

Consumer Perceptions of Unauthorised Halal Signage: A Study of “Muslim-Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard” and “Serve No Pork” Labels in Miri, Sarawak

Nur Mashitah Shahrman¹,

*Loob Integrated Sdn Bhd, Tealive Permy Mall Miri Sarawak, 98000 Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia
nurmashitahshahrman@gmail.com*

Nur Hafizah Harun^{2*},

*Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
hafizahharun@uitm.edu.my*

Muhammad Syukri Mohd Ashmir Wong³,

*Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
syukri@uitm.edu.my*

Farrah Payyadhah Borhan⁴,

*Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
farrahborhan@uitm.edu.my*

Norazlina Mamat⁵

*Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
norazlinamamat@uitm.edu.my*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 28 February 2026

Revised 13 March 2026

Accepted 16 March 2026

Published 31 March 2026

Keywords:

Consumer Perception

Halal

Muslim-Friendly

No Pork No Lard

Serve No Pork

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.24191/jhsmr.v2i1.10887>

ABSTRACT

The use of terms such as “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork” in food premises is often ambiguous due to the absence of clear definitions or official recognition. These labels are commonly adopted by food entrepreneurs in Malaysia, particularly in regions with diverse cultural backgrounds, such as Sarawak, where they are frequently used as a marketing strategy to attract Muslim customers. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate consumers’ understanding of the halal concept, determine the level of consumer awareness regarding the terms “Muslim Friendly,” “No Pork No Lard,” and “Serve No Pork” used at food premises in Miri, Sarawak, and examine how these terms influence consumers’ purchasing decisions. Data were collected through online questionnaires involving 465 respondents. The responses were analysed using descriptive statistics with SPSS version 27.0 serving as the primary analytical tool. Findings revealed that while consumers possess some general awareness of the halal concept, many remain unclear about the precise meaning of terms such as “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork”. A significant number of respondents mistakenly assumed that these terms signify full compliance with halal standards, which is not necessarily accurate. This paper

* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* hafizahharun@uitm.edu.my

highlights the importance of clearer labelling practices and responsible marketing by food operators in marketing their food premises and products. Furthermore, the findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and halal authorities on strengthening guidelines for halal food labelling to protect consumer rights and uphold religious sensitivities.

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is renowned for its rich diversity of races, religions, and cultures. Its multi-ethnic population, comprising Malays, Chinese, Indians, and indigenous communities from Sabah and Sarawak, generally lives in harmony. Within the Muslim community, adherence to halal food practices is a key priority as it is directly tied to religious obligations. Consequently, the demand for halal food is not solely the responsibility of individual Muslims but also a matter of concern for food business operators, particularly in multicultural areas such as Miri, Sarawak.

In Miri, a wide range of food establishments operate to cater to consumers from different backgrounds. To attract Muslim customers, some of these premises display labels such as “Muslim Friendly,” “No Pork No Lard,” and “Serve No Pork” on their signboards or menus. However, the use of such terms often generates uncertainty and confusion. This is because the terms lack clear definitions and are not regulated by an authoritative body such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). For instance, the label “No Pork No Lard” merely signifies that the food excludes pork and lard. However, it does not necessarily ensure the halal status of other ingredients, such as chicken, beef, or even the seasonings used. Similarly, the term “Muslim Friendly” can carry multiple interpretations and does not necessarily guarantee full compliance with halal requirements.

Such ambiguity can lead to misunderstandings among Muslim consumers who wish to maintain a diet in line with Islamic law. Some consumers may perceive these terms as equivalent to halal certification, when in reality they may not be. This confusion can undermine consumer confidence in the food offered and ultimately influence their dining decisions. Therefore, this study aims to assess the level of understanding among Muslim consumers in Miri, Sarawak, regarding the terms “Muslim Friendly,” “No Pork No Lard,” and “Serve No Pork.” The findings of this research are expected to guide consumers in making more informed decisions and encourage food premise operators to act more responsibly in using labels that may affect religious sensitivities.

Definition of Halal

The term halal originates from Arabic, meaning “permissible” under Islamic law. In the context of food, it refers to items that are lawful for Muslim consumption in accordance with the guidelines prescribed in the Qur’an and Hadith (Nora, 2024). While the concept of halal is rooted in Islamic jurisprudence concerning the lawful (halal) and unlawful (haram), its scope extends beyond legal rulings to encompass health, hygiene, and safety considerations, including systematic management of production processes (Abdul Salam, 2023). Compliance with Shariah principles is required at every stage—covering preparation, processing, storage, packaging, handling, and transportation (Yusoff, 2017). Moreover, Muslims are explicitly prohibited from consuming blood, alcohol, pork, carnivorous animals, and meat products not derived from proper Islamic slaughtering practices (Ali Abdallah, 2021). Within this framework, the notion of *syubhah* arises, denoting ambiguity regarding halal status. Food categorised as *syubhah* is to be avoided due to uncertainty about its permissibility (Sabri, 2020).

