also adds that content analysis needs to present some "features of reality." In that sense, arguments should be based on scientific facts and be explicit to construct an analytical inference (Krippendorff, 1980).

With the rapid and broad growth of the Internet across the world, contents have evolved into more dynamic and "liquid" platforms in comparison to conventional newspapers or other contents that are stable and non-changeable. That is why it

would technically be a smooth process to analyze and collect this physical data. However, Internet sources/news contain various, intense and inter-correlated, which can lead complexities for the researches (Comu and Halaiqa, 2014; Kautsky and Widholm, 2008). To avoid complexities and challenges as much as possible, it is important to determine the scope of the research, its limitations and the coding questions. Regarding this dissertation's content analysis, the scope and limitations can be naturally observed since the subject is already quite narrow and specific. In terms of the coding questions, one of the paper's research questions is the main question, which asks whether the halal food issue is addressed as a technical issue or if it has a political aspect in the news; moreover, there are sub-questions in the coding sheet that concern a variety of issues, including the number of views, shares and comments if applicable, photo usage, and the presence of direct links/hyperlinks to related news.

The variety of news could be considered a challenge, because it could lead to lost time. However, it also offers the chance to classify the news, which can make elimination easier to perform. Furthermore, the number of news articles obtained is not considered the main challenge of digital content analysis. Almost all scholars and researches pay attention to these contents' continuity (editing and changing), participatory (readers' intervention) and temporality (sudden absence of the content by removing or limiting access (Karlsson, 2016). These characteristics of online news have been considered problematic in terms of methodology. Karlsson claims that established content analysis methods are not compatible with digital news due the issue of time and space. In this context, he suggests that "the data do not exist prior to investigation, but need to be collected continuously or in real time" (Karlsson, 2016, p.180). Overall, the methods of content analysis for digital/online news have become controversial and are still being developed by leading scholars.

Determining the unit of analysis, which are the collected news in this research, has been another source of debate issue among scholars. Because of the

continuous structure of online news (adding new contents or updating the existed), sampling would not be the same as with classic content analysis but should be "purposive and inductive" (Karlsson, 2016, p.184). Nevertheless, it has been mostly observed that studies in the literature limited them regarding time and collected news. Concerns about the ever-changing structure of news would also be applied generally to breaking news. Therefore, when we look at news about halal food, it would be rare to see them in this category. Because of this changing content structure, the principal factor here would be recording the data. In that sense, there are some techniques such as saving the news' URL links, taking screenshots or saving in PDF format (Comu and Halaiqa, 2014). As another step, sampling has three stages according to some. The first is choosing sources (in this thesis, they are newspapers). The second stage is selecting news, and the third stage is taking some of them as samples of the research (Ogulmus, 1991). According to Benoit, researchers have used different techniques in terms of sampling, and those techniques could be random, convenience and purposive sampling methods. Convenience sampling is described as "texts that are easily (conveniently) available to the researcher" (Benoit, 2011, p.272); therefore, in this paper, convenience sampling is used due to the narrow topic as it would be difficult to find samples in some populations.

In this research, 86 news articles are collected from online newspapers and websites in Europe via well-known browsers such as Google, as well as from library databases such as LexisNexis and Newspaper Source Plus. After collecting the data and sampling, the next step is identifying the contents' categories according to Benoit (2011). He also adds that "the researcher begins with a set of categories and applies those categories through content analysis to a group of texts" (Benoit, 2011, p.271).

News of this research were collected from mainstream, well-known newspapers/websites in Europe. Another categorization was made in terms of chronological order, in which the research examined the evolution of news about

the halal food topic. Therefore, this paper tries to analyze how the halal food issue has been framed in the chosen samples. Part of this study is constructed as a quantitative content analysis. The research also focuses on the tone of the news, whether they are manifest or latent content.

In sum, researchers use content analysis to test and measure the relationship between media and politics, as well as to focus on how the media can impact the perceptions of society. Hence, this paper aims to contribute to both public and political communication studies.

3.1. Research design

"Halal," "halal food," "halal meat," "religious/ritual slaughter" were searched as keywords in the newspapers' websites and other sources. In addition to the selected news, I also looked at original language discourses by searching "halal food." To do this, Google Translate was used to translate from German to English or French to English, since translation from any language to English always gives better results. According to the search results, religious slaughter has more returns than searches for halal food. Some irrelevant news were later eliminated. For instances, some of the articles were not about halal food, and the words were only mentioned in a single paragraph. That is why they were not added to the news coverage. In addition, news articles which were not about halal food in the European region or not in a regional newspaper were also excluded from this research. Although LexisNexis was helpful for finding news, it gave repetitive results. The coding sheet was prepared in an Excel document, and the designed questions were addressed for each news article and newspapers; thus 1 and 0 have been used for yes and no answers. Furthermore, Figure 1 is from the newspaper's website, and a word cloud was made via wordart.com. This allowed all the news to be collected in a single page.

The halal food issue in the leading newspapers of Europe has occasionally been reported. The newspaper selection was not based on random selection; rather,

well-known and well-read newspapers have been analyzed. Due to a language barrier, only English online versions of *Der Standard* (Austria), *Die Welt* (Germany) and *Le Monde* (France) were added to the coding sheet. Three newspapers were selected from the UK, where the halal food issue has often been of interest because of the country's diverse cultural structure and the corresponding rise of right-wing movements. All newspapers can be considered liberal or liberal-leftist except for the *Daily Mail*. Even though liberal newspapers are usually in favor of multiculturalism and show respect for diversity, it has been observed that they are also skeptical toward the halal food issue due to concerns about animal rights and welfare. In contrast, right-wing and tabloid newspapers such as *Daily Mail* aim to evoke panic and anxiety in the public by exaggerating or misreporting related news. In this context, selecting newspapers only from right-wing or the leftist approach would not reflect a meaningful outcome.

3.2. Limitation

This research studies selected newspapers, but for further studies, it is possible to use other sources such as TV or radio news. I also tried to avoid adding more tabloid newspapers such as the *SUN*, even though tabloid newspapers have manifest contents about the halal food issue and would support this research's arguments. The majority of the newspapers selected are from the UK because of the English language content. Other newspapers from the region could not be added because of non-English contents. The time period was limited and covered news from 2001 to the present. It has been observed that the halal food issue increasingly appeared in the news, especially after 2009. In addition to the date limitations, some contents of the selected newspapers that mentioned countries outside of the European region (e.g., Australia, the US and China) were eliminated as well. In sum, language was ultimately the most significant limitation, and it is highly recommended to analyze non-English news for further research.

CHAPTER III

4. UNDERSTANDING HALAL DEBATE

Halal refers to Muslim identity, and it has become one of the most sensitive issues for both Muslims and non-Muslims, though in different ways. Throughout history, it has always used to distinguish themselves from others and thus remains an ongoing discussion in today's world. According to Ali (2015), "food practices and gender norms" construct national boundaries and determine group/community affiliation. He further explains the norms of food and sex for Muslim identity by stating:

> Female bodies (properly covered) and animal bodies (properly slaughtered) serve as potent signifiers of Muslim identity, as patriarchal thought sustains the hierarchical cosmologies that affirm male dominance in family and society and allow humans to view animals as legitimately subject to human violence (p. 268).

Thus, Muslim dietary rules, along with women's apparel, have been two major factors that distinguish Muslims from others. Corresponding to the growing Muslim population (see Table 1), halal consumption and halal demand have been increasing, especially in the food industry.

Table 1. Regional Distribution of Muslim Population

Muslim Population Distributed by Regions (Millions)	Estimated (2010)	Projected (2030)
Asia-Pacific	1.006	1.296
Middle East & North Africa	322	439
Sub Saharan Africa	243	386
Europe	44	58
Americas	5	11

Source: Instituto Halal, 2017

Along with Muslim-majority countries, nations that have Muslim minorities are examined by scholars in terms of consumer habits and behavior. Demand for halal production increased dramatically, particularly in Europe as immigration increased significantly in the 1960s and continues to the present. Despite the rapid

growth of the halal market, it could not meet the expectations due to different interpretations and a lack of state-level regulation regarding certification and standardization. Corresponding to this, some food chains realized the market potential and started to serve a halal food menu at some of their locations. However, this potential has never been considered and realized by politicians, and they have approached the issue from standpoints influenced by immigration, national identity and discrimination instead of the economy or industry. A good example can be seen in France where Quick hamburger chains added a halal menu, and this was considered discriminatory against "non-Muslims" by French politicians. The company did not stop serving a non-halal menu but had only added a halal one. However, it became a crisis in the country and was used by candidates in their presidential campaigns. Another example happened last year when Iranian President Rouhani visited his counterpart in France. Rouhani requested a halal and alcohol-free menu in the diplomatic lunch that they supposed to have. This request was rejected by President Hollande, who had a strong preference to serve traditional food. The officials added that "making a meal "Iran friendly" went against their Republican values" (the Independent, 2016). According to the same news, Rouhani's request was accepted in Italy, where he signed trade agreements worth billions.

