The Moderating Role of Influencer Marketing in the Relationship between Customer Perception and Halal Food Products Purchase Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the moderating effect of influencer marketing on the relationship between customer perceptions and purchase behaviour in Malaysia's halal food sector. The rise of digital platforms, especially social media, has reshaped consumer behaviour, with influencers playing a key role in purchasing decisions. Hence, this study assesses how influencer marketing influences consumer trust, product authenticity, and purchase intentions in a culturally sensitive market. A cross-sectional survey of 404 respondents from four regions in Selangor, Malaysia, was conducted. Findings show that while customer perceptions, specifically trust and product authenticity, influence purchases, their impact varies with influencer engagement. Additionally, influencer marketing significantly moderates this relationship, reinforcing consumer trust and product credibility, and increasing purchase likelihood. These results highlight the growing role of digital endorsements in halal consumer markets, offering insights into how businesses can leverage influencer credibility. By emphasizing the intersection of cultural values and digital marketing, this study contributes to research on halal consumer behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the marketplace, with consumers increasingly relying on social media as a key source of information for purchasing decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In this digital landscape, social media influencers have emerged as pivotal figures, shaping consumer behaviour through persuasive content and credible endorsements (Yang, 2024). Their ability to establish trust and relatability enables them to effectively promote products and services, making influencer

marketing an integral component of modern marketing strategies (Dinh & Lee, 2024; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Marwick, 2015).

While influencer marketing has been extensively examined in general consumer behaviour, its specific impact within niche markets, particularly the halal food industry, remains underexplored (Abu Bakar et al., 2023). Most existing studies focus on conventional consumer markets or broader digital marketing trends, often neglecting the cultural and religious nuances that influence halal food purchasing decisions (Muflih et al., 2021). Given the centrality of religious adherence in halal consumption, understanding how influencer marketing interacts with these values is crucial for developing effective engagement strategies.

A critical factor in the success of influencer marketing is customer engagement, which plays a fundamental role in enhancing brand equity and driving purchasing decisions (Ahmad et al., 2024). Without active consumer participation, influencer marketing loses its effectiveness (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). However, its impact varies across different demographic segments, as consumer trust, authenticity, and alignment with religious principles significantly shape purchasing behaviours (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). This complexity is particularly pronounced in Malaysia, where halal food consumers come from diverse cultural backgrounds with varying preferences and levels of religiosity.

The halal food industry in Malaysia has experienced substantial growth, driven by increasing consumer awareness and demand for halal-certified products (Hashim et al., 2024). Halal certification serves not only as a religious requirement but also as an assurance of quality and hygiene, attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers (Yener, 2022). Despite this growth, challenges persist, particularly regarding the credibility of halal certification, fluctuating consumer trust, and the role of digital influencers in reinforcing halal brand authenticity (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Addressing these challenges requires a deeper understanding of how influencer marketing can strengthen consumer trust and enhance perceptions of product authenticity.

Despite the industry's expansion, limited research has explored how influencer marketing influences customer perceptions and purchasing behaviour in the halal food sector, especially in culturally diverse regions such as Selangor. Prior studies have primarily examined influencer marketing's role in building brand awareness (Agustian et al., 2023) and shaping consumer attitudes (Dinh & Lee, 2024). However, there remains a significant research gap on its moderating effect on consumer trust and decision-making in halal markets. Understanding this dynamic is essential for leveraging influencer marketing to meet consumer needs and drive industry growth effectively.

To bridge this gap, this study aims to: (i) Provide empirical insights into the relationship between customer perceptions, particularly trust and product authenticity, and halal food purchasing behaviour. (ii) Examine how influencer marketing moderates this relationship by enhancing or mitigating the effects of consumer trust and engagement.

By addressing these objectives, this study offers valuable insights for marketers seeking to develop targeted influencer marketing strategies. Additionally, it provides guidance for policymakers in supporting the digital growth of Malaysia's halal food businesses. Through empirical analysis, the study also contributes to academic literature while fostering innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable growth within the halal food industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Halal Food Sector in Malaysia

The halal food industry in Malaysia is deeply rooted in Islamic principles, emphasizing purity, quality, and ethical consumption (Hashim et al., 2024). While it primarily serves the Muslim population, halal products are increasingly attracting non-Muslim consumers due to their rigorous quality and hygiene standards (Yener, 2022). This growing demand underscores the significance of regulatory bodies such as

JAKIM and HDC, which play a crucial role in ensuring compliance with halal certification standards, thereby enhancing consumer trust and strengthening market credibility (Halal Malaysian Portal, 2023).

