

Institution: University of Huddersfield		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 17		
Title of case study: Enhanced Understanding and Reduced Controversy within Expanding Religious Food Markets		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: October 2013 - present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
John Lever	Reader	10/2013-current
Gerard McElwee	Professor	11/2014-2020
Gareth Downing	Senior Lecturer	10/2013-current
Period when the claimed impact occurred: October 2015 - present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Expanding markets for kosher and halal food present significant economic opportunities, but animal slaughter for meat raises complex issues around business compliance and cultural and religious difference. University of Huddersfield (UoH) research has been used to develop policy on meat market transparency at the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and consumer understanding at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). As recognised by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), this has been achieved by refocussing dialogue between commercial and religious stakeholders to develop more transparent ways of slaughtering animals and labelling meat to address consumer anxieties and concerns about animal welfare. The research has also enhanced understanding of these markets for the Halal Food Authority (HFA), Morrisons Supermarket, and Fera Science.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The research underpinning this case explored the tensions and controversies revolving around the expanding global markets for halal and kosher food in the United Kingdom, Denmark and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Debate over the religious slaughter of animals for meat has been evident in Europe for more than two centuries, and there is a legal requirement for animals to be stunned before slaughter in line with animal welfare considerations (3.4). In some European countries, religious minorities have been allowed to bypass these laws in line with the freedom to practice religion, but this is a hugely contested policy debate. The research was based on a body of mixed methods work that examined a range of social, political and economic issues related to the competing production and consumption practices for religiously certified food products that have merged in this context (3.1, 3.2, 3.3).</p> <p>While Jewish consumers do not accept animals being stunned before slaughter, until recently the vast majority of Muslims in the UK and Denmark did accept such practice. But as the global halal food market expanded in the early 21st century to be valued at \$US1.8 Trillion by 2019, non-stun slaughter has become more popular among a significant minority of Muslims for religious, political and commercial reasons. By 2020, UK Muslims were expected to be spending more than £4.5 billion on halal food and drink annually, yet market growth has been accompanied by misunderstandings about the volume of animals being used to produce meat in both the pre- and non-stun halal markets (3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6).</p> <p>Lever began working on kosher and halal issues at Cardiff University in 2009, and it has remained one of his central research interests. On arriving at UoH in 2013, he began a collaboration with Florence Bergeaud-Blackler of the French National Centre for Scientific</p>		

Research (CNRS) and Johan Fischer of Roskilde University in Denmark to consolidate understanding of developments in the global halal market (3.1). In 2016, Lever and Mara Miele from Cardiff University were commissioned by Dubai Accreditation Centre (DAC) to compare consumer understanding in the UK and United Arab Emirates (UAE) to inform the development of new halal accreditation procedures and business compliance requirements for those exporting to the Middle East and other international halal markets. To do this, Lever and Miele designed a representative survey, with Gareth Downing of UoH conducting analysis of consumer requirements and understanding (3.2, 3.3). Concurrently, a qualitative study comparing the development of kosher and halal markets in the UK and Denmark was initiated with Fischer. This included a focus on slaughter legislation and regulation, certification, and consumption practices; Lever led on UK data collection and analysed findings from over 50 interviews and extended periods of ethnographic fieldwork (3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6). Building on the uncertainty created by the expansion of the halal market in the UK, Lever and Gerard McElwee of UoH conducted a mixed methods study on fraud in the UK halal sheep supply chain with Robert Smith of University of West of Scotland. This involved mapping out, modelling and analysing instances of fraud over a number of years (3.5).

Key findings include:

Business compliance requirements

Although kosher and halal production and consumption practices are ultimately premised on divine order, religion is both conditioned and invigorated by the global market. Global kosher certification bodies cooperate and compete with national certification agencies at the same time, while global halal certification bodies outsource responsibilities to Muslim certification bodies in national markets. The research found that products regulated in these ways extend the power, reach and authority of certifiers to drive quality standards and business compliance requirements in their respective markets. Further analysis revealed that national policies for animal slaughter and animal welfare in the UK and Denmark add to this complexity in ways that enhance social and political controversy, lessen business and consumer understanding, and provide opportunities for fraud. New accreditation procedures from UAE in 2018, which were underpinned by non-stun methods, added to the confusion, with research revealing that UK businesses producing stunned halal meat for export to the Middle East had to switch to non-stun production and certification at very short notice (3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6).

Social and political controversies

When slaughter without stunning was banned in Denmark in 2014, demand for non-stunned meat increased among Muslim consumers across the country. As Jewish and Muslim consumers found it increasingly difficult to maintain religious food practices, research found that prepacked non-stunned meat was imported from countries such as the UK, where non-stun production is allowed, or via countries in Eastern Europe with lower animal welfare standards. In the absence of a ban, and with social and political controversy about the volume of non-stunned meat produced in, and imported into the UK increasing, UK businesses and certifiers attempted to protect commercial interests by being more discrete about labelling stunned meat as halal and identifying the method of slaughter. This led to misleading media reports about the volume of non-stunned meat produced in the UK, which further undermined market transparency (3.2, 3.4., 3.6).

