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Halal Literacy and Its Influence on Consumer Behavior: Factors Driving Food Purchase Decisions

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Abstract: This study investigates the purchase intention of halal food products and how halal literacy moderates the relationship in a consumer behavior study. Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence purchase intention. Halal literacy is vital in determining purchase intention and consumer behaviour of halal food. Data will be collected from 190 Muslim consumers aged between 20 and 50 years with purchasing power. Screening questions will be used to engage suitable respondents. Data will be analysed for descriptive analysis, and relationships between the independent and dependent variables will be determined. The moderating factor of halal literacy will also be analysed. The findings will stress the importance of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control in consumer behaviour and its relations with purchase intention. Halal literacy in halal food purchases will be a contributing factor for food marketers to enhance their significance in consumer behaviour, according to a study of halal product purchases.

Keywords: *Halal, Purchase Intention, Halal Food, Customer Behaviour, Halal Literacy*

1. Introduction

Consumer behaviour has been a crucial component of economics (Prabhu, 2020; Mehta et al., 2020; Paz & Vargas, 2023). Customers are considered actors in the marketplace in consumer behaviour studies (Darmawan & Gatheru, 2021). Thus, manufacturers focus on their customers rather than their products, and they closely observe customer behavior (Roy & Datta, 2022). Due to the growing Muslim population worldwide, products endorsed as halal are critically aimed at the markets (Muhamed et al., 2019). Therefore, consumer behaviour for halal products is an important component in market analysis and critical to the success of the halal market (Djunaidi et al., 2021).

Because Muslims adhere to the teachings of Islam and their beliefs influence their consumption habits, marketers made efforts to customise products and services to meet the needs and wants of the Muslim population (Temizkan, 2022). While the halal food industry is expanding, Purwanto et al. (2021) noted that a critical area that requires in-depth research is understanding consumers' buying intentions for halal food products. When choosing halal goods and services, consumer comprehension of religion plays a critical role (Ngah et al., 2020; Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020).

Islamic teaching emphasises the connection between consuming halal food and human development, especially in the area of the soul and knowledge (Marzuki et al., 2020). Ariffin et al. (2023) stated that food consumption should be assessed based on its effect on a person's personality, spirituality, and ability to worship. These abilities serve as the basis for the expression of halal literacy (Maryam & Sumar'in, 2022). Halal literacy can be defined as the capacity to distinguish between goods and services that are allowed (halal) and prohibited (haram), resulting from a more profound comprehension of Islamic shariah law (Salehudin, 2010). Individuals' halal literacy can increase their propensity to consume halal items (Suparti et al., 2019). Some researchers indicate that halal literacy significantly increases purchasing intention (Pratama & Hartati, 2021; Maryam & Sumar'in, 2022).

Globalisation has recently caused foreign cultures to penetrate Malaysia (Pawi et al., 2020). "Korean wave," also known as "Hallyu," describes a rise in the exposure of Korean culture abroad (Ing et al., 2018). Additionally, with the surge in the appeal of K-pop culture, the popularity of Korean cuisine has been rising, particularly across Asia (Amin et al., 2020). Ramadani et al. (2023) state that some Korean items still lack the halal

certification label. However, Muslims' knowledge of halal food significantly influences their propensity to purchase (Mutmainah, 2018). A buyer's likelihood of purchasing only halal goods rises if they are aware of halal practices (Amalia et al., 2020).

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (PBC) all have an impact on intention, which shapes behaviour (Basir, 2021). Moreover, PBC results from people's control beliefs, and they tend to act in ways they can control. This theory holds that people's intentions lead to their actual behaviours (Yener, 2022).

Therefore, the study objectives are to investigate the impact of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and the desire to purchase halal food. The influence of halal literacy in moderating attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on intention will also be investigated. The goal is to determine whether Muslims have sufficient halal literacy to purchase halal products. Given that Korea is a non-Muslim nation, some consumers may believe that these items contain components that are forbidden (Choi & Jeong, 2020).