Definition of The Terms

Muslim Friendly

In today's culinary landscape, we often encounter terms that appear familiar yet carry specific nuances, such as "Muslim Friendly Restaurant." Restaurant owners and industry stakeholders commonly use this label to highlight their efforts to accommodate Muslim customers. It signals awareness of Muslim needs and cultural sensitivities, and the provision of suitable dining options for this demographic. The phrase also draws a connection to Islamic Food Law, as "Muslim-friendly" may imply the availability of halal dishes, the avoidance of non-halal ingredients, or a general recognition of Islamic dietary requirements (Crescentrating, 2021).

Furthermore, the resemblance between these terms reflects an attempt to appeal to Muslim preferences; however, unlike halal certification, they lack the assurance of an official, rigorous verification process. For example, the label "Muslim Friendly" does not necessarily comply fully with established halal standards. Such terminology carries the risk of misinterpretation, as Muslim consumers may mistakenly assume that the premises are entirely Halal-compliant when, in reality, only certain aspects are observed. Hence, Muslim patrons encountering a "Muslim Friendly Restaurant" must exercise discretion. While the term signals some consideration for Muslim needs, it also highlights the lack of full compliance with halal requirements (Crescentrating, 2019).

No Pork No Lard

The phrase "No Pork, No Lard" is commonly used in food labelling and restaurant menus to indicate that the products or dishes do not contain specific ingredients often avoided for religious, health, or personal reasons. The expression consists of two main parts. First, "No Pork" signifies that the food is free from pork or any pork-derived ingredients. This is particularly significant for individuals whose religions prohibit pork consumption, such as Muslims and Jews, as well as for those who choose to avoid pork for other reasons. Secondly, "No Lard" highlights the absence of lard, which is fat derived from pigs. Its exclusion is important not only for people who avoid pork products but also for vegetarians and individuals monitoring their saturated fat intake. Traditionally, many food products use lard in cooking or as a fat source, making this label an important assurance (Hana, 2024).

Serve No Pork

The term carries the meaning that a food or product does not contain pork meat or any pork-derived ingredients. This is particularly significant for individuals whose religions forbid the consumption of pork, such as Islam and Judaism, as well as for those who choose to avoid pork for personal or health reasons (Hana, 2024). Therefore, "Serve No Pork" indicates that the food or products offered are free from pork and pork-based ingredients.

Halal Issues in Food Premises

In recent years, many food establishments have adopted "No Pork" labels as a substitute for an official halal logo. At first glance, such signage may appear convincing to Muslim consumers, as it suggests that the premises do not serve pork, which is explicitly prohibited in Islam. However, as highlighted by Izham et al. (2022), restaurants displaying "No Pork" or "Pork Free" signs do not necessarily have valid halal certification. This ambiguity arises from inconsistencies in product offerings and operational practices. For instance, a premise may sell alcoholic beverages in one section while simultaneously maintaining strict separation in another, where slaughtered chicken, dedicated utensils, and segregated cooking equipment

are used. Despite such efforts, the overall operation cannot be considered fully compliant with halal requirements. As noted by Sinar Harian (2020), the adoption of the “Pork Free” label indicates a lack of comprehensive halal assurance, as the establishment does not fully adhere to halal principles. Consequently, this practice has the potential to create confusion, particularly among Muslim consumers who may mistakenly equate the label with halal certification.

According to Director General Othman Mustapha (2016), the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) is cognizant of the ongoing polemic concerning the misuse of terms such as “Pork Free” and “No Pork” by certain food premises and restaurants that are not certified halal. The use of such phrases may lead to confusion among Malaysian consumers, particularly Muslims. Othman emphasised the importance of consumers being vigilant and discerning when selecting food establishments. To facilitate this, the halal certification application process has been streamlined through the MYeHalal system. At the same time, JAKIM continues to expand access to information on halal-certified products for the Muslim community. In addressing and monitoring this issue, JAKIM has committed to collaborating with the State Islamic Religious Departments and the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (Divakaran, 2023). Such measures are intended to strengthen consumer confidence by ensuring that the terminology used by food premises is properly regulated, thereby preventing arbitrary or misleading usage.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive research design to address the research objective. This research applied convenience sampling because it specifically targeted consumers residing in Miri, Sarawak. According to data from OpenDOSM (2023), a continuation of the 2020 Malaysian Population and Housing Census (MyCensus), Miri's population is recorded as 248,877, representing the total number of residents in the district. The sample size for this study was determined using the method proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). To facilitate data collection, the researcher focused on consumers residing in Miri, Sarawak, who dine at food premises or have previously visited such premises. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a minimum sample size of 384 residents was required for Miri, Sarawak. However, a total of 465 respondents has participated in this study.