Recent advancements in halal certification have further transformed the industry, with emerging technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence enhancing traceability and consumer confidence (Belanche et al., 2021). As halal food gains global recognition, Malaysian producers face intensified competition, necessitating continuous innovation and stringent quality control to maintain their market leadership (Rafiki et al., 2023). Additionally, evolving consumer preferences indicate a growing inclination toward convenient, ethically sourced halal products, particularly among younger, digitally savvy consumers who actively engage in online marketplaces (Miftahuddin et al., 2022).

Despite these positive developments, the industry faces persistent challenges, particularly regarding certification lapses and hygiene concerns, which pose risks to consumer trust and industry reputation (Aslan, 2023; Rahim, 2016). The prevalence of fraudulent halal claims has fueled consumer scepticism, amplifying the demand for stricter regulatory enforcement and independent third-party auditing mechanisms (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Furthermore, the rapid expansion of online food delivery services has introduced new complexities in halal verification, raising concerns about cross-contamination and supplier transparency (Ismail, 2025). Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach, including stringent regulatory oversight, regular audits, and the integration of technological solutions to uphold consumer confidence and ensure the sustainable growth of Malaysia's halal food industry.

Influencer Marketing and Customer Perceptions

Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviour, with social media influencers playing a pivotal role in modern marketing strategies (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers are valued for their authenticity, relatability, and ability to establish trust, making them highly effective in engaging audiences (Yang, 2024). By leveraging platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, influencers create persuasive, timely, and relatable content that drives consumer engagement and influences purchasing decisions (Levin, 2020).

However, the effectiveness of influencers in shaping consumer perceptions is not uniform. Key determinants such as trustworthiness, engagement metrics, and content relevance significantly impact their influence (Dinh & Lee, 2024). As per Sporl-Wang et al. (2024) and Levin (2020), consumers are more likely to respond positively to influencers who demonstrate credibility, transparency, and alignment with their values. This factor is particularly relevant in niche markets like the halal food industry, where consumers seek influencers who consistently uphold halal principles and advocate for ethical consumption practices (Jannat, & Islam, 2019).

When influencer messaging aligns with brand values, it can amplify marketing outcomes by reinforcing consumer trust and fostering engagement (Chopra, 2021). Conversely, a disconnect between influencer credibility and brand messaging can diminish their impact, underscoring the importance of authenticity in driving positive consumer responses. Despite these insights, limited research has examined the specific role of influencers in shaping halal consumer preferences, particularly in Malaysia. While existing studies highlight influencer marketing's role in enhancing brand awareness (Agustian et al., 2023; Belanche et al., 2021), its moderating influence on halal food purchasing behaviour remains an area requiring further empirical investigation.

Customer Perceptions and Purchase Behavior

Customer perception is shaped by a combination of product attributes, marketing communications, and personal experiences, all of which influence purchasing decisions (Wang et al., 2023). Positive perceptions such as trust, perceived quality, and brand reputation enhance purchase intentions, whereas negative perceptions can deter consumer engagement (Lu & Chen, 2021).). Purchase behaviour, in turn, represents

the outcome of a complex decision-making process involving product evaluation, comparison, and the final act of purchase (Nasti et al., 2024).

In the halal food sector, consumer trust in certification and adherence to religious values are pivotal determinants of purchasing decisions (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). With growing consumer awareness, brands are increasingly evaluated based on their halal transparency, and digital platforms have emerged as primary sources of information (Qizwini et al., 2024). The credibility of halal claims plays a crucial role in influencing purchase behaviour, as consumers prioritize brands that uphold religious compliance and ethical sourcing (Ismail, 2025).

Despite extensive research on the influence of religious values on halal purchases, there remains a significant gap in understanding the role of digital endorsements, particularly influencer marketing, in shaping consumer perceptions (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Hence, the interaction between influencer credibility, perceived authenticity, and consumer decision-making warrants further investigation to understand how influencer marketing reinforces or challenges halal consumer trust.