Apart from animal rights and welfare, there are concerns about consumer rights when purchasing food. Despite reports and decisions of the EU regarding halal slaughter, nation-states are not obligated to apply them. Consumer-rights advocates are concerned about labeling and want to know what they are purchasing. According to some suggestions, labeling should be more comprehensive. For instance, stunning should be indicated on the product, and how the animal was stunned – electrocuted, gassed or shot with a bolt gun – should be added as well. However, food companies are not leaning toward following these recommendations, which can decrease their sales. According to a report by the European Commission Directorate General for Health and Food Safety, 66% of respondents stated the first purchase criteria of meat is its quality, while 16% said price (Food Chain Evaluation Consortium (FCEC), 2015).

Furthermore, the report revealed that "Only 2% of meat purchases cited production method as the most important purchase criterion, 1% religious consideration and 1% general animal welfare considerations; no respondents spontaneously mentioned animal welfare at slaughter as a purchase criterion" (FCEC, 2015, p.2). Overall, the majority of people do not seem to be concerned about animal welfare and religious slaughter, which proves that this has been the agenda of media and politicians rather than the public. Politicians address the halal food/slaughtering debate if there is an election and he or she has been questioned by the media regarding a scandal or crime.

Europe has nearly 20 million Muslims, and the halal market share is estimated to have 15% growth annually and be worth with $30 billion. Furthermore, opportunities in the halal market in the European region are described as: "an estimated annual turnover of $30 billion, two-digit growth market, high consumer expectation, increasing product availability, better organized channels of distribution, and the arrival of a new generations of consumers" (Journo, 2013, p.2). According to a survey conducted in Belgium with 500 Muslim consumers, 70% of the respondents demonstrated that they are interested in halal products. As stated by Bouhyaoui (2015), this emerging market needs two significant developments, which are "political and public initiatives" (p.73). In Europe, governance of halal slaughter is handled by a hybrid regulations, since there is no clear distinction between governmental and non-governmental bodies (Level and Miele, 2012). The certification bodies play a significant role in the market, and due to a heterogeneous structure, there may arise some determinants that would be acceptable to Muslims. For instance, national or ethnic affiliation may affect Muslims, who adhere to their original country's religious authority (Kurth and Glasbergen, 2016). It can be said for Turkish Muslims that some of them monitor Turkish religious authorities' involvement or declarations about specific issues or take their audit reports on foods seriously. Furthermore, even some certification bodies' business operations can be affected by history as Van Waarden and Dalen (2011) demonstrated in their study:

> …agencies where the origins of the founders lie in former colonies of western countries … seem to be more used to the western approach of relying largely on science, accountability and transparency. Agencies who have their roots in Muslim countries or countries which are less influenced by "the western" mentality seem to be operating according to the values and norms used in their country of origin (p.23).

A survey conducted by scholars about halal food consumption shows that in the Netherlands, Turkish, Moroccan and Somalian immigrants are more attached to halal food purchasing in comparison to others. I think this result should not be surprising since Turkish and Moroccan immigrants constitute the majority of Dutch Muslims (69%). Bonne and Verbeke (2006) also indicate that Europe has developed food technology in terms of sustaining animal welfare, however could not succeed "institutionalized quality reassurance beyond personal trust" (Bonne and Verbeke, 2006, p.1). The authors interviewed select Muslim groups and according to responses, Muslims prefer Islamic butchers and halal meat because of freshness, taste and the slaughter method. In addition, the most important factors appeared to be health, religious values, and family for Muslim consumers. In Belgium, Muslim motivations and decisions for meat purchasing are more complex than non-Muslims. The motivations can differ as analyzed by Bonne and Verbeke (2006) and include issues such as health, faith and animal respect for first-generation Muslims. Second-generation Muslims buy halal only to continue cultural tradition. Young Muslims also pay attention to labelling, so that reliable and well-known brands are preferable if they use halal labeling. Nevertheless, it is suggested that "a credible institutionalized reassurance system should be put in place for halal meat" (Bonne and Verbeke, 2006).

There is still remarkable loyalty to halal butchers in Europe, though some large supermarkets offer halal food (e.g., Carrefour and Casino in France and Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco in the UK). The reason behind this loyalty can

be explained in relation to two considerations; the first is cultural, and the second is service. Many Muslims tend to follow family habits, especially regarding the first generation's loyalty. They continue to trust local shops rather than large supermarkets and could not find one-on-one customer service the supermarkets. In contrast, local halal butchers can fulfill detailed religious or preparation requirements. Furthermore, in supermarkets, halal products have not been labelled clearly in terms of slaughter methods or ingredients. For instance, as reported "imported New Zealand lamb from halal abattoirs sold in UK supermarkets has not been labelled as halal," hence the default implementations prevent supermarket retails to become significant suppliers (Euromonitor International, 2015, p.9).

A consensus on halal food requirements should be created to meet demands in the market. Without consensus and "universally accepted halal standards," the halal market will remain inadequate in meeting the demands of Muslims in the European region. Despite this situation, the market still contributes billions of Euros to the European economy. It is claimed that to make a real peak to halal market and accept it as one of the segments, non-Muslim consumers should also embrace halal. This has not happened yet due to a lack of common certification and barriers to halal slaughter. Therefore, the stunning procedure can be described as "a double-edged sword," since in case of its implementation in accordance with halal, it would be unacceptable for some non-Muslims. In contrast, without halal slaughtering, the products would not be Sharia-compliant (Euromonitor International, 2015).

4.1. Halal food in global context

Halal industry standards and regulations are determined by the nation-states; there is no global or regional umbrella organization/institution for that (Riaz and Chaudry, 2004). Because it is a constantly growing market, companies tend to take this opportunity within the framework of free-market approach. However, halal also refers to Muslim identity; therefore, it has become one of the most

sensitive issues in the public sphere. In this context, religion and culture have a remarkable influence on consumer habits as Atalan-Helicke analyzed in her study that examined genetically engineered food in the halal market. She claims that local conditions need to be analyzed to understand changing consumption habits (Atalan-Helicke, 2015).

The halal market is considered "uncharted territory in terms of data analysis" by the International Trade Center (ITC), a joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations (ITC, 2015, p.13). The market has been a complex cross-section of cultural, geographic and religious boundaries. These parameters have been inconsistent over the years in addition to the various cultural differences and habits, diverse interpretations, and the structure of the supply chain. According to ITC's report, in debates about integration, immigration flow and political instability, perceptions and public attitudes have shifted, particularly in European countries. In the past, tolerance and awareness toward the Muslim identity was observed more explicitly, but that harmony has ended over the years. The halal market is considered a growing niche market, in which "the twin currents of the halal and mainstream markets converge around this notion of bringing purity, ethics and even a sense of the spiritual, back into matters of diet and lifestyle" (ITC, 2015, p.18). According to the same report, there are nine drivers of global halal market: consumer awareness, economics, technology, societal, supply-chain integrity, eco-ethical, food security, politics and law. The halal market's PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal) Analysis is also presented in the report (p.20) and analyzes the market's political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors. In that analysis, certain factors can be highlighted, including:

- Awareness about the market has been growing
- Political sensitivities and sovereignty issues such as religious slaughtering or the desire to protect traditional food culture
- Halal is an identity issue in societies

- Constantly changing consumer habits and a growing middle class and youth population
- Expanding markets lead to job creation, entrepreneurship, investments and developments in new educational fields (ITC, 2015, p.20).

In addition to this analysis, it is argued that stunning animals before slaughtering has been "gray area" for both secular and Sharia Law. This creates a legal obstacle and constant debate, especially in Europe. The report also categorizes the diverse definitions and certification of halal food to simplify the variety of fragmented approaches. In this classification, we understand that halal certification is controlled governments in Australia and New Zealand, where Muslims are the minority. In contrast, it is controlled by private entities in Europe. The initiative of the European Committee for Standardization is defined by regional frameworks, but the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), and the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) also developed their own halal food definitions. In this context, Australia realized the business opportunities of a halal market rather than considering the issue to be a solely socio-political one. The country has taken serious steps to constitute a "robust regulatory framework." Therefore, the halal market has been controlled more effectively in comparison to the European region (ITC, 2105). The reason why Europe and the US could not develop a regulatory framework is demonstrated in the ITC's (2015) report:

> In the United States, the United Kingdom and some European countries with significant Muslim populations, all matters relating to Islam have some inevitable social and political overtones that make it more difficult to view the halal market simply as a business opportunity; it naturally touches on issues relating to immigration, social integration and animal welfare (p.29).

This dissertation's arguments are confirmed by the above citation, since many of the collected news regarding halal food contains those debates. In addition to

these global and regional debates, some scholars state that the governance of halal food has become more complicated due to rapid globalization and industrialization. Global and regional level governance is structured in a complex network. Thus far, food standards have been regulated and labelled in a secular framework, while the emerging third category market is based on religious and cultural identity (Kurth and Glasbergen, 2016).

The Muslim population is the fastest growing religious group and will continue to grow across the world in the future. This growth will directly affect the halal market (see Table 2). The sector remains inadequate to supply the growing demands due to both industrial and political challenges, which will be explained further this section.

