



## Critical review

## Markets, religion, regulation: Kosher, halal and Hindu vegetarianism in global perspective



Johan Fischer

Roskilde University, Department of Society and Globalization, House 23.2, Postbox 260, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 30 November 2015

Received in revised form 18 December 2015

Accepted 25 December 2015

## Keywords:

Markets

Religion

Regulation

Kosher

Halal

Vegetarianism

## ABSTRACT

Most recent scholarship on moral economies or religious markets argues for the compatibility of economies/markets and religious practices in particular national or regional contexts. However, over the last couple of decades or so religious markets have entered a new phase characterized by new forms of regulation, certification and standardization on a global scale. Building on research on global *kosher* (a Hebrew term meaning “fit” or “proper”), *halal* (an Arabic word that literally means “permissible” or “lawful”) and Hindu vegetarianism this paper argues that these economies or markets to a large extent are conditioned by and themselves condition forms of transnational governmentality, that is, new and often overlapping practices of government and grassroots politics. I explore religious economies and markets at three interrelated levels of the social scale: state and non-state regulation, the marketplace and consumers. Epistemologically, comparison is used as a powerful conceptual mechanism that fixes attention on *kosher*, *halal* and Hindu vegetarian similarities and differences.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	67
1.1. Kosher .....	68
1.2. Halal .....	68
2. Hindu vegetarianism .....	69
3. Conclusion .....	69
References .....	70

## 1. Introduction

In 1995 rabbinic authorities in Israel certified the first fully *kosher* (a Hebrew term meaning “fit” or “proper”) McDonald’s restaurant in Jerusalem. In 1992 McDonald’s was fully *halal* (an Arabic word that translates as “permissible” or “lawful”) certified by the Singaporean state body, *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura* or the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS). The same happened in Malaysia in 1995 when *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia* or the Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (JAKIM), Malaysia’s halal state certification body, certified McDonald’s. In 2012 McDonald’s opened its first vegetarian restaurant in India in the wake of the decision in 2011 by the Indian state to make

it mandatory that vegetarian food must bear a “green mark” to indicate that products are wholly vegetarian. Vegetarianism in India is increasingly perceived as integral to Hinduism and is based on the concept of *ahimsa* (noninjury to all living creatures). What has happened in the last two decades or so is that these religious markets have been subjected to transnational governmentality by state as well as non-state actors, but these processes are not well understood.

The above transformations can be alluded to as McDonaldization, that is, processes by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of the world and how this affects education, work, politics, religion and many other aspects of society (Ritzer, 2006: 5). With regard to *kosher*, *halal* and vegetarianism this paper understands McDonaldization as a process characterized by transnational

E-mail address: [johanf@ruc.dk](mailto:johanf@ruc.dk)

governmentality. Most scholarship on moral economies or religious markets focuses on the compatibility of markets and religious practices (Hefner, 1997; Rudnyckij, 2010). However, over the last couple of decades or so these markets and economies have been subjected to new forms of regulation and standardization.

Global religious markets or economies are embedded in social action; for example production, trade, consumption and regulation in organizations and networks (Granovetter, 1985). Standards are part of the moral economy of the modern world that set norms for behaviour and create uniformity, and this point is important for the emergence and expansion of global and moral *kosher*, *halal* and Hindu vegetarian markets (Busch, 2000). As a moral economy food, rights and responsibilities characterized what we owe to one another, where ethical responsibilities of the moral economy are most pronounced in the case of food (Morgan, 2015). Not unlike the organic food chain, in religious markets and moral economies knowledge is the most important economic resource and learning the most important process. Moreover, economic agents are situated in particular bounded contexts that are configured and reconfigured by the combining of standardization and regulation (Morgan and Murdoch, 2000: 161).

Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) concept of transnational governmentality grasps how new practices of government and new forms of "grassroots" politics are being set up on a global scale. Examples are new strategies of discipline and regulation that I illustrate through *kosher*, *halal* and vegetarian regulation and standards. The outsourcing of the functions of the state to NGOs and other ostensibly nonstate agencies is a key feature of the emerging system of transnational governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002: 990). Following studies of modern forms of audit culture (Power, 1999; Strathern, 2000), I show that transnational governmentality of religious markets seems to take on a life of its own. An example of this is not only the US *kosher* market as a successful private-sector regulation in an era of growing public concern over the government's ability to ensure food safety (Lytton, 2013), but also more generally increasing regulation of religious markets globally.