2. Literature Review

Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior (CB) is defined as the study of how people choose, get, use, and dispose of goods, experiences, ideas, and services to suit their requirements. Roy. Anderson & Golden (1984) defined CB as the psychological processes that customers go through to determine their needs and wants, and how to satisfy those needs. An understanding of consumer behaviour aids marketers in choosing between various products and brands (Hanus, 2018); different customers may react differently to the same product (Sundararaj, 2021). Understanding consumer behaviour is crucial to understanding what they believe, feel, and desire from items (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2018).

The intention to buy halal products by Muslims has been investigated (Ali, 2021). In terms of the halal food products issue, many scholars applied the TPB to study the influence of intention and behaviour (Bashir, 2019). Many models were modified to add other factors, such as religiosity (Hendar, 2020); knowledge (Suparti et al., 2019); Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020); halal awareness (Vizano et al., 2021; Aslan, 2023); brands (Pratiwi, 2018); and trust (Khan et al., 2023). Research employing the TPB to examine behaviours related to Islam has demonstrated its considerable effectiveness in explaining such behaviours (Maduku & Mbeya, 2023).

Attitude

Attitude can be described as a psychological concept influenced by various factors, encompassing cognitive evaluation processes, beliefs, values, and emotional connections to a particular object (Khan et al., 2023). Attitude involves the assessment and judgment of an object, idea, or action along a spectrum of favourability, happiness, agreement, goodness, and liking or disliking (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

Hence, attitude constitutes a psychological assessment of behaviour. (Ajzen, 2012). When the human mind assesses perceptions of behaviour, it results in the formation of either a positive or a negative attitude towards that behaviour. Attitudes are a strong indicator of how people will consume food (Choe & Kim, 2018). Setiawati et al. (2019), observed a positive correlation with the purchase of food products. Other studies confirm that consumer attitude towards halal food has a significant and positive influence on purchasing intention. (Bashir, 2019), thus worthy of future study.

Subjective norm

Subjective norm, or social norm, indicates the extent of perceived social pressure either to participate in or abstain from a particular behaviour (Bai et al., 2019). From individuals in their social circle and those integral to their daily existence (Khan et al., 2023). According to Kian, Boon, Fong & Ai (2017), social influence is the impact that other people's behaviours, such as those of friends, family, classmates, co-workers, and other individuals or groups with whom a person is associated. These behaviours can change a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Social influence or subjective norm represents the effect of social pressure on a person's behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Subjective norms play a role in the acceptance of a new product. Numerous researchers have investigated the impact of subjective norm in various contexts, particularly regarding fast food. (Didarloo et al., 2022), meats consumption (Çoker & Linden, 2022), organic foods (Canova et al., 2020) apparel and many more (Garg & Joshi, 2018). Nevertheless, it plays a crucial role in shaping the intention to purchase not only for other products and services but also for halal branding (Pasha, Wahab & Daud, 2019). Given that halal branding is a significant religious criterion to consider before making a purchase, consumers often seek additional subjective norms to authenticate their buying decisions (Aslan, 2023).

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)

Perceived behavioural control refers to people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest (Azizan et al., 2022)**.** Perceived behavioural control involves an individual's judgement towards a behaviour by evaluating the available resources and identifying the opportunities that arise, which are nonetheless influenced by the extent of confidence and perception to behave (Ajzen, 1991). On the other hand, an individual who has control of all these available resources will be able to evaluate the opportunities that arise and could anticipate the obstacles faced if the behaviour is performed (Lim & Rasul, 2022).