Table 2. Evolution of Halal Industry by Sector (USD)

Sector	2015	2021
Finance	3.4 trillion	6.1 trillion
Food and Beverage	1.1 trillion	1.9 trillion
Tourism	151 billion	243 billion
Fashion	243 billion	368 billion
Media and Recreation	189 billion	262 billion
Pharma	78 billion	132 billion
Cosmetics	56 billion	81 billion

Source: Instituto Halal (2017)

Malaysia leads in halal certification for products sold in Europe, and that is part of the country's industrial and economic development program called Vision 2020 (Bergeaud-Blackler *et al.* 2015). The recognition of halal foods through the certification process has been made mostly by Malaysian authorities such as JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia). Any certification body in Europe is not considered reliable if it does not have JAKIM accreditation. Because of colonial history, the Malaysian diaspora plays an important role in the UK particularly and has also expanded into other European countries. According to a 2016 JAKIM report on recognized foreign halal certification bodies and

authorities, the highest numbers of accredited halal certification bodies are from the UK, Switzerland, Poland, the Netherlands and Germany respectively (JAKIM, 2017).

According to the World Halal Council, the world market for halal food is worth an estimated $3.2 trillion annually and includes food, as well as logistics and tourism (World Halal Council, 2016). In recent years, sales related to only food products amounted to $632 billion, which is 16% of the global food industry (Izberk-Bilgin and Cherly, 2016). Kosher and halal foods are highly important markets in terms of growing demand, especially in the United States; yet this importance has not been not recognized by the food industry (Regenstein *et al.* 2013). As previously mentioned, the halal market has some challenges, and the certification/standardization policies have been among the most significant. According to some reports, other challenges include "product transparency and quality, brand positioning and retail placement" (Flanders, 2014, p.8). In the same report, it can be understood that because there is no global certification body, some non-governmental agencies and institutions manage this process. For instance, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore is another leader like JAKIM is in Malaysia. Asian and southern Asian countries are obviously much more aware of the halal market and have influential institutions to regulate local and regional halal food markets (Flanders, 2014). Meanwhile, as a Muslim-majority country, Turkey has also provided halal certification via the Turkish Standards Institution, but its halal certificate is not recognized by Malaysian government due to the secular structure of the institution (Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata, 2016).

There have been some initiatives at global and regional levels as well. Another challenge shown by the World Halal Council is the lack of global production for halal raw material and ingredients. This challenge has led to certification problems and is mentioned on the official website of the Council (World Halal Council, 2016). Nevertheless, to construct unity on halal standardization and certification, various organizations have been established such as the World Halal

Council. Likewise, the European Commission launched a regional initiative (DIALREL Project) in 2006 for the same purposes.

According to some reports, one of the most significant challenges is the resistance against halal food by non-Muslim countries, such as the Netherlands which has banned halal slaughtering and export. This is seen as a challenge in the market, since the Netherlands limited its potential halal markets after the decision. In addition, the lack of global standardization has created confusion for private initiatives, companies and consumers. Investments in the halal market remain at lower levels, which is a financial challenge that limits growth. However, the opportunity of the halal market is demonstrated in diverse products and service segments. Regional differences also create opportunities for companies, such as in western countries where halal choices are still limited in comparison to eastern markets. In eastern markets, there are many choices with poor quality and innovation, as well as customer trust (Thomson Reuters, 2016).

In the halal market, the production and trade process are managed by mostly non-Muslims. That is why some claim that there is already a negative attitude toward Islam and Muslims, and it is not possible to see the issue from a commercial or economic viewpoint (Fischer, 2014). As a growing market, halal should not be seen as an additional requirement for minorities, but it has started to affect the entire global food market, including western "biotechnology companies." Furthermore, the halal market is not compromised by only some sort of food regulation, but has been developing market day by day with the involvement of multiple parties (Fischer, 2008).

Because halal has great potential in the food industry and also in fashion, some global companies have tried to obtain a share of the market by developing new strategies in recent years (e.g., DKNY's Ramadan Collection or the hijab collection launched by Dolce & Gabbana). Therefore, halal on the global scale has grown, and a unified and "centralized halal hub" would provide more

transparency. Centralization would also smooth processes for supply chains, and the performance of business would also be better (Euromonitor International, 2015). Because there is not enough control and protective regulations for consumers, some Muslims purchase kosher meat since in these cases, kosher is considered more halal than halal food. There is also competition between certification bodies regarding religious slaughter methods (pre-stunning or without stunning). Therefore, this fragmentation between non-governmental organizations leads to a non-unified religious market (Fisher, 2014).

4.2. Halal food in Europe

Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights refers to freedom of religion and grants rights and freedoms (Council of Europe, 1953). Lever and Miele argue that this has led to the spread of private certification bodies in Europe, especially for non-stunned "authentic" halal meat production (Lever and Miele, 2012). To contribute to religious/halal slaughter issues and debates at the supranational level, the European Commission started a project called "Dialrel."
According to some authors, Islam has some problems with European nation-states such as France, the Netherlands and Britain, which makes Islam as "resilient" to adaptation. Because religion is considered a special form of cultural expression, halal has become a part of multicultural debates, along with the headscarf and radicalism (Statham *et al*. 2005).

Huntington (1997) argues that the extent to which Muslim generations will be assimilated in Europe is debatable, and they would instead separate the countries into Muslim or Christian states. Huntington's prediction can be seen as the dominant perception in Europe recently. The "us and them" approach has grown in correspondence with a populist wave.

According to Gole (2016), the importance of meat production and consumption that meet European standards and regulations is viewed as a contribution to building "Europeanness" or European identity. She also emphasizes the radicalization of animal welfare groups, stating:

> The public campaign lays to blame of animal slaughtering on "ritual slaughtering" but the problems reveals have more to do with the industrialization of breeding and slaughtering practices… Religious slaughter along with halal meat is regarded as a "religious practice" and not as a market matter (Gole, 2016, p.197).

Because of rising neoliberal economic policies in Europe, food production and consumption have become institutionalized and therefore, religion has become one of the debates regarding food preferences.

The halal food market has expanded in France, and the UK and Germany have major potential when considering purchasing power. Apart from western Europe, the eastern part of the region has important Muslim populations as well. For example, 70% of the population is Muslim in Albania, 60% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 30% in Macedonia, and 19% in Russia. It is also claimed that non-Muslims prefer halal food because of the idea that it is safer (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2011). In the Netherlands, the government is reluctant to interfere in halal food governance and regulations regarding certification and labelling. That is why in Europe, the reliability of halal food has been decreasing due to the absence of governmental norms, internal fragmentation and food/slaughter house scandals. In addition, the lack of a unified standardization at the regional level can be considered an opportunity at the national level to protect domestic markets with strict rules when exporting halal products. As Kurth and Glasbergen have stated, in the Netherlands, the halal market is "weakly institutionalized and hardly adaptive to the needs of a heterogeneous Muslim community" (Kurth and Glasbergen, 2016, p.114). In addition, the authors claim that religious and ethnic backgrounds have been neglected by Dutch authorities, even though these have been significant factors in the market (Kuth and Glasbergen, 2016).

During the process of halal meat production, the halal product must not be mixed or brought together with pork, which that is hard to guarantee in Europe. That is why it is considered to be tough and complicated by governments. Economic and technical aspects of the discussion include "simplification of export and economic gain," which is especially sought by certification companies. However, the religious frame remains as determinant for those two, and Muslim consumers focus overall on the risk of "eating haram" or the religious acceptability of the product. The governance of the halal market is not transparent in terms of standards and processes, and this prevents participation in the procedures. That is why it would be essential to unify the standards to improve the market and governance system. Efficient halal-market governance could be built by determining the "right problem," and afterwards, "that the requirements serve the objective, reflect scientific understanding, international norms and are adaptive to local needs" as Kuth and Glasbergen (2016) suggested. As previously mentioned, the lack of transparency and participation in the process, along with neglected ethnic, cultural and religious differences, creates problems for the market's governance. Governments' economic development plans or strategies usually do not meet public interest. However, at least information pollution could be prevented.

Fischer (2014) argues that the proliferation of Islamic consumption culture is considered to be the incapability of secularism in the UK. He additionally claims that the halal food issue is much more politicized in France and has become a sensitive topic. The difference between the UK and France is the position of religious fundamental rights. In the UK, religious rights have not been constitutionalized but left to the political arena. However, in France, *laicite* guarantees the state's neutrality toward all religions (Fischer, 2014). In the last decade, there have been some developments in proliferation of halal food in Europe, especially well-known fast food restaurants, and brands such as KFC, Quick Burger and Subway started to add halal menus.

Meanwhile, halal food has appeared on the agendas of some leading politicians outside of far-right groups. For instance, France's Nicolas Sarkozy contributed to the halal food debates in school canteens in 2015. He supported his major's decision regarding lifting special food choices (whether halal or kosher) from schools and indicated that if eating habits were based on religion, it was not acceptable in state schools. However, as secularism does not have pressure mechanisms regarding what to eat and wear, it has become an excuse to "save France from cultural mixing" (The Guardian, 2015).

Halal in the United Kingdom

In the UK, the proliferation of halal food has created panic among the public, even though the UK as a country is the most multicultural and has diverse a Muslim population. Religious slaughter, which is one of the most vital issues in discussions, has not been banned in the country as "under the Slaughter of Animals Act of 1933 and Slaughterhouses Act 1974," halal or kosher slaughtering are allowed without pre-stunning. However, halal slaughter should be banned according to some since it bothers non-Muslims, even though 88% of the animals in the country are stunned before slaughtering. Therefore, halal slaughter (12% slaughtering according to conventional methods) can remain a matter of intense debate in the country (Miller, 2014).