Critical Analysis of Existing Literature

Existing research highlights the increasing demand for halal food, driven by heightened consumer awareness, evolving dietary preferences, and stringent regulatory certification processes (Muflih et al., 2021). The expansion of the halal food industry has been fueled by a growing Muslim population, increased globalization, and a rising demand for ethically sourced products (Widyantoro et al., 2019). However, despite this rapid growth, regional-specific studies, particularly in Selangor, Malaysia, remain scarce. Many existing studies tend to generalize halal consumer behaviour, often overlooking the demographic, socio-economic, and cultural variations that may significantly influence purchasing patterns. Hence, understanding these regional differences is crucial for tailoring marketing strategies and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the halal food sector.

Similarly, while influencer marketing has been widely recognized for enhancing brand trust, consumer engagement, and purchase intentions (Dinh & Lee, 2024; Sporl-Wang et al., 2024; Lou & Yuan, 2019), its specific application within the halal market remains underexplored. The rise of social media has transformed how consumers interact with brands, with influencers playing a key role in shaping perceptions and driving purchasing decisions. However, most research to date has focused on the impact of influencer marketing on conventional brands, leaving a critical gap in understanding how influencers shape consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase behaviour within the halal market (Agustian et al., 2023). Given that trust and religious credibility are pivotal factors in halal purchasing decisions, it is essential to explore how influencer marketing strategies can be optimized to align with halal consumers' expectations and ethical considerations.

Furthermore, while religious values are well-established determinants of halal purchase intentions (Koc et al., 2025), there is a lack of empirical studies examining the intersection of influencer marketing and halal consumer behaviour. Existing research, such as Rafiki et al. (2023) and Aslan (2023), primarily examines the role of religious beliefs in shaping consumer preferences but lacks analysis of how digital endorsements, social media narratives, and influencer credibility impact halal purchasing decisions. Hence, addressing these gaps is essential for developing targeted marketing strategies that align with cultural and religious sensitivities, ensuring that halal brands effectively engage their audience while maintaining trust and authenticity. A deeper exploration of these dynamics will not only enhance academic understanding but also provide practical insights for businesses, policymakers, and marketers looking to leverage influencer marketing in the halal food industry.

Table 1. Summary of Gaps in Literature

Focus Area	Existing Findings	Research Gap	Relevance
Halal food consumer behaviour	Growth in demand driven by Muslim awareness and halal certification (Muflih et al., 2021)	Limited studies on customer perception in the halal food sector in Selangor	Understanding regional-specific factors shaping customer behavior
Influencer marketing impact	Influencers enhance brand trust and engagement (Dinh & Lee, 2024; Lou & Yuan, 2019)	Lack of studies examining influencers' role in moderating customer perceptions in the halal food market	Identifying how influencers impact halal-specific consumer preferences
Purchase behaviour and halal values	Religious values shape halal purchase intentions (Koc et al., 2025)	Limited exploration of the synergy between influencer marketing and halal-related customer behaviour	Understanding the dynamic interplay for informed marketing strategies

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature review, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H_1: Customer perception, particularly in terms of trust and authenticity, significantly influences purchase behaviour in the halal food sector.

H_2: Influencer marketing moderates the relationship between customer perception and purchase behaviour by enhancing trust and consumer engagement.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study integrates two key theories to examine the relationship between customer perception, influencer marketing, and purchasing behaviour.

The first, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), posits that behaviour is primarily driven by intentions, which are influenced by individual attitudes and subjective norms. In the context of halal food, consumer attitudes toward halal certification, societal expectations regarding religious adherence, and perceived authenticity play a crucial role in shaping purchase intentions (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). Prior research suggests that consumers are more inclined to purchase halal food when they perceive it as compliant with Islamic principles and trust the certification process (Loussaief et al., 2024; Miftahuddin et al., 2022).

The second theory, Social Influence Theory (Cialdini, 1984), examines how social factors, such as influencers, impact individual behaviour. This theory highlights two primary mechanisms: normative influence, where individuals conform to societal expectations, and informational influence, where individuals rely on credible sources for decision-making (Levin, 2020). In the halal market, influencers act as key opinion leaders, reinforcing halal values and shaping consumer choices by providing trusted recommendations (Qizwini et al., 2024).