This study utilised a questionnaire as the main research instrument. The questionnaire was constructed based on previous studies and comprises 4 sections. Table 1 below shows the questionnaire's division.

Table 1. Division of the questionnaire

Section	Number of items	Description
A	6	Demographic information
B	8	Consumer understanding of the halal concept
C	5	Consumer awareness of the terms "Muslim Friendly", "No Pork No Lard", and "Serve No Pork"
D	5	Influence of the terms "Muslim Friendly", "No Pork No Lard", and "Serve No Pork" in consumer decision making

Source: Author (2025)

A five-point Likert scale format shown in Table 2 was used for Parts B and C, which aims to evaluate consumers' understanding of the halal concept, determine the level of consumer awareness regarding the terms “Muslim Friendly,” “No Pork No Lard,” and “Serve No Pork” used at food premises in Miri, Sarawak. In examining how these terms influence consumers' purchasing decisions, dichotomous survey scales (Yes/No) were used to simplify decision-making and data analysis.

Table 2: Five-point Likert scale interpretation

Numerical value	Response categories
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

Source: Koo and Yang (2025)

Data were then analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27.0. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarise the demographics of the participants and items in sections B, C and D. Table 3 indicates the mean interpretation scale that was applied in this research to determine the degree of understanding, perception or attitude of the respondent towards terms like Muslim Friendly, No Pork No Lard and Serve No Pork.

Table 3: Mean Score Interpretation Table

Numerical value	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	Very low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.20	Medium
3.21 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very high

Source: Moidunny (2009)

Initially, a pilot testing phase was conducted with a sample of participants. In the pilot phase, participants' responses were carefully examined, and statistical techniques, including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency, were used to determine the percentage of accurate responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

The findings of this study are presented in this section. It includes background information such as respondents' gender, age, and education level, as well as preliminary questions on whether they are consumers in Miri, Sarawak, and which terms they believe are most commonly used by food premises in the area. This section also explains the analytical methods used to interpret the data. Table 4 summarises the profiles of all 465 respondents who participated in the study, with no missing data.

Table 4. Demographic profile

Demographic Information	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	49.2
	Female	50.8

Age	18-28 years old	300	64.5
	29-44 years old	106	22.8
	45-60 years old	59	12.7
Education	SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia)	141	30.3
	STPM (Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia)	25	5.4
	Diploma	178	38.3
	Bachelor Degree	115	24.7
	Master Degree	6	1.3
	PhD	-	-
Religion	Islam	309	66.5
	Christianity	132	28.4
	Buddhism	24	5.2
	Hinduism	-	-
Which of the following terms do you think it is most commonly used by food premises in Miri, Sarawak?	“Muslim Friendly”	44	9.5
	“No Pork No Lard”	127	27.3
	“Serve No Pork “	197	42.4
	I am not sure	97	20.9

Source: Author (2025)

The total number of respondents in this survey was 465, with 229 males (49.2%) and 236 females (50.8%). Based on the researcher’s observation, female consumers in Miri, Sarawak appear to be more dominant in this survey sample. The majority of respondents (64.5%) were aged 18-28 years, followed by 29–44 years (22.8%) and 45–60 years (12.7%). This indicates that younger adults were the dominant group of participants, consistent with the higher likelihood that younger individuals are more digitally literate and responsive to online questionnaires. The skew towards younger age groups suggests that perceptions of food labelling terms may be particularly influenced by younger consumers, who are often active decision-makers in modern food consumption trends.

In terms of educational attainment, the largest group of respondents held a Diploma (38.3%), followed by SPM (30.3%) and a Bachelor’s degree (24.7%). A small number of respondents have STPM (5.4%) and Master’s degree (1.3%), while no respondents indicated PhD qualifications. This distribution reflects the educational composition of many working-age adults in Miri, where Diploma and SPM holders dominate the workforce. The relatively high representation of Diploma and degree holders suggests that most respondents possess at least moderate educational exposure, which may influence their awareness and interpretation of food labelling. Religion was an important demographic factor in this study.