Over the last decade, the halal market has rapidly grown in the UK and is discussed more than other religious products such as kosher food. According to DIALREL Project's Report, there are four factors underlying this growth: "increasing Muslim population, changes in consumer behavior, identity reinforcement and general increase in meat consumption" (DIALREL, 2008). The halal food process is handled solely by private initiatives or organizations in the UK. Therefore, there are no official data or statistics. The Halal Food Authority, which is one of the most reliable private bodies for halal food, estimates that halal meat composes approximately 25% of all meat production in the UK. However, only 75% of them are certified, and the rest consist of growing numbers of halal

butchers in Muslim neighborhoods. In the report, it is indicated that many Muslims consider butchers to be more reliable by offering trustworthy products and pointing out concerns about the authenticity of halal meat. Meanwhile, according to predictions, the halal market is valued at £1 to £2 billion in the UK food market. When compared to kosher, the halal market is experiencing more rapid growth, and the most important challenges are the lack of trust, increasing misuse, fake meat and certification. Transparency in the market is the primary criteria which constitutes high importance for authenticity of halal.

Halal slaughter has been controversial in the UK and criticized intensively by tabloid newspapers. Because of the non-unified certification process in the country, information about halal products remains uncertain and confusing. That is why these debates are considered challenging for the halal market in the UK (Euromonitor International, 2015). According to research by Fuseini et al. (2017), 95% of Islamic scholars confirmed that "reversible" stunning is halal during meat production, whereas only 53% of Muslim consumers in the UK said that this is halal-compliant. That means other Islamic schools, which do not accept stunning, influence Muslims abroad. It can be claimed that half of Muslims in the UK do not have confidence in Islamic scholars. This fact points to the complexity of the issue and shows serious neglect in the halal market (Fuseini et al. 2017).

According to a survey conducted by the Food Standards Agency in 2011, it is indicated that halal slaughtering has been a futile discussion in the UK since more than 80% of the animals were pre-stunned. Furthermore, the quantity of killed animals remained quite low in comparison to the overall UK. In addition, according to Fischer (2014), the majority of Muslims and halal food organizations in the country desire state control and regulation for halal production. However, governments have preferred to refrain from intervening on behalf of either pro-halal or anti-halal groups. For instance, when halal food debates peaked in 2014 and 2015 due to bloody CCTV records from halal slaughterhouses, Cameron's government was called to ban religious slaughter in the country. As indicated in

the *Independent* (2015), Cameron has avoided intervening on halal and kosher meat labelling and refused to provide restrictions despite pressure from the public, animal rights associations (Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and some members of Parliament (*Independent*, 2015).

Media coverage in the UK usually focuses on negative aspects of the halal food issue, but the global potential is also not underestimated. In this context, it can be claimed that Great Britain is not aware of the consumption needs and demands of Muslims. However, Islam would be the most influential religion on its followers, especially in terms of "needs and wants" (Wright, 2015). According to interviews conducted by Wright (2015) with young British Muslims, results showed that many of them indicated their "identity and self-description" as Muslim. In the same study, the author claims that there are three F's in the halal market: food, finance and fashion. Many of the young British Muslims indicated that they do not feel themselves to be "Islamic consumers" except in regard to food. Even though they seek halal food, there is an obvious "lack of knowledge or interest" about other requirements such as Islamic finance. Some differences between Muslim and non-Muslim lifestyles such as halal food and the headscarf are more obvious and visible (Wright, 2015); therefore, they have become the most debated issues in the European region. The delineation appears in daily life and thus tends to create threatening perceptions among the public.

Halal in France

Even though strong opposition to halal food has been growing, France has been one of the largest markets in the region. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, France is the leading country in terms of halal market growth, and market value has reached $8 billion. France has a growing Muslim population, which leads a dynamic market in terms of production and distribution. Furthermore, Journo (2013) claims that as halal food demands are growing, Muslims in France are looking for:

- “visibility in the supermarket shelves
- more precision in the quality and composition of the products
- a sophisticated marketing approach
- the ‘right’ halal certification
- brands that match their generation and way of life” (p.3).

Meat is the leading product, which has an enormous effect on market growth. According to a market analysis conducted by the French food and feed expert company Sutralis, “halal consumers spend 30% of their income on food products compared to 14% for the consumers of conventional food products” (Journo, 2013, p. 3). The ratio is higher than with conventional consumers because halal meat is much more expensive than non-halal meat products. Muslim consumers would have to accept paying more due to the lack of availability and accessibility. The country’s three largest mosques oversee halal meat production and distribution, including the Grand Mosque Paris which monitors approximately 70% of the halal product distribution across France (Journo, 2013). In addition to mosques, Votre Service and Muslim Conseil International are private bodies that verify halal products with certification. Votre Service was established in 1991 to check and guarantee the quality of halal meat via its agents and slaughterhouses for Muslim consumers. The association provides lists of products, butcheries and restaurants that they have verified as having halal food. In addition, some supermarkets have launched their own halal brands. For example, supermarket leader Casino created a halal brand called Wassila, and Carrefour added halal brands in 40 different products. The fast food restaurant Quick included halal products at 8 of 350 branches across the country. These initiatives remain inadequate, because the report of United States Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service investigates the halal food market and found that there is a considerable gap in terms of halal certification and US could involve for getting advantage in the market.

According to Alyanak (2016), two important factors have shaped public opinion in France against Islam and related issues. The first one is the principle of *laicite*, which leads to perceptions of halal as a threat due to its visible position in the public sphere. The lack of trust and authenticity toward halal products creates suspicions and is considered to be the second factor (Alyanak, 2016). As happened in the UK, some scandals took place in France, and halal was questioned due to claims that French people eat halal without their knowledge. This contradicts with *laicite* as the only principle that guarantees every citizen freedom of conscience and neutrality of the public sphere. That is why endeavors for the institutionalization of halal are viewed as violations of *laicite* and non-Muslims' rights.

Because of Europe's single market, halal, like other food products, has wide mobility across the region due to demand. Some claim that this can also be considered a challenge due to the difficulty of tracking. Because of the unwillingness to regulate the halal market at official levels, local or private certification organizations have met the demands and needs of Muslims. This is also stated by Alyanak (2016):

> Yet, when formal institutions fail to address needs, such as accessing halal in a better-regulated market, community ties gain importance. … If a Muslim cannot trust the halal products sold at a French supermarket, s/he will seek the same product at a venue owned by his/her "brothers" or "sisters" even if that means paying extra (p.20).

In addition, according to the author's fieldwork in France, many Muslim respondents indicated that they usually do not shop at French supermarkets but rather prefer local ethnic supermarkets, butchers and restaurants. Despite growing skepticism, trusted places such supermarkets or butchers are known via personal relationships with other Muslims (Alyanak, 2016).

In France, fraudulent businesses selling halal food have emerged, which is known by religious leaders. It is claimed that only 5 to 10% of halal meat sold on the market is "real halal." Moreover, most of the meat from halal butchers comes from the wholesale market, and one would not know otherwise unless he or she personally brought a sheep to the butcher (Kutschera, 1996). In recent years, with involvement of private certification bodies and increasing awareness, this ratio could diminish.

Halal in Germany

According to statistics, Germany has the second highest Muslim population (4.3 million) after Russia, while France is third in the European region (Buckenhüskes, 2013). Therefore, aside from the increasing population, dramatic changes in the global market are seen as one of the main reasons behind halal food's growth. Muslim-majority countries are considered to be significant emerging markets and include countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey; they have constant GDP growth and can compete with western economic powers. Therefore, economic changes have led to social transformation such as immigration flows from rural to urban areas in those countries. Hence, with the inevitable transformation in food habits due to consumer profile changes, halal food has become in higher demand in the European region. The need for take-away, ready-to-eat products and fast food has left traditional food preferences behind.

According to Euromonitor International's report (2015), Germany is the first country that has halal food restaurants "with value retail sales price sales of EUR2.3 billion in 2014, accounting for 23% of the regional total" (Euromonitor International, 2015, p.7). In addition, it is indicated that approximately 80% of the Muslim population in Germany follows halal requirements and despite modern retail, they mostly prefer to purchase halal meat from local Muslim butchers. However, halal products, especially certified meat, are rarely found in German supermarkets (Euromonitor International, 2015). Similar to circumstances in the UK and France, halal slaughter is sometimes considered to be on the ascent but

has not yet become ingrained in German markets. In fact, German authorities made the most important decision in 1994 regarding halal food because of a Turkish butcher trial. The butcher sued the Hessen state in Federal Constitutional Court over restrictions to his freedom of religion by banning halal slaughter. Despite the debates, the court decided in favor of the butcher, and this ruling became binding afterward.