By integrating these two theories, this study establishes a comprehensive framework for analysing how influencer marketing moderate's customer perceptions and purchasing behaviour within Selangor's halal food market. The combination of TRA and Social Influence Theory offers insights into both internal motivational factors (religious beliefs, trust) and external social influences (influencer credibility, peer influence) that drive halal purchasing decisions (Dinh & Lee, 2024).
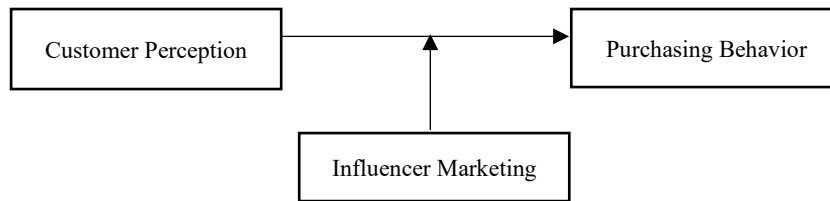
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Fig. 1. The framework of this study

Adapted from: Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and Social Influence Theory (Cialdini, 1984)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design, following Setia (2016) to collect data from a statistically determined sample of 404 respondents at a single point in time. A cross-sectional design is particularly suitable for examining relationships between variables within a defined timeframe without requiring longitudinal follow-up (Wang & Cheng, 2020). The sample size of 404 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for selecting an appropriate sample from a known population, ensuring sufficient statistical power and generalizability of the findings. To enhance response rates and address potential respondent queries, the survey was administered face-to-face by trained enumerators, thereby mitigating common response biases associated with self-administered surveys (Nanes & Haim, 2021).

Survey Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data, focusing on four key dimensions: (i) demographic information, (ii) customer perceptions, (iii) purchase behaviour, and (iv) influencer marketing. The demographic section included variables such as age, gender, education level, and income.

Customer perceptions were assessed using validated measurement scales adapted from prior studies to evaluate trust, perceived product authenticity, and satisfaction with halal food products (Ismail, 2025). These constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), adhering to best practices for consumer perception studies (DeVellis, 2017).

Purchase behaviour was measured using items that examined purchase frequency, decision-making criteria, and brand loyalty, drawing from established consumer behaviour literature (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). Influencer marketing constructs focused on influencer credibility, authenticity, and alignment with halal values, incorporating validated items from Sporl-Wang et al. (2024) and Lou and Yuan (2019). Before full-scale deployment, the questionnaire underwent pre-testing with 20 respondents to refine clarity, enhance reliability, and ensure the robustness of the survey instrument (Anupama et al., 2023).

Sampling Procedure

A stratified random sampling approach was employed to ensure a representative sample from the selected research areas. The final sample consisted of 404 respondents aged 18 and above, drawn from four key locations in Kajang: Bandar Teknologi, Bandar Kajang, Bandar Sungai Long, and Bandar Batu 10 Cheras, with a combined total population of 484,488 according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2020).

These locations were selected due to their demographic diversity, significant presence of Muslim consumers engaged in halal food purchasing, and logistical feasibility for field data collection. The

stratification process was based on demographic indicators such as income level and religious affiliation, ensuring that the sample accurately represented the broader halal food consumer market in Selangor (Taherdoost, 2016a).

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted between September 2 and September 12, 2024, using face-to-face survey distribution. Trained enumerators facilitated the survey administration, ensuring consistency in data collection and minimizing interviewer bias (Taherdoost, 2021). The decision to employ face-to-face distribution over online surveys was driven by the need to improve response accuracy, clarify ambiguities in survey questions, and enhance participation rates, particularly among less digitally active respondents (Darusalam & Hussin, 2019).

Strict ethical considerations were upheld throughout the data collection process. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before their participation, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The study adhered to research ethics guidelines centred by Miller & Williams (2011), ensuring the protection of participants' rights.

Systematic Literature Review for Methodological Context

To refine the survey instrument and develop a robust hypothesis framework, a systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted following Kitchenham's (2004) protocol. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, the SLR aimed to systematically identify validated constructs and ensure that survey items accurately captured key dimensions of consumer perception, purchase behaviour, and influencer marketing (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022).