A majority of respondents were identified as Muslims (66.5%), followed by Christians (28.4%) and Buddhists (5.2%). No respondents were identified as Hindus. This distribution closely reflects the religious composition of Miri’s population, where Islam is the dominant faith. The high proportion of Muslim respondents is particularly relevant, given that this study focuses on consumer perceptions of food premise labelling such as “Muslim Friendly,” “No Pork No Lard,” and “Serve No Pork.” Their views are crucial, as Muslims are directly affected by such labels in the context of halal compliance.

When asked about the most commonly used terms in food premises, the highest proportion of respondents (42.4%) selected “Serve No Pork,” followed by “No Pork No Lard” (27.3%), “I am not sure”

(20.9%), and “Muslim Friendly” (9.5%). These findings indicate that consumers widely recognise non-certified labelling terms in Miri. The dominance of “Serve No Pork” reflects its popularity among food entrepreneurs as an informal assurance to Muslim customers, despite its lack of formal recognition in halal certification. The relatively low response for “Muslim Friendly” suggests that this term is less visible or less trusted among consumers. Interestingly, the fact that one-fifth of respondents were uncertain highlights a potential gap in consumer understanding regarding food premise labelling, reinforcing the need for clearer regulations and education.

Consumer Level of Awareness Regarding the Concept of Halal

The findings for consumer understanding of halal concepts were presented in Table 5. The survey demonstrates a generally high level of consumer awareness regarding the halal concept, as indicated by mean scores ranging from 4.26 to 4.42 across all items. The findings suggest that respondents generally possess a strong understanding of halal principles when selecting food premises.

Table 5. Level of consumer awareness regarding the concept of halal

Item	Frequency (f)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
1 I understand the concept of halal food.	4	1	28	217	215	4.37	0.686
2 I understand the importance of halal in selecting the food I eat.	3	3	190	190	232	4.39	0.717
3 I understand that halal is not just about the absence of pork and alcohol.	3	1	199	199	234	4.42	0.675
4 I understand the concept of halal food premises.	3	2	187	187	227	4.37	0.728
5 I understand that halal food premises only use clean, halal ingredients.	8	11	191	191	211	4.26	0.855

Source: Author (2025)

For Item 1, “I understand the concept of halal food”, the mean score was 4.37 (SD = 0.686). This indicates that most respondents have a strong grasp of the basic definition of halal food. The low standard deviation reflects consistency in responses, suggesting that knowledge of halal food is well established among consumers.

For Item 2, “I understand the importance of halal in selecting the food I eat”, the mean score was slightly higher at 4.39 (SD = 0.717). This finding highlights that consumers not only understand the halal concept but also actively consider it as a crucial factor in their food selection. It suggests that halal compliance influences consumer decision-making, reflecting a high level of consciousness about religious and dietary obligations.

The highest mean value was recorded for Item 3, “I understand that halal is not just about the absence of pork and alcohol”, with a score of 4.42 (SD = 0.675). This demonstrates that respondents recognise the holistic nature of halal, which extends beyond the prohibition of specific ingredients to encompass broader Shariah requirements, including hygiene, safety, and ethical sourcing. The low standard deviation further reinforces the understanding that this is consistently shared across the sample. This finding aligns with previous studies that define halal awareness as consumers’ understanding of halal principles covering ingredient sources, processing methods, and certification compliance (Alam et al., 2025).

For Item 4, “I understand the concept of halal food premises”, the mean score was 4.37 (SD = 0.728), indicating a high level of awareness of what constitutes a halal-certified premise. This includes not only the

halal status of the food itself but also compliance in handling, preparation, and the environment in which food is served, ensuring the use of halal-certified ingredients, maintaining proper hygiene standards, and avoiding cross-contamination with non-halal items. However, the slightly higher standard deviation compared to other items suggests that some respondents may interpret the concept of halal premises differently. Studies on halal consumer behaviour have similarly highlighted that knowledge and awareness of halal certification enhance consumer trust and influence their intention to patronise halal-certified food outlets (Purnomo et al., 2024).

Lastly, Item 5, “I understand that halal food premises only use clean and halal”, received the lowest mean score of 4.26 (SD = 0.855). Although still relatively high, this result indicates that while respondents generally believe halal premises should uphold cleanliness and halal standards, there is greater variation in perception. Personal experiences with different food premises and varying levels of confidence in the consistency of hygiene practices could influence this. Previous studies have also reported concerns about improper labelling, lack of certification, and inadequate monitoring, which may lead consumers to question the authenticity of halal claims in food establishments (Begum et al., 2025).