Animal Welfare vs. Halal Slaughter

Concerns regarding animal welfare have gained momentum in the last two decades in Europe due to crises regarding contagious diseases and slaughterhouse scandals. Industrialized farming and its negative results on the health of people and animals have created intense discussions and increased the public's awareness. The media has played a key role in raising awareness and concerns about animal farming. Both religious slaughter methods and technological innovations in the sector have been considered as inhumane by animal rights groups. The industry's violations of ethics and values have been criticized, and those violations have included issues such as the absence of good housing, feeding and appropriate behavior. Miele et al. (2011) organized a project called "Welfare Quality," in which focus groups and citizen juries were selected from European countries such as France, Sweden and the UK. This project established a dialogue between society and scientists regarding animal welfare and argues that:

> This dialogue also showed that technical, ethical and political decisions are highly interwoven, and the borders between these domains are porous and subject to constant challenges (Miele et al. 2011, p.116).

The conclusion of the project supports my dissertation's suggestions about halal food issue as well. The halal slaughter debate has been shaped by different dynamics, including techniques and methods, values, political decisions and market dimensions. Reaching a consensus on the technical and scientific facets of

the issue could be difficult, and this could perhaps be the main obstacle to preventing progress in the previously mentioned aspects. Similar to discussions about halal slaughter, the absence of a common definition and scope could be the main challenge for animal welfare supporters. According to the results of Miele et al. (2011), it would be difficult to reach a consensus about what animal welfare is. Concerns and sensibilities do not always align among the public and scientists, and it can also change from country to country in the European region.

The leading organization included in the selected news for this thesis was the UK's Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which has called for banning religious slaughter in the country. The society applied the call to both halal and kosher meat in Great Britain. Muslim and Jewish leaders have heavily criticized the society's declaration, and they asserted the organization's stance was intolerant toward minorities. In Germany, the far-right party AfD's election manifesto also included bans for minarets and halal slaughter and was criticized as anti-Semitic (Lindner, 2016). Because halal and kosher slaughtering are both religious dietary rules, any action or intent to ban these methods would be considered discriminatory toward minorities. Lindner (2016) also revisits past experiences in Germany and Switzerland regarding kosher slaughtering by examining discussions during the late 18th century. The author adds that Jews, who were less than 1% of the population, were stigmatized as "strangers from the east." In 1894, Switzerland was the first country in Europe to ban slaughter without stunning. Germany followed the Swiss, and in 1930s, it was expanded to other German states (Lindner, 2016). Today, AfD's and other right-wing parties or groups usually target halal slaughter rather than kosher because to avoid being labeled as anti-Semitic. While Islamophobia does not pose serious problems recently, anti-Semitism would be a highly undesirable accusation, especially for politicians. In this context, whenever religious slaughter becomes a discussion point, leading Jewish leaders have interfered and condemned the banning attempts. That is why it would not be wrong to claim that widespread bans of halal slaughter have not been achieved yet because of Jewish objections rather

than the Muslim community in Europe. In addition, while halal food has been intensely debated in France and used by politicians such as Nicolas Sarkozy, his center-right counterparts in Germany have mostly avoided making negative statements and have sought to balance majority and minority rights. Whereas Sarkozy could defend banning halal food in schools, Merkel has emphasized protecting tolerance as much as possible. Outside of far-right groups, maintaining tolerance is highlighted in Germany as it is one of the leading countries to have a Muslim minority. It would be possible to observe from the media that debates could be bolder and louder in France and the UK in comparison with Germany. Banning halal food or slaughter would lead to a ban of shechita (Jewish religious slaughter method) as well. Germany might not willing to take this risk to protect tolerance and also to avoid charges of anti-Semitism again.

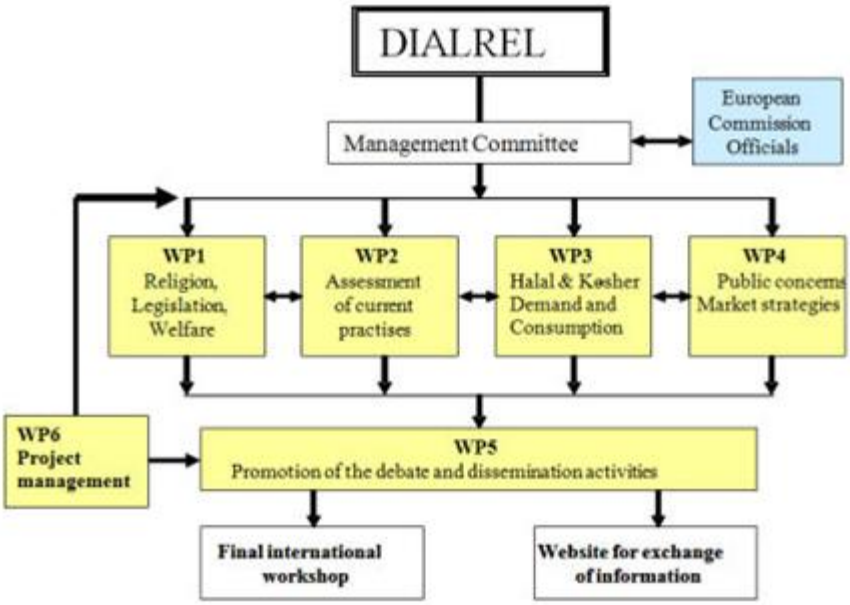
4.2.1. The DIALREL project

The DIALREL project is funded by the European Commission and involves partners from 11 countries (France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Turkey, Italy and Israel). The DIALREL project took place between 2006 and 2010 and became the only project/initiative to be directly supported by the European Commission. The project aimed to "address issues relating to religious slaughter by encouraging dialogue between stakeholders and interested parties as well as gathering and dissemination of information" (Dialrel Project webpage, n.d.). As a multi-disciplinary project, DIALREL managed the initiative in close cooperation with veterinarians, food scientists, sociologists, and jurists to develop constructive dialogue between interested parties. The project also proposed to explore conditions for both parties and facilitate the adoption of good religious slaughter practices, as well as a review mechanism to monitor for better practices. DIALREL produced a number of reports and fact sheets on topics that include religious requirements, legislation, veterinary and animal welfare concerns, current slaughter practices, consumer attitudes regarding halal and kosher, and the development of halal and kosher meat markets in Europe (DIALREL Report, 2010).

The project's working plan consisted of six work packages (see Figure 2 as well):

- WP1. Religion, Legislation and Animal Welfare: Conflicting Standards
- WP2. Religious slaughter: Evaluation of current practices
- WP3. Halal consumer and consumption issues
- WP4. Concerns, knowledge and information in the general public
- WP5. Promotion of the debate and dissemination activities
- WP6. Project management

Figure 2. Organizational chart of DIALREL Project's six work packages (available on the project's web page)



Also, for the first time, the project provided EU-level analysis and statistics about the number of animals involved, insights into the motivations of halal and kosher consumers, and comprehensive technical information. However, there has been criticism of the project in that it claimed to be a dialogue but did not engage with religious communities in any significant manner. As a result, DIALREL did not

examine the matter in a sufficiently deep or even-handed manner. Although the project was inadequate at producing concrete outcomes, it could be considered a significant step in contributing to the debate.

CHAPTER IV

5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1. Halal Food in European news coverage

The relationship between the media and religion is pivotal as much as religion is covered by media organizations. As Atalan-Helicke has argued, the halal food issue has gained momentum in European media coverage, especially after 2013 (Atalan-Helicke, 2015). Instead of examining this relationship in depth, this dissertation intends to demonstrate how Islam is placed and reported in the European media. Islam has been on the top of the agenda for many decades, especially following 9/11 and its aftermath. Specifically, Islam has been an attractive topic for the secular media in which terrorism, violence, and crime have become the most frequent keywords.

In the UK media, political discussions have been about the government's lack of strategy and the statements of scientific experts supporting a ban on halal slaughter. For instance, the Farm Animal Welfare Council has long recommended banning religious slaughter, first in 1985 and again in 2003. Similar to Cameron, both the Thatcher and Blair governments rejected a ban because of respect for the rights of religious groups such as Muslims and Jews. Providing exemptions to the law led to criticisms by animal-rights advocates. While tabloid newspapers usually report negative and hyperbolic news, others focus on the opinions of both parties. Information for audiences regarding definitions of halal and kosher appeared in many selected news sources, and more technical details about cutting and other processes were occasionally given. It has also been debated why this issue is controversial in the country by including claims of animal-rights activists and objections from minority representatives. In some news, it has been emphasized that there would be no humane way of animal slaughtering, whether halal or non-halal; it was described as a myth:

> … those oppose to halal/kosher slaughtering really care animal welfare when they go to holiday where they could mostly eat halal food? Meat industry brutal and

> animals are products in such an industrialized area. The livestock industry is a ruthless and brutal one. Animals are a "product", a "crop" to be "harvested". Every year, 1bn animals are killed in the UK and all had nice lives and went to knife in a humane manner; this is a myth (The Guardian, 2014).

Nevertheless, any prohibition on halal slaughter has been widely reported in the news, such as decisions in Denmark, Holland and Poland. In some of the news, the Danish decision has been considered hypocritical, and there were claims that it was not related to animal welfare (Brown, 2014). In addition, some advocates for animal welfare oppose the Islamophobes who use this controversy in their anti-Islam propaganda. Jones states in his article entitled, “Sorry Islamophobes, this is about animal welfare not religion”:

> There is always a level of hypocrisy about meat-eaters; animals don’t have rights which are a human concept. But human have duties to protect the welfare of the animals (Jones, 2015).