Relevant articles were sourced from high-impact academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using Boolean search terms such as "halal food market," "customer perception," "influencer marketing," and "purchase behaviour." The selection criteria prioritised peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2024 to incorporate recent empirical findings.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using SPSS version 28, following established best practices in consumer behaviour research (Abbott, 2014). The analysis process was carried out systematically to ensure accuracy and reliability in deriving insights from the data.

First, reliability and validity testing were conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each construct to confirm that the survey items reliably captured the intended constructs (Taherdoost, 2016b). In addition, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to examine the dimensionality and construct validity of the survey items, ensuring that they accurately measured the underlying theoretical constructs (Taherdoost et al., 2014).

Next, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents, the distribution of responses, and key purchasing behaviours. This step provided an overview of the sample composition and initial insights into consumer patterns, following the approach recommended by Darusalam and Hussin (2019). The descriptive analysis helped in identifying trends and characteristics relevant to the study.

To further investigate relationships between key variables, multiple regression analysis was employed. This method was used to examine the impact of customer perception and influencer marketing on purchasing behaviour. Regression analysis was selected due to its effectiveness in modelling consumer decision-making and digital marketing dynamics (Hair et al., 2019). Through this approach, the study was able to determine the extent to which consumer perceptions and influencer marketing influence purchasing decisions in the halal food sector.

Additionally, moderation analysis was conducted to explore the role of influencer marketing as a moderating variable. Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS was utilised to examine the interaction effects between customer perception and purchase behaviour. This analysis provided insights into whether and how influencer marketing strengthens or weakens these relationships (Hayes, 2018).

To ensure the robustness and reliability of the findings, all statistical analyses were conducted at a 95% confidence level, with significance thresholds set at $p < 0.05$ (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). This rigorous methodological approach enhances the validity of the study and ensures that the results generate meaningful insights for halal food marketing strategies.

FINDINGS

Reliability and Validity Assessment

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which measures the internal consistency of the constructs. A threshold of 0.70 was used to determine acceptable reliability (Taherdoost, 2016b). The results as shown in Table 2 indicate that all constructs exceeded this threshold, confirming their reliability.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha Values)

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
CP	25	0.87
IM	19	0.82
CPB	12	0.85

Additionally, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to evaluate construct validity and uncover the underlying factor structure of the measurement items. Following the guidelines of Taherdoost et al. (2014), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were employed to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

- **KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy:** 0.84 (indicating strong sampling adequacy)

- **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity:** $\chi^2 = 4321.56$, $p < 0.001$ (confirming that factor analysis is appropriate)

Descriptive Insights

The findings reveal significant demographic and behavioural trends that offer valuable insights into consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviours within the halal food market. The study identifies young to middle-aged adults as the primary consumer base, with the largest proportion of respondents aged 29–39 years (47.5%), followed by those aged 18–28 (31.4%). This demographic trend underscores the growing influence of millennials and younger generations in driving demand for halal food, aligning with previous studies that highlight their preference for ethically sourced and religiously compliant products (Loussaief et al., 2024).

The gender distribution is nearly balanced, with 51.7% male and 48.3% female respondents, indicating that halal food consumption is not gender-specific but appeals equally to both men and women. Additionally, while Muslims constitute the majority (68.1%) of the sample, a notable percentage of non-Muslim consumers also engage with halal food products, including Hindus (10.1%), Buddhists (8.9%), and Christians (7.7%). This finding reinforces the notion that halal certification is widely perceived as a

benchmark for food quality, hygiene, and ethical sourcing, even among non-Muslim consumers (Yener, 2022).

Employment and income distribution further highlight the economic characteristics of halal food consumers. A significant proportion of respondents (41.8%) are employed in the private sector, with most falling within the moderate-income bracket. This reinforces prior findings that working-class consumers are key players in the halal food market, with purchasing decisions influenced by religious considerations, product authenticity, brand reputation, and affordability (Jannat & Islam, 2019).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-28 years old	127	31.4
29-39 years old	192	47.5
40-50 years old	60	14.9
> 51 years old	25	6.2
Race		
Islam	275	68.1
Buddhism	36	8.9
Christianity	31	7.7
Hinduism	41	10.1
Others	21	5.2
Monthly Income		
< RM2,500	108	26.7
RM2,500 – RM3,969	154	38.1
RM3,970 – RM5,439	78	19.3
RM5,440 – RM6,909	36	8.9
RM6,910 – RM8,379	19	4.7
RM8,380 – RM9,849	8	2.0
> RM11,319	1	0.2
Occupation		
Public Sector	77	19.1
Private Sector	169	41.8
Self-Employed	75	18.6
Housewives	34	8.4
Retired	14	3.5
Full-time Student	17	4.2
Others	18	4.5