Overall, these results suggest that consumers in the study population demonstrate a strong awareness of the halal concept, particularly in recognising that halal extends beyond the avoidance of pork and alcohol. However, perceptions of operational practices in halal premises show slightly greater variability, which may indicate differing levels of trust or exposure to actual practices in the food service industry. In the context of this study, the high level of halal awareness may influence how consumers interpret labels or claim such as “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork” at food premises. Although these terms may suggest the absence of certain non-halal ingredients, consumers with a deeper understanding of halal concepts may still question whether such establishments fully comply with halal standards, including certification, ingredient verification, and proper food-handling procedures. Therefore, consumer awareness plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and trust towards halal-related claims in the food service industry (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024).

Consumer Understanding of Non-Halal Certified Signage

Table 6 shows consumer understanding of the unauthorised halal signage. The first item, “I am familiar with the term Muslim-friendly,” had the highest mean score, 4.26 (SD = 0.756). This is followed by the item “I am familiar with the term serve no pork” with a mean of 4.16 (SD=0.843), while “I am familiar with the term no pork no lard” obtained a lower mean of 3.59 (SD=1.193). Overall, in relation to the objective of determining consumer understanding of the terms “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork”, the findings indicate that respondents are most familiar with the term “Muslim Friendly.”

Table 6. Consumer Understanding of the terms “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork”

	Item	Frequency (f)					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	I am familiar with the term "Muslim Friendly".	6	3	43	225	188	4.26	0.756
2	I am familiar with the term " No Pork No Lard".	51	30	67	226	91	3.59	1.193
3	I am familiar with the term "Serve No Pork".	9	11	46	228	171	4.16	0.843

Source: Author (2025)

Table 7 further shows consumer awareness of the terms used in food premises, particularly the definition of each term.

Table 7. Consumer awareness of the terms “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork”

	Item	Frequency (f)			Per cent (%)		
		Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure
1	I am aware that the definition of "Muslim Friendly" in the food premise means the food premise strives to meet the needs of Muslim customers without a full guarantee of compliance with Halal standards.	413	12	40	88.8	2.6	8.6
2	I am aware that the definition of "No Pork No Lard" used in food premises means that there is no pork and lard used to cook all the food menus in the food premises.	378	18	69	81.3	3.9	14.8
3	I am aware that the definition of "Serve No Pork" in the food premise means the food premise does not serve pork, but it can still use other pork-derived ingredients (e.g., fat/lard) in the preparation of food.	9	11	46	74.2	6.9	18.9
4	Do you assume that a food premise labelled "Muslim Friendly", "No Pork No Lard" or "Serve No Pork" is halal?	130	138	197	28.0	29.7	42.4

Source: Author (2025)

According to Table 7, 88.8% of respondents understand that “Muslim Friendly” means the food premise strives to meet Muslim customers’ needs without a full guarantee of compliance with halal standards. Only 2.6% disagreed, and 8.6% were not sure. This is consistent with recent research indicating that many consumers in Muslim-majority settings are increasingly familiar with terms that are “halal-adjacent” (for example, “Muslim Friendly”, “Halal type”) even when formal certification is absent. For instance, the study by Albanjari et al. (2025) reports that immigrants in Malaysia show high awareness of halal concepts and labelling, influenced by government policy and labelling practices. Nevertheless, the fact that almost 1 in 12 either disagrees or is unsure shows there is still ambiguity and potential for misinterpretation. This aligns with Maifiah et al. (2025), who found that issues such as halal meat cartel scandals led to reduced consumer confidence, particularly regarding imported products or non-locally certified products.

For Item 2, the survey shows that 81.3% of respondents correctly understand that “No Pork No Lard” means neither pork nor lard is used in cooking any food item in the premises. About 14.8% are unsure, and 3.9% misunderstand. Research on halal awareness has repeatedly shown that removal of pork/lard is a baseline expectation among Muslim consumers; however, even among such explicit labels, concerns remain about hidden ingredients, cross-contamination, or whether the premises are entirely free of certain prohibited substances.

For Item 3, only 74.2% understand “Serve No Pork” in the sense that a premise does not serve pork meat, but may use other pork-derived ingredients (e.g., lard or fat) in food prep. The results also show that 6.9% misunderstand and 18.9% are not sure. This relatively low level of awareness and high uncertainty are consistent with past findings that more ambiguous or loosely defined labels (e.g., “serving”, “no pork”) are more susceptible to misinterpretation. The semantic differences between “serve,” “use,” “no lard,” etc., tend to confuse consumers and lead to misaligned assumptions. Furthermore, Hazimah et al. (2024) found that the "No Pork, No Lard" label easily attracts Muslim customers, especially those with lower levels of religiosity.