He adds animal cruelty should be prevented regardless of whoever commits it. If the main point is to protect animals from violence and this can only be sustained by stunning before slaughter, not only halal but non-halal products should be targeted by this protest. According to Dehghan (2014), non-halal meats are also not transparent about slaughtering, and there is uncertainty about methods, which creates suspicions. In addition, pre-stunning is rejected by some non-Muslim countries such as “such as France’s traditional food foie gras” (Dehghan, 2014).

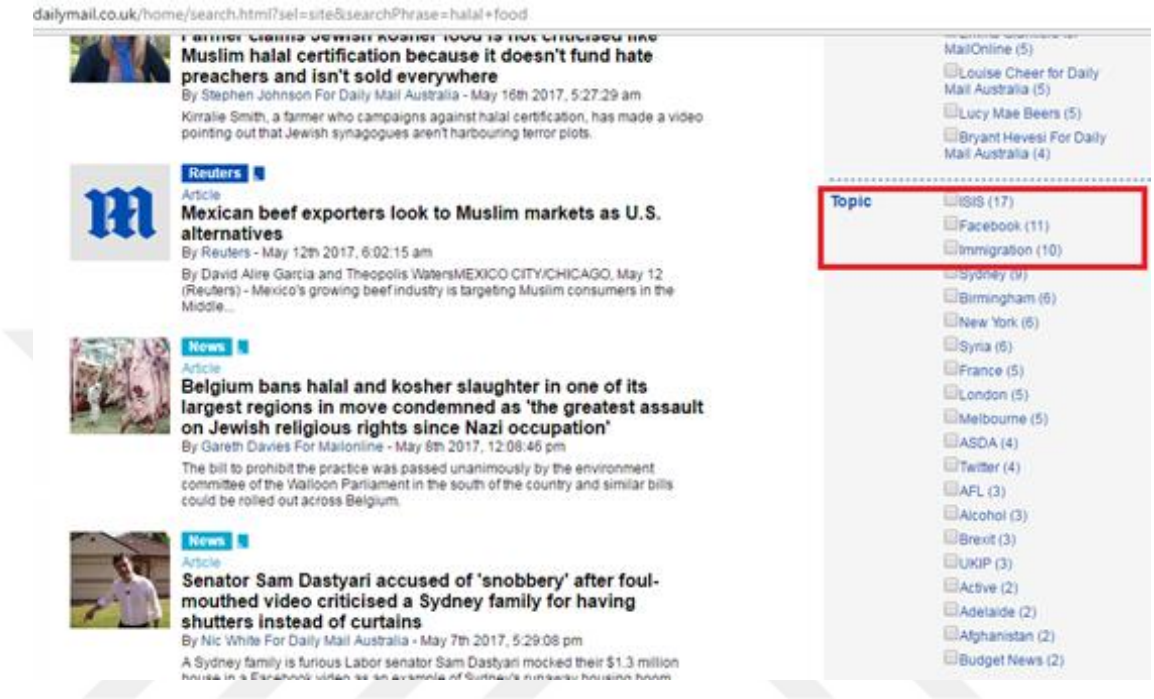
Together with political and social discussions, the market side of the issue has been reported in the news. For instance, Austria’s *Der Standard* placed the country’s position between law on animal rights and religious freedoms. This is seen as the main challenge and obstacle for the halal market’s development in Austria. Some supermarkets have started to add halal products at their chains, despite high pressure from the public. In one case, Spar had to withdraw halal meat from its chain. However, Rewe, which sells fresh halal meat in Mercury supermarkets, did not comply with public pressure and continues to sell halal products. While halal meat constitutes less than 1% of the country’s entire meat

production, it remains a “niche market” as reported in *Der Standard*. In the country, the Animal Protection Act prohibits slaughter without stunning unless for religious reasons. Like other countries in Europe, Austria has struggled to balance animal rights and religious freedoms according to news. That is why the post-stunning option has been considered by the experts. Most of the selected news gave information about halal requirements and the market situation in the country. As indicated by Moser and Laufer (2016), “halal products have also become an emotionally occupied economic factor in Austria” (Moser and Laufer, 2016).

In addition to Denmark’s decision regarding halal slaughter, France has also been discussed in the news across the European region. “Islamic burger becomes political” and “Islamic burger: controversial but popular” were titled news in *Der Standard*, in which far-right opinions and socialist speeches were presented. For instance, some of them defended halal menus of hamburger chains, because Muslims do not have many choices for restaurants in France. Hate campaigns against halal products have also been reported in the news, and they have typically started via social media platforms, especially on Facebook and Twitter. These campaigns have been aimed at businesses such as Spar and Mercury supermarkets in Austria, KFC and Subway food chains, and Quick Hamburger in France. Despite the campaigns, companies have not been willing to disengage from the halal market’s opportunities. Not all members of the public are angry about halal products, but those who oppose religious slaughter or are even bothered by bilingual packaging are growing in number in recent years. One of the factors behind this has been the tabloid media, which tends to support the far right. The *Daily Mail* newspaper in the UK can be considered a tabloid and broadly covers halal food issue as a threat and supports Islamic violence.

A striking example can be seen from the newspaper’s web page. When “halal food” is typed in the search engine, related topics become available on the left side of the page from the highest to the lowest. Figure 3 shows that ISIS is at the top of the list with 17 news articles in total, while Facebook is second, and immigration is third.

Figure 3. Top three topics of Halal Food search in Daily Mail



Facebook becomes the second-ranked topic among the news because of some racist posts, activities by anti-Islamic groups, or in contrast, the events and organizations of pro-halal food groups. Immigration is directly related to the accelerated growth of the Muslim diet. In this topic, the majority of news covers politicians' speeches and news releases regarding increasing crime rates in the Muslim population in the UK. When it comes to ISIS as the first topic, the news coverage mentions ISIS attackers and a correlation with Muslim immigrants, jihadists, as well as subjects such as financial support to ISIS via halal businesses. The Daily Mail is a well-known newspaper and has a total circulation of 29 million per month, which includes 27 million unique online visitors (Newsworks, 2017). Hence, it is obvious that the halal food issue is not addressed from perspectives of nutrition, food safety or finance, but rather the political and social aspects are presented in the news. Although circulation of newspapers is considered a significant indication in terms of how many readers are reached,

online news has become more widespread and available on laptops and mobile devices. Online news platforms present interactive discussions to readers, similar to other online platforms, forums and social media. Readers can post their comments right below the news and can also respond to comments they wish to oppose or support.

Even though this study excludes the comments section of the news, some of them are worth mentioning to see from perspectives of the public in discussions about the issue. It is possible to observe that traditional conservatives consider halal food as threat to their values and longstanding habits. For instance, one said, "Our country's eating habit cannot be changed without our consent. Muslims have to eat what everyone eats in the country and accept this" (*Daily Mail*, 2014). The media fuel this fear by using headlines and pictures such as those posted by the *Daily Mail* that contain the word "secret" or its synonym. The newspaper emphasizes that state authorities overlook something that is illegal, and thus halal food secretly seizes the whole country. An example can be seen in 2014; *"Britain goes halal...but no-one tells the public: How famous institutions serve ritually slaughtered meat with no warning."* The *Daily Mail* prefers long headlines, which aim to give the main message to the audience as can be seen from this example. The content of the news continues to reflect the same message. However, the content is less important, since the picture and the headline become crucial for delivering the main message and for seeing the newspaper's attitude towards any certain issue.

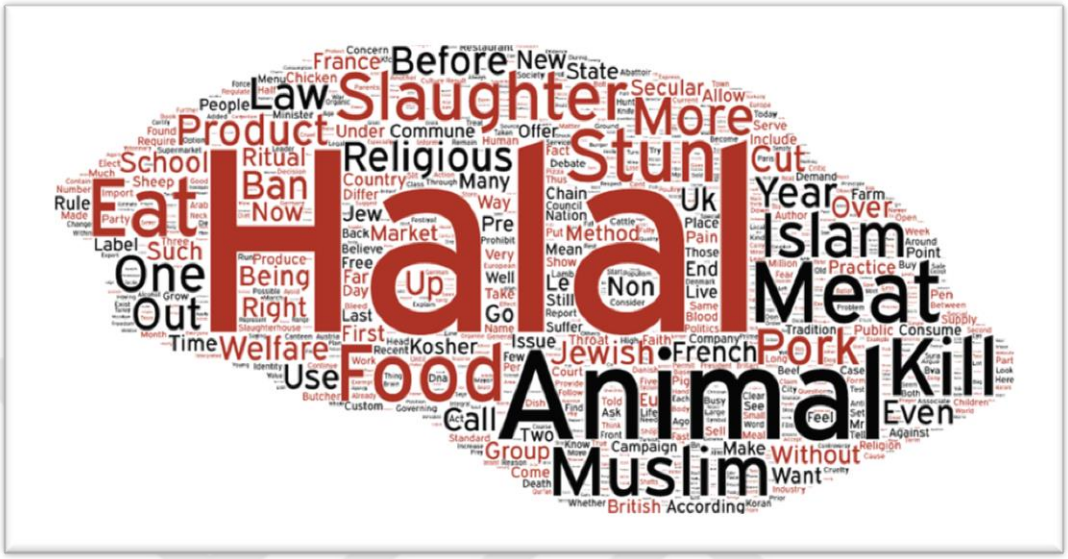
Newspapers are traditionally divided into two categories by media studies. The first is tabloid newspapers such as the UK-based *Daily Mail* mentioned above. The second category is "broadsheet" newspapers, which have more formal language, as well as a more serious approach in terms of reflection/production of news. There has been general skepticism towards the media concerning biased attitudes and subliminal messages; however, some media organizations have certain quality standards and ethics policies that they gained reputation after many