Consumer anxieties

As meat market transparency declined in the UK and media scrutiny intensified, anxieties about threats to animal welfare standards and British values intensified among non-Muslim consumers. At the same time, as the number of fast-food chains and restaurants offering halal food options increased after the 2008 recession, Muslim consumers faced increasingly complex and difficult food choices. As both stunned and non-stunned halal meat appeared in the same supermarket aisles, and on the same restaurant menus as non-halal meat, research revealed that it became increasingly difficult for Muslim consumers to know what, and where, to eat. This again increased consumer anxiety considerably (3.2, 3.4, 3.6).

Overall, UoH research revealed the need for more nuanced understandings of, and insights into, globalising halal and kosher food markets. Research findings have thus underpinned a number of targeted policy interventions to improve meat market transparency, improve business understanding and compliance, and counter misunderstanding and prejudice.

3. References to the research

This research can be described as crossing the 2* threshold as it is largely published in highly rated peer reviewed academic journals and well received books from established and well-known academic publishers.

3.1 Bergeaud-Blackler, F., Fischer, J. and **Lever, J.** (2015) *Halal Matters: Islam, politics and markets in global perspective* London, UK: Routledge DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315746128> [can be supplied on request]

3.2 **Lever, J.** and Fischer, J. (2018) *Religion, Regulation and Consumption: Globalising Kosher and Halal Markets*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press. Access: <https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526103642/> [can be supplied on request]

3.3 **Lever, J.** and Fischer, J. (2018a) *Kosher and Halal Business Compliance*, London, UK; Routledge <https://www.routledge.com/Kosher-and-Halal-Business-Compliance/Lever-Fischer/p/book/9781138065185> [can be supplied on request]

3.4 **Lever, J.** (2018b) Halal meat and religious slaughter: from spatial concealment to social controversy – breaching the boundaries of the permissible? *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37(5) 889-907 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654418813267>

3.5 **McElwee, G.**, Smith, R and **Lever, J.** (2017) Illegal activity in the UK halal (sheep) supply chain: Towards greater understanding, *Food Policy* 69: 166-175 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2017.04.006>

3.6 **Lever, J.** (2020) Understanding halal food production and consumption in the West – beyond dominant narratives, *CAMBIO. Rivista sulle trasformazioni sociali (Journal of Social Transformation)* 10 (19) 89-102 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13128/cambio-9001>

4. Details of the impact

Halal and kosher meat production represent a significant share of global markets. In the UK, market expansion has been accompanied by a lack of transparency about certification practices and methods of slaughter, which has led to misleading media campaigns about threats to both animal welfare and British values. This has increased consumer anxieties and presented opportunities for a reduction in animal welfare standards and an increase in fraud. This UoH research has informed and educated key policy stakeholders involved in the halal and kosher meat markets in the UK and beyond, and raised the profile of the issues involved with the public. In September 2018, leading food expert Marion Nestle at New York University wrote an article on her blog (5.1) recommending Lever and Fischer's book on Halal and Kosher food markets (3.2) to 144k twitter followers and 50k website subscribers as a way of understating debates about the religious slaughter of animals. The understanding and insight that emerges from this research has provided the foundations for policy changes to improve meat market transparency and improve animal welfare at slaughter, reduce consumer anxieties, and improve market access for UK businesses. The impacts of this research have been achieved through three main pathways.

Reframing public policy debate on non-stun slaughter and animal welfare

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) have been a leading advocate of banning slaughter without stunning for over 100 years. With around 20 experts from across sectors, Lever has been an invited expert at BVA campaign and policy meetings in London since 2017. His advisory activities and inputs have reframed BVAs "policy position regarding improved regulation of non-

stun slaughter” and created “positive dialogue with all stakeholders, religious stakeholders and certifiers” (5.2).

Considering the implications of the 2014 ban on non-stun slaughter in Denmark, in 2017 Lever advised against a ban in the UK on the grounds that it was likely to draw more attention to the issue of non-stun slaughter, and potentially increase demand for non-stunned meat; BVA subsequently stopped campaigning to assess their position. In 2018, Lever was invited to provide further input in order to raise awareness among BVA members. This involved an invited blog post, accessed by more than 500 people (5.3), and a keynote talk at the 2018 BVA congress in London, which included a panel discussion on “how science, politics and society shape the way we kill animals” (5.2). BVA recognise the significance of Lever’s work on the history of kosher meat production and Jewish non-stun slaughter practice in the UK for situating and reframing their current work on halal slaughter practice. They find it important in “ensuring wider understanding amongst our staff and members of the social, cultural and religious framework in which we situate our policy on welfare at slaughter (including non-stun slaughter) and informing how we communicate our policy to the wider public” (5.2). BVA has a membership of 17,000, meaning that Lever’s input has impact across the majority of the 20,000 veterinary professionals in the UK.