For Item 4, only 28.0% of respondents assume that premises labelled “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, or “Serve No Pork” are halal; 29.7% do not assume, and a large proportion (42.4%) are not sure. This uncertainty is also observed in recent literature. A study by Maifiah et al. (2022) found that, although Muslim consumers generally trust local halal certification (JAKIM) more than other logos, scandals have eroded confidence, particularly regarding unverified sources. Another relevant finding by Hoang et al. (2025) discusses consumer expectations that labels should not be misleading and that there is demand for clarity in what “halal” means in different contexts. Although not directly about the same labels, it reflects a broader concern about the misinterpretation of claims.

Influence of the Unauthorised Halal Signage on Consumers' Perception

Table 8 presents findings on how unauthorised halal-related signage, such as “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork”, influences consumers’ perceptions when selecting food premises. Overall, the results indicate that respondents demonstrate moderate to high awareness regarding the limitations of such labels. However, certain responses suggest that these terms may still influence consumer confidence in food premises.

Table 8. Influence of the Unauthorised Halal Signage on Consumers' Perception

	Item	Frequency (f)					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	I am confident that food premises that have the labels "Muslim Friendly", "No Pork No Lard" or "Serve No Pork" are permissible for Muslims.	39	27	163	121	115	3.53	1.169
2	I know that the labels "Muslim Friendly", "No Pork No Lard" or "Serve No Pork" do not guarantee the food is halal.	12	9	54	191	199	4.20	0.904
3	I consider premises with labels such as "Muslim Friendly", "No Pork No Lard" or "Serve No Pork" acceptable alternatives when a halal-certified premise is unavailable.	9	11	46	228	171	4.16	0.843
4	I will only enter premises that have the halal logo.	6	7	41	171	240	4.36	0.808
5	I carefully look for signs such as "Muslim Friendly", "No Pork No Lard" or "Serve No Pork" before choosing where to eat.	17	10	58	178	206	4.17	0.978

Source: Author (2025)

The first item, “I am confident that food premises that have the labels ‘Muslim Friendly’, ‘No Pork No Lard’ or ‘Serve No Pork’ are permissible for Muslims,” recorded a moderate mean score ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.169$). This indicates that respondents have mixed perceptions regarding the permissibility of food premises displaying such labels. Previous research has shown that labels like "Muslim Friendly" and "No Pork No Lard" can be used as marketing techniques without official halal verification, which can lead to confusion among Muslim consumers (Haji Bibi et al., 2025).

In contrast, the second item, “I know that the labels ‘Muslim Friendly’, ‘No Pork No Lard’ or ‘Serve No Pork’ do not guarantee the halalness of the food,” recorded a high mean score ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.904$). This shows that most respondents are aware that such claims cannot substitute for official halal certification. This finding is consistent with previous research that emphasizes that halal certification issued by recognized authorities serves as a critical assurance mechanism for Muslim consumers, ensuring that food products comply with Islamic dietary laws, ingredient sourcing requirements, and hygienic preparation processes (Magfiratun et al., 2025).

Similarly, the statement “I consider premises with labels such as ‘Muslim Friendly’, ‘No Pork No Lard’ or ‘Serve No Pork’ as acceptable alternatives when a halal-certified premise is not available” recorded a relatively high mean score of 4.16 (SD = 0.843). This suggests that although respondents understand the limitations of these labels, they may still consider such premises as practical alternatives when halal-certified establishments are unavailable. This behaviour may reflect pragmatic decision-making among Muslim consumers, particularly in environments where halal-certified options are limited. Previous literature indicates that halal consumption behaviour is often influenced by situational factors, availability of halal-certified products, and consumers’ personal level of halal knowledge (Wiyono et al., 2022).