years, such as *Die Welt* from Germany. Nevertheless, some news of *Die Welt* regarding halal food is debatable and includes articles such as the 2002 “Throat cut allowed” headline news and the 2005 “Eat with Allah’s permission.” Animal slaughter has always been brutal and bloody and has become even more disrespectful in today’s industrialized meat slaughterhouses. Animals are generally slaughtered from the throat, which is not a specific method for halal slaughter. However, the news headlines from *Die Welt* show this manner. The words in news headlines are carefully selected to catch the audience’s attention and make them read that news. In this context, some words can create anxiety and panic, while others can be found sympathetic. Because religious slaughtering is associated with “violence,” along with women’s issues in Islam, the halal concept is strongly opposed by secularists and anti-Islamic groups. Since halal is a requirement of Islamic Sharia law, it would be enough to see the word “sharia” to oppose or discriminate against halal production, especially for anti-Islamic groups of Europe. Political activist Alain Wagner illustrates such a perspective by saying:

> …it's not like kosher food. Kosher-eating people are not preaching for the destruction of democracy. Halal is Sharia. And we need to ban any Sharia-related thing in our society (2011).

Likewise, “Allah” and especially “Allah-u Akbar” can be considered to have a direct relationship to terrorism in recent years. “Cultural war,” “battle,” “clash,” “cruel slaughter” and other words that evoke negative thoughts are often used in the news and headlines. Despite such contents, there are relatively constructive news articles among the selected news, especially in the UK’s *Guardian* newspaper. The newspaper contributes to the halal debate in a better way when compared to the others. In addition, the selected news are collected in a single content, and the most frequent words appear in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Word cloud of selected news


Halal
Animal
Slaughter
Stun
Muslim
Meat
Food
Eat
Product
Religious
Islam
Kill
Pork
Law
Ban
Welfare
Jewish
Before
More
Secular
Year
Over
Even
Without
Kosher
French
Right
Out
One
Use
Call
Group
Being
Market
Method
Uk
Cut
Up
Non
Time
Label
Rule
School
Ritual
Now
Jew
Pre
Way
Many
Commune
Under
France
Chicken
People
New
State
Allow
Include
Serve
Today
Practice
Consume
Public
Tradition
Pain
Place
Those
End
Live
Same
Blood
Politics
Company
Feel
Make
Want
Campaign
Two
Come
Death
Whether
British
According
Korean
Industry
Cruelty
Religion
Against
Case
Beef
Bva
Look
Here
Part
Pen
Supply
Around
Point
Week
Buy
Sale
Year
Between
Problem
Consider
Report
Suffer
Faith
Throat
Issue
Few
Per
Court
Dna
Thing
Work
Recent
Head
Custom
Governing
Butchers
Abroad
Standard
Increase
Free
Far
Day
Last
First
Back
Believe
Differ
Country
Class
Through
Human
Remain
Service
Fact
Debate
Thus
Chain
Council
Nation
Put
Show
Mean
Le
Still
Report
Well
Take
Go
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Prohibit
Cattle
Farm
Demand
Author
Open
Million
Case
Denmark
Live
Blood
Politics
Tradition
Public
Consume
Supply
Pen
Between
Problem
Look
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Case
Beef
Bva
Case
Test
Ant
Set
Mr
Tell
Against
Religion
Cruelty
Industry
Korean
Safe
Buy
Around
Point
Week
Open
Author
Farm
Demand
Include
Serve
Today
Allow
Secular
Cut
Over
Year
Pain
Place
Those
End
Live
Same
Blood
Politics
Company
Feel
Make
Want
Campaign
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Death
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According
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Industry
Cruelty
Religion
Against
Case
Beef
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Week
Buy
Sale
Year
Between
Problem
Consider
Report
Suffer
Faith
Throat
Issue
Few
Per
Court
Dna
Thing
Work
Recent
Head
Custom
Governing
Butchers
Abroad
Standard
Increase
Free
Far
Day
Last
First
Back
Believe
Differ
Country
Class
Through
Human
Remain
Service
Fact
Debate
Thus
Chain
Council
Nation
Put
Show
Mean
Le
Still
Report
Well
Take
Go
Very
Prohibit
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Denmark
Live
Blood
Politics
Tradition
Public
Consume
Supply
Pen

the newspapers. In the first line of the Table 3 shows news about halal food was reported more in the *Independent* and the *Guardian* in comparison to the others. The highest level for the *Guardian* was 18.9%, while the *Independent* was second at 16.3% with 19 news articles.

Table 3. Content of total news coverage (86 in total)

	Daily Mail	**Der Standard**	**Die Welt**	**The Independent**	**Le Monde**	**The Guardian**
Pictures	13	9	2	14	8	16
Negative Connotation	13	7	6	13	2	8
Technical & Financial Content	2	10	4	10	3	18
Political Content	13	11	8	16	8	16

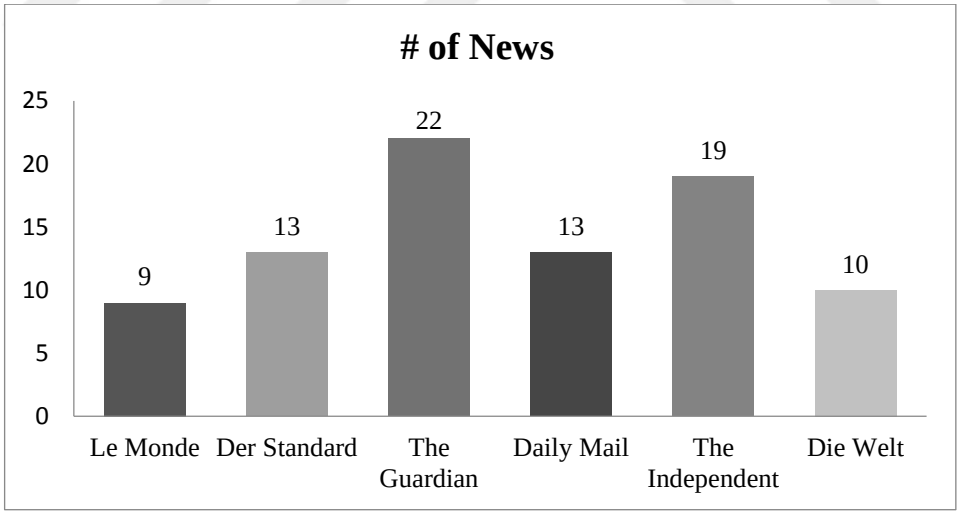
It should be noted that some contents of the news include both political and financial issues, as well as technical details. Because it would be quite complicated to add all this information to the table, I prefer to present a more simplified version to create a general idea of news articles about halal food. As observed from the newspapers in the UK, the halal food issue in Australia was covered widely. Those news articles are not included in this research because of regional limitations. Almost all newspapers reported on the religious slaughter ban in Denmark in 2014, along with the pork ingredient scandals of some food companies. Other developments, such as banning halal food from school canteens in France, were reported and discussed by the newspapers more than once. For instance, the news in the *Guardian* (2015) argues:

> For the hardliners on the French right, meat is politics. In the last presidential election campaign in 2012, as Sarkozy … deliberately stoked fears about the Islamization of the nation's dinner plates. (Chrisafis, 2015)

Another news article about the same issue was included as a headline in the *Guardian*, which said "Pork is the latest front in Europe's culture wars." The newspaper refers to a clash between cultures in the European region and mentions far-right opposition to the Muslim way of life by using the halal food issue.

Though the *Guardian* tends to be neutral toward the halal food issue, this headline contains negative connotation. In addition, the newspaper includes information about animal rights and welfare concerns, as well as the ethical side of the issue. The *Independent* has addressed the issue by focusing on religious slaughter. Opinions of veterinary scientists regarding "cruel" slaughtering have been included frequently. The Daily Mail newspaper had the third highest amount of coverage and was the same with *Der Standard*. *Die Welt* (8.6%) and *Le Monde* (7.7%) had the lowest levels. The total number of news is also demonstrated in the Figure 5.

Figure 5. Breakdown of collected news by newspaper



While *Der Standard* and *Daily Mail* have the same amount of news, the content of them are different. Because *Der Standard* is a liberal/center-left newspaper, the language of the news is not as aggressive in contrast to the *Daily Mail*. The news reached its peak in 2014 due to the Danish ban on religious slaughtering and French political agendas. It is also observed that the halal food debate gained

momentum after 2009 in European news coverage. In 2015 and 2016, the issue was persistently discussed and included in the newspapers. The increase in right-wing and populist trends in the region should be one of the reasons for this growth, since politicians and media organizations set agendas in the countries. Halal food scandals and animal rights concerns have become opportunities and excuses to support their arguments. Tolerance for cultural differences in daily life has diminished dramatically, which can be observed from the news.