This engagement underpinned the establishment in 2019 of a new working group to inform BVA’s considerations of “how they present the public with transparent information about the slaughter process” to limit future controversy. Lever was again identified as a key expert and his input “informed several key recommendations” in policy (5.2). While BVA would still ultimately to like to see non-stun slaughter banned, in the new policy document – ‘BVA position on the welfare of animals at slaughter’ – published in 2020, the need for better engagement with religious communities to make production practices more transparent, improve animal welfare at slaughter, and prevent the importation of non-stunned meat from countries with lower welfare standards than the UK, is recognised for the first time (5.2).

Improving market transparency and reducing consumer anxiety

To address the anxieties created by the lack of meat market transparency amongst religious and non-religious consumers, the Huddersfield team has advocated for better labelling. In 2019, the Member of Parliament for Clacton requested copies of Lever’s work for a Government debate on labelling and improving meat market transparency. Lever’s work was said to be “incredibly useful” in discussions with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in a “campaign to require all meat and meat products to be labelled as to the method of slaughter” (5.4). The UoH team have since developed a new meat production label, which is recognised by Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (ADHB) for influencing “key stakeholders in industry and Government” to “increase market transparency and moderate the anxieties of Muslim and non-Muslim consumers” (5.5).

Enhancing understanding of regulation and business compliance requirements

Lever and Fischer’s work (3.3) has improved understanding of industry and business compliance leading to changes in business engagement. The Halal Food Authority (HFA) stated that this work “brilliantly explains social and regulatory parameters within which halal industry currently operates” (5.6), and that this enables HFA business partners to understand and determine the appropriate standards and certification criteria required to enhance access to these markets and the opportunities they offer. In the UAE, Lever and Miele’s expertise was seen to be important in finalising the “development of new accreditation procedures and business compliance requirements at the recently established Emirates International Accreditation Centre (EIAC).” (5.10)

In 2019, Lever was subsequently asked by the HFA to run an event about market opportunities and business compliance requirements, which Lever held at UoH. Chaired by Prof. Gerard McElwee, the event attracted attendees and speakers from across sectors, including the supermarkets Asda and Morrisons, national meat producer associations, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), and various national halal certification bodies. After the

event, Lever was commissioned by Morrisons to develop a Business Compliance Factsheet for manufacturers wishing to achieve appropriate halal standards to work with Morrisons (5.7). Morrisons have found the guidance in the factsheet “useful for sending out to businesses and contacts looking for support to work with Morrisons” (5.8). One of UKs leading science companies, Fera Science, also found Lever and Fischer’s work (3.3) useful in understanding market opportunities for developing religious food compliance tests around the world, notably that the “contrast between kosher and halal is quite nuanced” (5.9). As a result, Fera decided to focus their efforts solely on the global halal market.

The findings from research across these three areas has contributed to improved understanding across the very important and growing global halal and kosher meat markets. In the UK, enhanced dialogue with commercial and religious stakeholders, and certification bodies has led to the development of new policies that recognise the value of engaging with religious minorities to address concerns about producing and importing meat with lower animal welfare standards. This is improving market transparency, lessening consumer anxiety, and countering misunderstanding and prejudice. Industry regulation and business compliance procedures are also much clearer, thus improving market access for businesses in the UK and overseas.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1. Marion Nestle of New York University Blog Post, foodpolitics.com/2018/09/weekend-reading-kosher-and-halal-market-regulation/#.W5Nr5BccAzp.twitter

5.2 Testimonial letter from British Veterinary Association (BVA) confirming importance of Lever’s work for their members and the importance of Lever as a key expert for the development of new policies on meat market transparency around slaughter practice.

5.3 Invited BVA blog post, Debating Religious Slaughter Over 200 Years: From Spatial Concealment to Social Controversy? bva.co.uk/news-and-blog/blog-article/debating-religious-slaughter-over-200-years-from-spatial-concealment-to-social-controversy

5.4 Testimonial letter Member of Parliament (MP) for Clacton, confirming the importance of Lever’s work for developing policy on better labelling.

5.5 Testimonial letter from the UK Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board explaining the overall significance of Lever’s work.

5.6 Testimonial letter from CEO of Halal Food Authority UK about the benefit of Lever and Fischer’s work for halal business and industry.

5.7 Halal Business Compliance Factsheet.

5.8 Email message from Morrisons confirming the usefulness of Lever and Fischer’s Business Compliance Factsheet.

5.9 Testimonial letter from the UK company Fera Science on the value of Lever and Fischer’s work for understanding market compliance requirements for UK science and technology companies.

5.10 Testimonial from Professor Haluk Anil on the impact of Lever and Miele’s research for Dubai Accreditation Centre (now Emirates International Accreditation Centre)