The item “I will only enter premises that have the halal logo” recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.36, SD = 0.808), indicating a strong preference among respondents for officially halal-certified food premises. This result highlights the significant role of halal certification in strengthening consumer trust and confidence in food products and establishments. Studies have consistently demonstrated that halal certification is an important determinant of purchasing decisions, as it assures the halal integrity of the entire food production and preparation process (Purnomo et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the statement “I carefully look for signs such as ‘Muslim Friendly’, ‘No Pork No Lard’ or ‘Serve No Pork’ before choosing where to eat” recorded a high mean score of 4.17 (SD = 0.978). This indicates that respondents actively search for halal-related indicators when selecting food premises. Although these signs may not represent official certification, they still function as preliminary cues that help consumers identify potentially permissible food establishments. Previous research has also shown that consumer awareness and knowledge of halal concepts play a significant role in shaping purchasing behaviour and influencing consumers’ evaluation of halal claims in the marketplace (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that consumers have a relatively high level of awareness of the limitations of unauthorised halal signage. Nevertheless, these labels still influence their dining decisions to some extent. While respondents clearly prefer premises displaying an official halal logo, signage such as “Muslim Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork” may still serve as informational cues when halal-certified options are unavailable. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening consumer education regarding halal certification and improving regulatory oversight to prevent misleading halal-related claims in the food service industry.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that while consumers in Miri, Sarawak, possess a solid foundational knowledge of the halal concept, specifically regarding the prohibition of pork and alcohol, there remains a significant gap between general awareness and technical understanding. Most respondents recognise that halal encompasses hygiene and proper slaughter. However, they struggle to apply these principles when encountering informal labels such as "Muslim Friendly," "No Pork No Lard," or "Serve No Pork." This ambiguity suggests that while the "Serve No Pork" sign is the most familiar to the public, many consumers mistakenly equate these unofficial terms with formal halal certification, highlighting a lack of clarity about official regulatory standards and food-handling procedures.

Consequently, these alternative terms heavily influence consumer decision-making, particularly when halal-certified options are scarce or unavailable. The research indicates that many diners prioritise practicality and accessibility, often accepting surface-level assurances of "integrity" over verified certification. This tendency to compromise religious certainty for situational convenience underscores a pressing need for stricter regulatory oversight and enhanced public education. To protect consumer rights

and maintain halal integrity in the marketplace, authorities and business operators need to provide clearer communication and standardised labelling that distinguishes informal claims from authentic halal status.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/FUNDINGS

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia, for providing the facilities and support for this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted without any self-benefits, commercial, or financial conflicts, and declare no conflicts of interest with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Nur Mashitah Shariman conducted the research and prepared the original draft of the manuscript. Nur Hafizah Harun supervised the research process, monitored the overall progress, anchored the review and revisions, approved the article submission, and guided the development of the work into a journal article. Muhammad Syukri Mohd Ashmir Wong strengthened and refined the literature review section. Farrah Payyadhah Borhan reviewed and verified the study's methodological aspects. Norazlina Mamat critically reviewed the manuscript's overall structure and organisation.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the authors used AI tools to clarify the content, rephrase sentences, and correct grammar. Accordingly, no structured or content-generating prompts were employed. The authors further declare that AI tools were not used to generate the research data, conduct the analysis or produce the results presented in this manuscript. After using the AI tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the publication's content.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT/ SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

The data for this study is available in open access at DOI and UiTM PTAR repository

ETHICS STATEMENT

I testify that our submitted article adhered to ethical principles and obtained research ethics approval from UiTM.

REFERENCES

Alam, A., Fuadati, A. R., Fathma, A., Nordin, N., & Ullah, I. (2025). Halal Awareness In Contemporary