Using pictures as visual content in the news is essential for reaching audiences. It is significant to use a relevant photograph with the content; however, most of the newspapers use irrelevant or inconvenient photographs to easily draw the attention of readers. Furthermore, one of the photographs used by the *Independent* in 2009 serves as an example of bloody usage:

Figure 7. A news article's picture from the *Independent* titled "End 'cruel' religious slaughter, say scientists" in 2009

Using bloody pictures or photographs of dead animals from the slaughter-house scandals or even images of halal food labels, which are in Arabic, can be irritating for the audience. Some halal food labels can be seen in Figure 6, which is also verifying the fractionation of halal certification bodies around the world.

Figure 6. Different types of labels of Halal Food (ABC, 2014)

This creates confusion for Muslim consumers and becomes an obstacle for common standardization. In addition, none of the European national governments have become involved in the halal market certification and standardization thus far. Instead, states only intervene in the distribution process. For instance, the government in France allows halal food distribution by the largest mosques. Likewise, none of the governments have developed regulations for the halal market. Therefore, the gap is filled by private bodies or enterprises, and this situation is open to fraud and exploitation.

The meat industry has rapidly grown because of increasing consumption. There have been many scandals about slaughtering and treatment, including poultry production processes. Slaughtering animals has been cruel solely, thus it does not necessary to become religious. Stunning before slaughter with electroshock or gas devices already leads to animal suffering. Therefore, even though the *Independent* included scientific approaches toward the religious slaughtering methods used by Muslims and Jews, the usage of the photograph in the example is highly problematic and inconvenient.

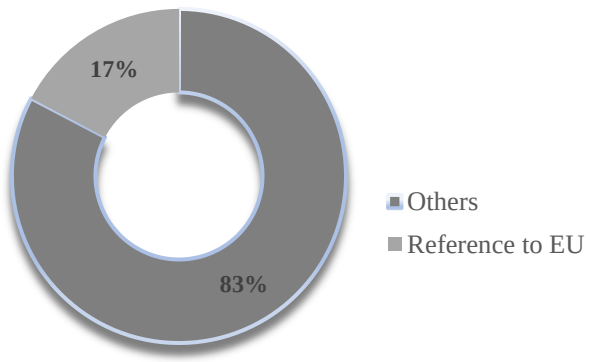
Photo usage, headlines and content are the three main components of news. It is crucial for journalists and editors to decide newsworthiness, and then the important part is how to present this news to the readers. In this context, usage of words in the content and headline becomes significant regarding sensitive issues. Negative connotation refers to the selected news content, headline and photo usage together. The *Daily Mail* and the *Independent* contain the highest level as each had 11.1% out of 86 news articles. *Le Monde* published the fewest news articles that provided negative implications. Almost half of the news contains words or photos with negative connotations.

The halal food issue has been addressed from technical/scientific and financial standpoints by the newspapers. As can be seen from the Table 2, the *Guardian* gave the uttermost place among the newspapers, while the *Daily Mail* often approached the issue from a political aspect. The *Guardian* mostly focuses on halal slaughtering techniques and its position in the market. An opinion news article, for instance, claimed that the Danish ban is human hypocrisy than animal welfare by the decision of banning halal slaughter. Since Denmark wants to increase pork production and export across the region, the reason behind the ban was not related to animal welfare concerns. In the same news, this hypocrisy refers to another issue, which was about a young giraffe at the Copenhagen Zoo. The giraffe was young and healthy, but he was given to lions as food in front of children and visitors because of the zoo's inbreeding program. Hence, the Danish decision to ban religious slaughter without stunning has been controversial. It has been widely discussed in the news and has included aspects from slaughtering techniques and rules in Islam and Judaism in 2014.

Another determinant of the news content analysis was the presence of any reference to regulations and policies of the European Union (EU). Although halal food debates remain at the state level, some of the selected news articles refer to EU policies such as the European Convention for Human Rights, which has been the main reference for religious slaughter and trade regulations. Regulating halal food by labeling in the European market could not be acceptable for European

countries, which are relatively protectionist in the food and agriculture industry. The UK, for instance, rejected including the EU's halal labeling for halal meat (The *Guardian*, 2014), while France has long been highly sensitive to local food and agricultural production as mentioned earlier. The following figure shows the percentage of EU-related news in total news.

Figure 8. Reference to European Union



Only 17% of the overall news mention EU regulations and policies, and the rest refer to other rules such as national or local policies. The most discussed nations among them have been France and Denmark due to the ban of halal slaughtering and removing a halal meat option from schools. In addition, the meaning of halal and its status in the market placed in the news by giving expert and scientist opinions.

The *Daily Mail* was the leading newspaper in terms of reporting scandals related halal slaughterhouses and revealed CCTV records to support the news, which was quite disturbing for readers regardless of their faith. Inspections and auditing should be made for food safety and hygiene, but controversial issues such as halal/kosher slaughtering should be handled carefully since it might support Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. Food safety is essential according to Muslim and Jewish rules, as much as it is for Christians and secularists. Therefore, this inhumane way of slaughtering is considered haram and unacceptable and in

contrast to halal. Hence, fraudulent companies and implementations could happen in any sector, which is often encountered in the food and agriculture industry.

In addition to the selected news, some online news webpages, which publish in the Turkish language, were also evaluated to develop an idea about their reactions to these debates. Banning halal slaughter is seen as discrimination against Muslim and Jewish minorities, and up-to-date developments such as the ban of halal slaughter in Belgium and the Netherlands have also been published. Other issues such as the public pressure leading to the withdrawal of halal meat from retailers by Spar, Austria's largest supermarket chain, have also been covered. Furthermore, some reported pork slaughterhouse records that were considered horrific and claimed that animal-rights activists who attack halal could not explain this situation (Son Haber, 2017). The news usually covers incidents in leading European countries, such as the halal challenge in Germany, which began on social media to boycott halal products by putting pork next to them in supermarkets (Guncel, 2016). Apart from Spar and the halal challenge, another supermarket issue occurred in the UK, where anti-halal groups placed brochures on halal products that stated consumers were supporting terrorism by buying halal. All these are considered anti-Islam attacks and cultural battles in supermarkets. The difference between Turkish-language news and other national newspapers could be the presence of local incidents about halal food and slaughter. Local mayors and the opinions of experts have been reported as well. In comparison with minority news, the national media would cover the halal food issue in a broader manner. For instance, it would not report on local halal food stores or on the activities of companies.

CONCLUSION

The halal food issue has been analyzed either from the standpoint of business and economics or from the standpoint of science in the literature. In recent years, few researchers have studied it from socio-political perspective. This research intends to contribute to those studies by analyzing mainstream newspapers from four leading countries in the European region. Because meat is the main component of the food chain, religious slaughter comprises and shapes the debate at some point. Concerns about animal welfare have increased dramatically, and thus activists have become a pressure group in the decision-making process. Likewise, Jewish and Muslim immigrant communities have considerable power in some countries to oppose governments on religious slaughter decisions. Anti-halal groups are mostly far-right politicians and media, and they escalate the debate by cooperating with animal-rights advocates.

The media have framed the halal food issue in different ways such as crime stories, politics, finances and conspiracy theories. It is observed in the selected newspapers that they used irrelevant photos and aggressive wording in headlines to create panic and anxiety among the public. In a multicultural society such as the UK or France, the media play a key role in affecting public opinion. The media, like most societies, is not a homogeneous structure, and that means there is not a single media in Europe. However, mainstream newspapers and TV reach the majority of public, and that is why they have power to shape public opinion. In this context, each of the newspapers in this research is a mainstream publication, and most of them have addressed the halal food issue from a socio-political standpoint. Nevertheless, it would not be wrong to claim that all mentioned aspects of halal food issue interlock with one other.

In the EU, the initiatives for the halal food debate have remained at the national level rather than regional. However, estimates show that the Muslim population will continue to increase in Europe and the world, and that will lead to a regional

market necessity. However, there is already tension at the heart of EU policy discourses between trade and animal welfare parties, which has made sustaining halal production at the regional level more complicated. There is considerable variation in current halal practices, and the rules regarding religious requirements are still confusing. In addition, the confusion within Muslim communities can be considered another aspect of the issue. To be more precise, two principles are regarded with conflicting parties. One, there is an increasing awareness of animal welfare, which has led lawmakers to prohibit slaughter without previous stunning. Two, there is the protection of the fundamental human right to religious freedom, which gives freedom regarding what to eat to consumers. Therefore, in Europe's halal market, consumer demands and concerns need to be addressed within a common standardization. It is also necessary to have an institutional body related to slaughter techniques, product range, consumer expectations, market share and socio-economic issues. A central institution could abolish the various types of certification bodies.

In sum, with this research, I aimed to contribute to the limited number of studies by collecting news content and analyzing it for representations of Muslim identity in European media through the halal food issue. As the fastest growing religion in the world, it seems as if the Islamic lifestyle will continue to occupy the agenda of Europe for the long term. As a result, the proliferation of halal food and demand will also remain one of the key topics in this debate.

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