PBC was measured based on the previous studies (Basir, 2021). It results in a positive impact on the intention to buy food products. According to Khan et al. (2019) One form of PBC pertains to an individual's assessments of the ease or difficulty in executing a behaviour. PBC has proven to be a substantial predictor of the intention to purchase halal products (Fuadi et al., 2022; Govaerts & Olsen, 2023). Bashir (2019) identified PBC as the third most effective predictor of the intention to purchase halal food, while other studies (Xin & Seo, 2019) Discovered PBC to be the second most significant predictor of halal food, following attitude.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the decision made by customers to purchase a good or service after giving it some thought or even after gaining an appreciation for it (Naseri et al., 2021). Usually, people purchase food items to satisfy their physiological needs for hunger and thirst (Imtiyaz, et al., 2022). They want their food purchases to appear nice to others, which relates to social requirements (Canova et al., 2020).

Intention can affect a consumer's decision to buy in the future. According to Marzuki et al. (2020)Before making the actual purchase, the process was led by the consumer's intention to buy halal products because this intention predicts their future behaviour. Bashir (2019) found that consumers' aim to buy halal food goods significantly affects how they behave when making purchases.

There may be differences between the way products are produced in non-Muslim or Western countries and how they are envisioned from an Islamic standpoint (Rahim et al., 2021). A Muslim needs to be aware of the product categories they utilise and purchase. They must comprehend the halal notion as a result.

Halal Literacy

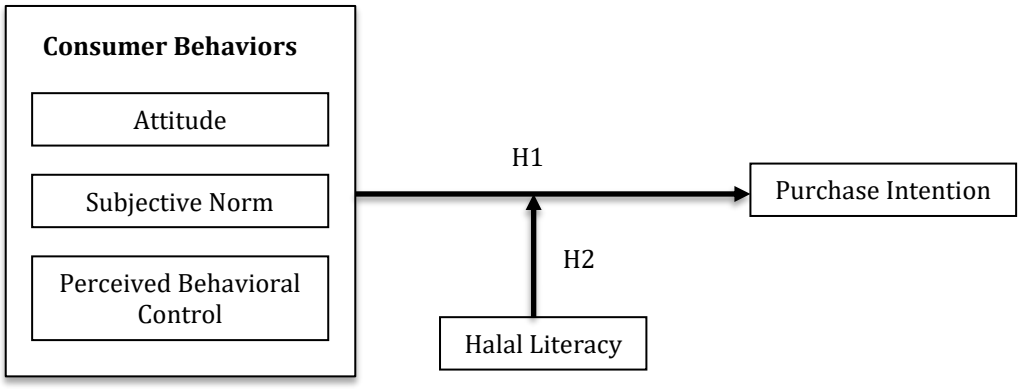
Halal literacy involves the knowledge and comprehension that an individual possesses of a product being consumed (Sahat et al., 2023). According to Shariah law, halal literacy exists as an individual's capacity to incorporate knowledge, awareness, and skills to discern between halal and haram goods and services (Siti Nurunnajwa Shamsudin et al., 2024). It is also characterized as the proficiency to distinguish between permissible (halal) and non-permissible (haram) goods and services, stemming from an enhanced understanding of Islamic law (Salehudin, 2010). The presence of a halal label does not solely determine the categorization of a product as halal or unlawful; it is also essential for consumers to comprehend the nature of the product they are consuming (Nurhasanah & Az Zahra, 2023). Muslim consumers with a deeper understanding of the halal concept will likely be more discerning about their food (Khan et al., 2020).

It serves as a crucial signal for the industry to recognize halal literacy and the factors influencing why consumers opt for a particular product or service (Siti Nurunnajwa Shamsudin et al., 2024). Jae and Delvecchio (2004) connect literacy to the proficiency or capability in utilizing written information. According to Pratama and Hartati (2021), halal literacy significantly impacts the consumption of halal products. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of studies that assess both conceptual and practical aspects of halal literacy (Sardiana, 2020).

Addressing the gap in halal literacy is crucial as many individuals remain unaware of its significance, often overlooking its potential impact on their lifestyle choices" (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024).