Furthermore, consumer attitudes toward halal certification emphasize its critical role in purchasing decisions. As summarized in Table 3, a substantial 64.1% of respondents consider halal certification to be "very important" when selecting food products. This underscores the centrality of religious compliance, certification transparency, and brand credibility in shaping consumer trust and purchasing behaviour. Given these insights, halal food brands must strengthen their certification processes and communicate these assurances effectively to maintain consumer confidence.

The study also highlights the growing dominance of social media in influencing purchasing decisions, particularly through TikTok (40.8%), which emerges as the most preferred platform, followed by Facebook (19.8%) and YouTube (19.6%). This finding aligns with global digital marketing trends, which suggest that TikTok's short-form video format fosters high engagement and trust, particularly among younger audiences (Barta et al., 2023). The popularity of influencer-driven marketing on TikTok suggests that brands should prioritize short, visually engaging content to effectively attract and engage halal-conscious consumers.

The significant role of influencers in shaping consumer preferences is further evident, as 76.5% of respondents follow influencers promoting halal food products, and 70.5% find influencer marketing both appealing and motivating for their purchases. These findings confirm that influencers serve as key opinion leaders, reinforcing halal values and influencing consumer trust (Chopra, 2021). Moreover, 57.7% of respondents perceive influencer marketing as more effective than traditional advertising, supporting Dinh and Lee (2024) that suggest peer recommendations hold greater influence over purchasing decisions compared to conventional advertisements.

Collectively, these insights reinforce the transformative impact of digital platforms and influencer marketing in the halal food industry. Businesses and marketers must leverage these evolving consumer behaviours by developing strategic, authenticity-driven marketing campaigns that align with halal values, enhance brand credibility, and effectively engage target audiences.

Table 3. Respondents' Perception

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. When purchasing food products, how important it is for you that they are certified halal?		
Very important	259	64.1
Important	52	12.9
Neutral	68	16.8
Not very important	19	4.7
Not important at all	6	15
2. What are social media platforms that you spend more time on?		
X (Twitter)	28	6.9
Instagram	52	12.9
YouTube	79	19.6
Facebook	80	19.8
TikTok	165	40.8

3. Do the influencers you follow promote any halal food product or halal food brands?

Yes	309	76.5
No	13	3.2
Not sure	82	20.3

4. Does influencer marketing content appeal to you and make you want to check out or buy that halal food product?

Yes	285	70.5
No	28	6.9
Not sure	91	22.5

5. Do you think influencer marketing is more effective than traditional marketing?

More impactful	233	57.7
Moderately impactful	74	18.3
Equally impactful	69	17.1
Not impactful	28	6.9

Regression and Moderation Analysis

The analysis confirms significant relationships between customer perceptions, influencer marketing, and purchasing behaviour, offering critical insights into the determinants of halal food consumption. A strong positive correlation exists between Customer Perception (CP) and Customer Purchase Behaviour (CPB), providing empirical support for Hypothesis 1. Regression analysis reveals that customer perceptions account for 52.6% of the variance in purchasing behaviour ($R^2 = 0.526$, $\beta = 0.646$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the essential role of trust, product authenticity, and halal certification in shaping consumer decision-making. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of perceived credibility and religious compliance in halal marketing (Koc et al., 2025). Table 4 summarizes the regression analysis, demonstrating that trust, authenticity, and certification significantly shape purchase intent.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Summary

Variable	R	R-square	F	Sig.
CP*CPB	0.725	0.526	446.035	0.000
(CP*IM) → CPB	0.785	0.616	322.313	0.000

Furthermore, the role of influencer marketing as a moderating factor in consumer decision-making is empirically validated, supporting Hypothesis 2. Introducing influencer marketing as a moderator increases the model's explanatory power to 61.6% ($R^2 = 0.616$, $\beta = 0.142$, $t = 6.235$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that influencer endorsements enhance consumer trust and engagement. This finding aligns with prior studies indicating that credibility, relatability, and authenticity are critical in driving marketing effectiveness (Dinh

& Lee, 2024; Agustian et al., 2023). Influencers serve as trust intermediaries, bridging the gap between consumer scepticism and brand credibility, thereby reinforcing the impact of customer perceptions on purchasing behaviour.

