

CONSUMER INSIGHTS ON HALAL CERTIFICATION: AWARENESS, PERCEPTION, AND VISIBILITY AS KEY DETERMINANTS OF PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates consumer insights on halal certification in Malaysia by examining awareness, perception, visibility, trust, and purchase behaviour, with religious belief as a moderator. Using a non-probability purposive sampling method, 801 valid responses were collected and analysed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that perception and awareness significantly influence trust, while visibility has no significant effect. Trust and religious belief strongly predict purchase behaviour, and religious belief also moderates the relationship between trust and purchase. It should be noted, however, that the sample disproportionately represents Indigenous Sabah respondents, while Malay respondents—the national majority—are underrepresented. Therefore, the findings are context-specific and not generalisable to the entire Malaysian population. Despite this limitation, the study provides useful insights into consumer trust in halal certification and offers practical recommendations for practitioners, regulators, and policymakers, as well as theoretical contributions for future research.

Keywords: Halal purchase behaviour, Trust, Awareness, Perception, Visibility, Religiosity.

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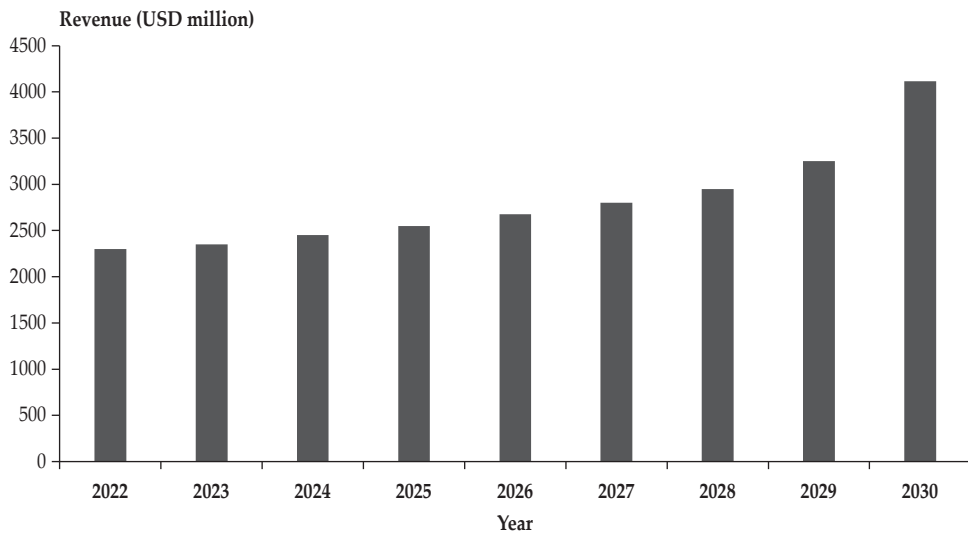
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I. INTRODUCTION

Halal means allowable for use or consumption by Islamic laws, which covers food, makeup, medicines, services, and others (Khan & Haleem, 2016). It stresses cleanliness, safety, and the absence of prohibited elements such as pork, alcoholic beverage and the like. *Fiqh* states that something is halal if it is *mubah*, which means it is not forbidden in any way. Additionally, Halal also extends to all actions, habits, and uses that are not against Islamic laws. In agreement with this, Imam Al-Ghazali states that *halalan tayyiban* refers to legal things that are naturally good, safe, and in line with Shariah (Wijayanti & Meftahudin, 2018).



Source: <https://www.zionmarketresearch.com/report/halal-food-market>

Figure 1.
Global Halal Food Market Forecast (2022–2030)

The 2023 Zion Market Research study notes that the global halal food market was worth about USD 2.3 billion in 2022 and will be worth over USD 4.1 billion by 2030, thanks to a 7.7% compound annual growth rate. This growth is due to increasing demand from Muslims around the world and rising interest from non-Muslims as they view halal goods to be clean, moral, and safe. The industry encompasses a variety of food and drinks that are made according to Islamic dietary rules, which forbid ingredients like pork and alcohol and prescribe Islamic way of animal slaughtering. The Asia-Pacific and the Middle East are two major regions driving market growth to halal food, thanks to rising awareness, trade, and tourism.

In Malaysia, the halal business is a key driver of economic growth, making up about 7.4% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The government aims to raise this share to 11% by 2030 through the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030. They also seek to create over 700,000 jobs (Ministry of Investment Trade and Industry, 2023). The detailed plan shows that the country really wants to improve its halal

ecosystem, which includes such industries as food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, transportation, and tourism. Malaysia is known as a world leader in halal food, which is due in large part to its well-established halal certification system by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and is known for its strict standards. Malaysia has been a global hub for halal goods, thanks to trade missions, strategic partnerships with other countries, and promotion of halal exports. Including halal in the bigger National Investment Mission Plan (NIMP) 2030 also ensures that it fits in with efforts to develop the industries. This makes halal not only a religious obligation, but also a national economic strategy.