- Muslim Societies: A Systematic Review of Scopus-Indexed Studies. *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research*, 30(3), 215–238. <https://doi.org/10.33102/jfatwa.vol30no3.707>
- Albanjari, F. R., Syakarna, N. F., Zahara, J. N., & Ghani, M. B. A. (2025). Muslim Immigrant Consumer Awareness and Policy Implications of Halal Food in Malaysia. *LAA MAISYIR: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam*, 12(1), 26-42. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lamaisyir.v12i1.52705>
- Abdallah, A., Rahem, M. A., & Pasqualone, A. (2021). The multiplicity of halal standards: a case study of application to slaughterhouses. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 8(1), 7. 021) 8:7 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-021-00084-6>
- Begum, S., Alamgir, M., Sharmin, T., & Chowdhury, M. T. (2025). Understanding consumer perception of halal foods: A conceptual framework using the Stimulus-Organism-Response model. *Journal of Business Strategy Finance and Management*, 7(01), 04–18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12944/JBSFM.07.01.02>
- Crescentrating. (December, 2019). *What is Halal Food? A Comprehensive Guide*. Retrieved from Crescentrating: <https://www.crescentrating.com/magazine/muslim-travel/4020/what-is-halal-food.html#:~:text=What%20is%20Muslim%2Dfriendly%20food,>
- Crescentrating. (February, 2021). *Guide to Halal Restaurants: Muslim-Friendly Restaurants*. Retrieved from crescentrating: <https://www.crescentrating.com/magazine/all/4032/guide-to-halal-restaurants-or-muslim-friendly-restaurants.html>
- Divakaran. P. (16 February, 2023). *Jakim: 'Pork Free', 'No Pork' signs at restaurants can confuse Muslims*. Retrieved from The Star: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2016/02/16/jakim-pork-free-no-pork-do-not-mean-food-is-halal/>
- Dusuki, A. W. & Dar, H. (2007). Stakeholders' perceptions of corporate social responsibility of Islamic banks: Evidence from the Malaysian economy. In M. Iqbal, S. S. Ali & D. Muljawan (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Islamic Economics and Finance* (pp. 249–277). Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: Islamic Development Bank.
- Haji Bibi, Z., Nik Fauzi, S.F., Mahda A.Z., Ismailly, N. & Duan, M.K. (2025). “No Pork, No Lard” or “Muslim-Friendly”: Understanding Consumer Perceptions and Preferences. *Proceedings Borneo International Islamic Conference*; Vol. 16. 2025; 1-9
- Hana. (12 October, 2024). *What is “No Pork, No Lard, No Alcohol”?* Retrieved from Halal Freak: <https://halalfreak.com/no-pork-no-lard/>
- Hazimah, M., Yovita, & Yushimita. (2024). Pengaruh Konsep “No Pork No Lard” terhadap Minat Beli Konsumen Muslim Jakarta. *Jurnal Manajemen Perhotelan dan Pariwisata*, 7(2), 94–103. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jmpp.v7i2.84057>
- Izham, S. S., Ahmadun, M., & Hazmi, H. F. (2022). Trend And Community Comprehension Concerning The" No Pork" Label on Food Premises: Trend Dan Kefahaman Masyarakat Berkaitan Label “No Pork” Di Premis Makanan. *al-Qanatir: International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 28(2), 50-60.
- Koo, M., & Yang, S. W. (2025). Likert-type scale. *Encyclopedia*, 5(1), 18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia5010018>
- Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30: 607-610
- Maifiah, M. H., Ahmad, A. N., Iskandar, M. A., & Azam, M. S. (2025). Identifying barriers to efficient cold chain management in the halal food industry. *International Journal of Business and Technology*

Management, 7(1), 86–100. <https://doi.org/10.55057/ijbtm.2025.7.1.8>

Magfiratun, S., Mujibatun, S., & Imron, A. (2025). Consumer perceptions and challenges of halal certification in Indonesia's food and beverage industry. *International Journal of Nusantara Islam*, 13(1), 153–162. <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijni.v13i1.46030>

Abdul Salam, A.H. (13 August 2023). *Halal: Sumber Kesehatan*. Retrieved from Edisi MAIS: <https://mais.gov.my/e-edisi/halal-sumber-kesehatan/>

Moidunny, K. (2009). The effectiveness of the National Professional Qualifications For Educational Leaders (NPQEL) (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Bangi: The National University of Malaysia.

Nora, H. (1 June, 2024). *Maksud Halal*. Retrieved from RONA: https://rona.my/maksud-halal/#google_vignette

OpenDOSM. (30 August, 2023). *KAWASANKU*. Retrieved from OpenDOSM: <https://open.dosm.gov.my/dashboard/kawasanku/Sarawak/parlimen/P.219%20Miri>

Purnomo, I. A., Pratikto, H., & Suharsono, N. (2024). The influence of halal certification and halal awareness on purchasing decisions. *East Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(4), 1567-1578.

Sabri, F. (27 Januari, 2020). *Syubhah Dalam Kandungan Makanan dan Minuman*. Retrieved from Wordpress: <https://halalpractice.wordpress.com/2020/01/27/syubhah-dalam-kandungan-makanan-dan-minuman/>

Saleh, H., & Rajandran, T. (2024). Relationship between non-Muslim consumers' intention to purchase halal products and halal awareness, halal certification, halal marketing, and halal knowledge: A systematic review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(9), 416–426.

Sinar Harian. (4 Mac, 2020). *Restoran Ada Tanda 'No Pork', 'Pork Free' Bukan 100 Peratus Halal*. Retrieved from Sinar Harian: <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/72519/LIFESTYLE/Sinar-Islam/Restoran-ada-tanda-no-pork-pork-free-bukan-100-peratus-halal>

Wiyono, S. N., Deliana, Y., Wulandari, E., & Kamarulzaman, N. H. (2022). The embodiment of Muslim intention elements in the purchase of halal food products: a literature review. *Sustainability*, 14(20), 13163.

Yusoff, S. Z. (2017). The factor of awareness in searching and sharing halal food products among Muslim families in Malaysia. *In SHS Web of Conferences*.



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).