Therefore, the framework is hereby postulated,

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework adapted from (Khan et al., 2023)



3. Methodology

Population and sampling

This unit of analysis for this study will be Muslim consumers of halal food products aged between 20 and 50. They are selected based on maturity because the selection of age group as a sampling criterion is based on variations that may exist between age groups of generations (Salehudin, 2013). This study requires Muslim respondents because they are well-recognised as Muslim consumers regarding halal considerations. The respondents who live in the Klang Valley region, which is centred on Kuala Lumpur and encompasses other towns and cities within Selangor, will be selected.

Klang Valley's population is expected to reach nine million by 2023 (Statista, 2023). Therefore, the study will employ a power analysis calculator, G*Power, to determine the required sample size for statistical tests (Memon et al., 2020). Utilising the priori analysis function, the researcher needed to predefine values for the significance level (α), statistical power ($1 - \beta$), and population effect size (f^2) (Cohen, 1988). Considering default settings or pre-existing values ($\alpha = 0.05$, $\beta = 0.95$, and $f^2 = 0.15$) within G*Power version 3.1.9.4, a sample of 146 is considered appropriate for this research. Aiming for a 30% unresponsive outcome or any unforeseen circumstances, the final number of respondents anticipated will be 190.

Data Collection

Data collection for this research will be conducted through questionnaires distributed both on-site and online. The questionnaire will be adapted from prior studies (Bhutto et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2022). A structured questionnaire will be posed to consumers using closed-ended questions to assess attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control towards halal food purchases, with halal literacy as a moderator.

The questionnaire will consist of three sections: Section A will focus on demographic backgrounds, including gender, age, race, and education. Section B will be the consumer behaviour, which consists of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control; Section C will comprise purchase intention and halal literacy, while Section D will be the halal literacy components. The structured questionnaire will utilise a 7-point Likert Scale, chosen for its ease of understanding and broad acceptance among respondents (Malhotra & Dash, 2010).

Screening questions will be posed to the respondents to ensure the questionnaire reaches the correct target group. Accordingly, the following screening questions will be asked: i) Are you a Muslim?; Age – Between the range of 20-50 years old?; iii) Have you ever experienced or eaten any Korean food? If the answer is YES for all questions, the respondent will continue to answer the survey; otherwise, if one of the answers is NO, the respondent will be removed from the sample.

Table 1: Dimensions of Questionnaire

Dimensions	Items	Sources
Section A		
Demographic Background	5 items	Researcher
Section B		
Consumer Behaviours:		
Attitude	5 items	(Jannat & Islam, 2019; Amalia et al., 2020; Iranmanesh et al., 2020)
Subjective Norm	5 items	(Amalia et al., 2020; Iranmanesh et al., 2020; Vanany et al., 2020)
Perceived Behavioural Control	5 items	(Amalia et al., 2020; Iranmanesh et al., 2020; Vanany et al., 2020)
Section C		
Purchase Intention	5 items	(Amalia et al., 2020; Usman et al., 2022)
Section D		
Halal Literacy	5 items	(Salehudin, 2010; Bhutto et al., 2022)

Table 2: Likert Scale

Likert Scale – Measurement of Agreement						
Extremely Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Extremely Disagree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)

The questions will be written in simple dual-language variants, i.e., Malay and English. A language expert will be appointed to endorse the language translation.

Plan for data collection

IBM SPSS Statistics version 20 will be used to examine the data gathered. The data will undergo a screening process to ensure that any unanswered or missing items from the acquired data collection are addressed. Descriptive data analysis will utilise the initial demographic profile of the respondents. After that, a descriptive statistic will be conducted to examine the mean score or central tendency. For statistical techniques, this study will use parametric methods, specifically multiple regression; the relationship between variables will be used whenever necessary to match the study's objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. Finally, moderation analysis will be used to evaluate whether attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control have the same effect on halal literacy. It is used to determine if a moderator modifies the direction or strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Memon et al., 2019).

4. Conclusion

This research will significantly contribute to consumer behaviour, especially halal food purchase intention. As a marketer, knowing the reason behind halal food purchases could improve product positioning and, eventually, product acceptance and purchase.

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