Beyond its moderating effect, influencer marketing also exerts an independent influence on purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.453$, $t = 8.232$, $p < 0.001$), reaffirming its pivotal role in shaping consumer preferences and purchase intent. This underscores the effectiveness of social media-driven marketing strategies, where influencer recommendations serve as both a reinforcing factor for consumer perceptions and a direct driver of purchase decisions, particularly in trust-sensitive markets (Catic & Poturak, 2022).

These findings underscore the strategic importance of influencer marketing campaigns in promoting halal food products, particularly on high-engagement platforms such as TikTok. Given their perceived credibility and social influence, influencers act as powerful catalysts for consumer decision-making, amplifying brand messaging while fostering stronger consumer-brand relationships. Table 5 presents the moderating effect of influencer marketing, further confirming that influencers significantly enhance the impact of customer perceptions on purchasing behaviour.

Table 5. Moderation Analysis

Relationship	Beta	SE	*t*-value	*p*-value
Moderating Effect (CP*IM) → CPB	0.142	0.023	6.235	0.000
CP → CPB	0.646	0.031	21.120	0.000
IM → CPB	0.453	0.055	8.232	0.000

SE: Standard Error, *** $p < 0.001$

DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Key Insights and Discussion

This study highlights the critical interplay between customer perceptions, influencer marketing, and purchasing behaviour in the halal food sector. Trust in halal certification and product authenticity emerged as primary drivers of consumer purchase decisions, reflecting the deep-rooted influence of religious and cultural values on consumer behaviour (Jannat, & Islam, 2019). Consumers perceive halal certification as a crucial indicator of authenticity, reinforcing their confidence in product compliance with halal standards (Loussaief et al., 2024). This increasing consumer emphasis on halal authenticity aligns with global industry trends, where advancements such as blockchain technology and AI-driven certification systems are enhancing supply chain transparency and trust (Yekeen et al., 2024). Notably, the growing interest in halal-certified products among non-Muslim consumers suggests a broader shift; halal is now perceived not just as a religious obligation but as a symbol of quality, hygiene, and ethical sourcing (Noor et al., 2023).

Beyond product authenticity, influencer marketing emerged as a key moderating factor in consumer perceptions. Influencers function as cultural intermediaries, bridging the gap between brand messaging and consumer expectations by leveraging their relatability and social proof to enhance trust (Dinh & Lee, 2024). By consistently reinforcing halal values, influencers contribute to strengthening product authenticity while catering to the emotional and cultural needs of their audience (Pratama, 2023). However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing hinges on consumer trust. Recent studies indicate that credibility issues, commercialization, and ethical concerns regarding paid sponsorships have fueled growing scepticism among digital consumers (Agustian et al., 2023). Over-commercialization, where influencers endorse multiple brands within a short period, risks diminishing perceived authenticity, ultimately eroding consumer trust (Levin, 2020). Furthermore, ethical concerns arise when influencers misrepresent their commitment to halal principles, raising doubts about the sincerity of their endorsements (Belanche et al.,

2021). To mitigate these risks, brands must carefully select influencers whose values align with their halal positioning, ensuring that their endorsements maintain credibility and safeguard brand reputation.

Social media platforms play an increasingly central role in consumer engagement, particularly among younger demographics who rely on digital channels for product recommendations and brand interactions. This study identifies TikTok as the most influential platform, surpassing Facebook and YouTube in driving engagement among halal-conscious consumers. This trend aligns with global marketing insights, where TikTok's short-form, algorithm-driven content fosters higher engagement and virality than traditional advertising approaches (Barta et al., 2023). However, content format significantly impacts marketing effectiveness. Personal storytelling, where influencers share authentic experiences with halal brands, generates stronger emotional connections with audiences. Live-stream product demonstrations and unboxing videos enhance transparency, reducing consumer uncertainty and reinforcing brand credibility. Meanwhile, short-form video reviews (under one minute) cater to modern attention spans, facilitating quick and informed decision-making (Agustian et al., 2023). These findings underscore the importance of platform-specific content strategies that align with consumer engagement preferences.