The central research question here concerns how religious economies are being governed and the effect of these efforts for the marketplace and consumers. Thus, I explore the workings of modern religious forms of transnational governmentality at three levels: regulation by state and no-state certifiers, the marketplace and consumption. I argue that these markets are conditioned by and themselves condition forms of transnational governmentality, that is, new and often overlapping practices of government and grassroots politics that tend to take on a life of their own. Epistemologically I use comparison as a powerful conceptual mechanism that fixes attention on the similarities and differences between *kosher*, *halal* and vegetarian food (Herzfeld, 2001).

### 1.1. *Kosher*

*Kashrut* and *kosher* law (*halacha*) include a number of prohibitions, such as a ban on pork and the mixing of milk and meat. In addition to food, *kosher* is also widely used to designate the "rabbinic properness" or personalized understanding of a wide range of objects, products, activities, ideas, and institutions (Ivry, 2010: 662). *Kosher* law is ultimately the application of a system of religious precepts and beliefs that governs the types of foods that people of the Jewish faith eat. This system is based on a number of verses found in the Bible, rabbinic Biblical exegesis, ordinances as presented in the *Talmud* (the written record of the oral law as redacted in the fifth century), and the writings and decisions of rabbinic authorities (Blech, 2008: xxiii). Central concepts in *kosher* laws are related to acceptable plants and species of animals. Other important concerns are rennin, gelatine, lactose, sodium caseinate

(a protein produced from casein in skimmed milk), vitamins, eggs, grape products, fruits, vegetables, and Passover (a major Jewish festival) items (Regenstein and Regenstein, 1979).

*Kosher* is often used as an example of not only a niche US market where successful private-sector regulation in an era of growing public concern over the government's ability to ensure food safety occurs (Lytton, 2013), but also more generally increasing regulation of it. Within the last two decades or so The Big Five *kosher* certifiers have achieved global reach: Orthodox Union (OU), OK Kosher, Kof-K Kosher Supervision, Star K, and Chicago Rabbinical Council (CRC), as well individual rabbis who issue certificates.

Nestlé recognized that the OU symbol is the most widely accepted *kosher* symbol. Nestlé USA and OU have a long-standing relationship that dates back to the Nestlé Foods Corporation that opened in the United States in 1900. An important aspect of the cooperation between OU and Nestlé is the submission of new ingredients and products for approval to the OU office and this office also addresses issues raised during routine inspections with the plant managers. The primary *kosher* responsibilities of the corporate managers include supervising the implementation of *kosher* policy at Nestlé, addressing significant production issues, day-to-day management of certified co-packing plants, and financial management. The *kosher* status for each product is coordinated among many people, including ingredient suppliers, factories, marketing, technical services, quality assurance, legal, and regulatory affairs. Each of these groups is responsible for a part of the process, and their expertise is essential for delivering the appropriately manufactured and labelled *kosher* product (Orthodox Union, 2004). OU certifies thousands of companies globally and thus also carries out inspections in biotech companies, such as Novozymes – a leading biotech company with annual revenue of around US\$2 billion (Fischer, 2015a). As we saw it above McDonald's is *kosher* in Israel and in Argentina.

Several studies show how diverse groups of Jews in the global diaspora negotiate *kosher* principles and practices. For example, dietary practices provide a common symbolic system through which the notions of Jewish identity can be expressed by keeping *kosher* (Buckser, 1999; Diamond, 2000; Klein, 2012). These studies show that many Jewish groups are fastidious about their everyday *kosher* consumption and this point has reinforced regulation of global *kosher* production and regulation. Research also shows that *kosher* certification and logos are extremely important in the everyday lives of many Jewish groups in Europe (Fischer and Lever, 2016). However, many Jewish consumers are not fastidious about *kosher* together with local Jewish organizations they feel that The Big Five *kosher* certifiers have become global, commercial and powerful to such an extent that their certification of thousands of companies and products have taken on a life of its own detached from the everyday lives of Jewish consumers.

### 1.2. *Halal*

The Koran and the *Sunna* (the life, actions and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad) exhort Muslims to eat the good and the lawful that God has provided for them, but there are a number of conditions and prohibitions. Muslims are expressly forbidden to consume carrion, spurting blood, pork, or foods that have been consecrated to any being other than God himself. These substances are *haram* and thus forbidden. Ritual slaughtering entails that the animal be killed in God's name by making a fatal incision across the throat; another significant Islamic prohibition relates to wine and any other intoxicating drink or substance (Denny, 2006: 279). In the modern food industry, a number of requirements have been made in relation to *halal* food; for example, to avoid any substances that may be contaminated with porcine residues or alcohol, such as gelatine, glycerine, emulsifiers, enzymes, flavours,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5073634>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5073634>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)