Implications for Practice and Theory

The findings of this study offer significant implications for both business practitioners and academics. From a marketing perspective, businesses seeking to strengthen their position in the halal food sector must adopt a strategic approach to influencer collaborations. Micro-influencers, with follower counts between 10,000 and 50,000, tend to generate higher engagement rates and deeper trust compared to macro-influencers, who, despite having broader reach, often struggle with authenticity (Chopra, 2021). Given that halal-conscious consumers prioritize trust, brands should focus on engaging micro-influencers who align with halal values and have an engaged niche following. Additionally, marketing strategies should emphasize digital platforms with high engagement potential, particularly TikTok and Instagram, where visually-driven content resonates strongly with younger halal consumers. Rather than relying solely on engagement metrics such as likes and shares, businesses should incorporate conversion rates, customer retention, and brand sentiment analysis to measure the true effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns (Belanche et al., 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of how influencer marketing intersects with culturally specific consumer behaviours. The findings provide empirical support for the role of trust and relatability in fostering purchase intentions, reinforcing the applicability of social influence theories to digital marketing in niche markets (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The moderating effect of influencer marketing suggests that businesses operating in culturally sensitive industries can benefit from tailored marketing approaches that emphasize authenticity and alignment with consumer values (Leung et al., 2022).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights, it has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design captures consumer behaviour at a single point in time, making it difficult to assess long-term shifts in consumer trust and influencer effectiveness. Given that trust in influencers can fluctuate due to social media trends, influencer scandals, and regulatory changes, longitudinal studies are needed to examine how consumer sentiment evolves (Levin, 2020). Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to track how engagement with halal influencers affects consumer trust and purchase loyalty over an extended period.

Another limitation lies in the study's geographic scope, as it focuses on consumers in Kajang, Selangor, limiting its applicability to broader populations. As per Razak et al. (2025), cultural and economic differences across regions may significantly impact halal purchasing behaviour. For instance, urban consumers with higher disposable incomes may prioritize brand prestige, while rural consumers may emphasize affordability and certification transparency (Qizwini et al., 2024). Thus, future research should

explore halal consumer behaviour across diverse geographic and economic contexts to capture a more nuanced understanding of market dynamics.

Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data presents the risk of social desirability bias, where respondents may overstate their engagement with halal-certified products and influencer marketing (Shah et al., 2024). Therefore, future studies should incorporate alternative research methods, such as experimental designs or in-depth qualitative research, to validate consumer behaviour more accurately. Moreover, this study primarily focuses on purchasing behaviour without examining brand loyalty or post-purchase satisfaction. In this regard, future research should investigate whether influencer marketing leads to sustained brand loyalty, repeat purchases, and long-term consumer retention.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study underscores the importance of customer perceptions and influencer marketing in shaping purchasing behaviour within the halal food sector. The findings confirm that influencer marketing plays a critical role in bridging the gap between product offerings and consumer expectations by enhancing trust and reinforcing brand authenticity. However, the long-term implications of influencer credibility and consumer trust remain areas that warrant further exploration.

To advance research in this domain, future studies should focus on two primary gaps. First, the long-term impact of influencer marketing on brand trust and consumer loyalty requires further investigation. Given that influencer credibility can erode over time due to over-commercialization and changing consumer expectations, it is essential to assess whether halal influencers maintain long-term influence on consumer behaviour. Second, cross-cultural differences in halal consumer behaviour should be examined. Cultural, religious, and economic differences may shape consumer perceptions of halal marketing differently across various regions, requiring more comparative research across global markets.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that influencer marketing, when aligned with cultural and religious values, can significantly enhance consumer trust and purchasing behaviour in the halal food sector. By leveraging credible influencers, optimizing digital content strategies, and adopting robust measurement frameworks, businesses can strengthen their competitive positioning in an evolving halal market landscape.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors affirm that this study was conducted without any self-benefits, commercial, or financial conflicts. Furthermore, the authors declare the absence of any conflicting interests with the funders or other parties involved in the study.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Nur-Iman Hashim drafted and refined the article, ensuring clarity and coherence while leading the literature review. Nadzirah Mohd Fauzi developed the research concept, provided guidance, and approved the submission. Ummi Munirah Syuhada Mohamad Zan conducted the statistical analysis and interpreted the results.

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