Even though Malaysia's halal business is known around the world, it is still facing a number of major issues that keep it from reaching its full potential. One major issue is that the halal licensing system is hard to understand and it comprises many parts (Muhammad et al., 2020). There are more than 200 different halal logos and certification groups globally. The different standards and meanings of halal have created confusion and made halal trade more difficult. Even though JAKIM's certification is recognised in more than 100 countries, it needs to be made more widely known around the world and its processes need to be streamlined to international standards like ISO or HACCP so that it becomes more trustworthy and efficient. Businesses, especially micro and small businesses, often stay away from the halal markets due to the lack of consistencies and the time it takes to deal with paperwork (Saiman & Yusma, 2022).

The central issue for this research is, Malaysia's halal industry, despite its global reputation, has faced significant credibility challenges in recent years due to several high-profile incidents. One of the most damaging was the exposure of a fake halal meat cartel that operated for over four decades, smuggling and repackaging non-halal meat—such as horse and kangaroo—as halal-certified beef (Euromeatnews, 2020). This scandal revealed systemic corruption, where officials were allegedly bribed to allow the distribution of uncertified meat, sparking public outrage and raising serious concerns about the integrity of Malaysia's halal certification system. Additionally, several companies, such as LY Frozen Food, have been prosecuted and fined for misusing halal logos, highlighting weaknesses in monitoring and enforcement mechanisms within the industry (Bernama, 2023).

It has also been reported that halal licensing has been abused in stores, which further hurts public trust. At Universiti Malaya, a store was caught selling ham and cheese sandwiches with a fake halal logo (New Straits Times, 2025). Due to these events, many raise concern over the reliability halal licensing processes and supervision. International reports have also stated that Malaysia's halal rules are among the strictest in the world, sometimes even stricter than needed, and yet due to inconsistencies in enforcement, they become less effective. Because of this, halal authorities like JAKIM and others are under more pressure to ensure the halal ecosystem to be more transparent, trackable, and trustworthy.

Most earlier studies treat halal certification as just a factor in assessing its effect. This study takes it further by breaking halal certification into three clear parts—awareness, perception, and visibility—so we can uncover which elements truly matter to consumers. By separating these dimensions, the findings show a clearer picture: awareness and perception only lead to purchase behaviour when they first build trust, while visibility, although important for trust, doesn't directly

push consumers to buy. This more detailed pathway has not been shown in previous halal studies, and it helps explain why some certification cues influence behaviour and others stop at the trust stage.

These real-life cases highlight the urgency of studying consumer trust in halal certification. This study examines how awareness, perception, and visibility influence trust, and how trust and religious belief affect purchase behaviour, using PLS-SEM. The results show that perception and awareness significantly enhance trust, while visibility does not, and that religious belief is the strongest driver of purchase behaviour. As the sample relies on non-probability purposive sampling and overrepresents Indigenous Sabah respondents, the findings are context-specific and not generalisable to the entire Malaysian population, yet they provide useful theoretical and practical insights.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Ajzen (1991) develops the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to describe what consumers want and how they act, especially when it comes to religious or moral purchases. According to the TPB, attitudes, subjective rules, and perceived behavioural control all play a role in how people act. For halal consumption, religious beliefs or health concerns are drivers of purchase (Bonne et al., 2007; Lada et al., 2009). Subjective norms, like religious and social pressure, are also very important. This is especially true in collectivist countries like Malaysia, where family and community affect what people buy (Awan et al., 2015; Wilson & Liu, 2011). In addition, a person's confidence in their ability to find and buy halal goods can influence their ability to turn their intention into action (Shafie & Othman, 2006; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011). Because of these, the TPB is a well suited to uncover how consumers act when they know about and think about halal certification.

The signalling theory by Spence in 1973 is useful when consumers can't directly check the features of a product. In the halal industry, approval logos show that the product is real, safe, and in line with religious rules. This is especially true when customers can't see the internal processes, like how the food is slaughtered or where the ingredients come from (Tiemann & Ghazali, 2014). Researchers have found that how trustworthy, visible, and recognisable halal logos have a significant effect on how much people believe them and consequently on their purchase (Marzuki et al., 2012). However, inconsistent certification standards and wrong use of halal logos can weaken these cues and reduce trust, especially for very religious customers (Ab Talib et al., 2013; Bonne et al., 2007). Together with the TPB, the Signalling Theory explains how outside visual cues, such as halal certification, support how people think and turn their intentions into actions that they actually carry out.

Putting TPB and Signalling Theory together gives us a complete way to look into how halal consumers' internal thought processes and outside data cues affect their behaviour. The TPB theory posits how attitude, norms, and control affect behaviour intentions. The Signalling Theory adds more detail by adding how certification logos help people believe in a product when they are making a

purchase decision (Ahmi et al., 2005; Jusmaliani & Nasution, 2009). The halal mark is a sign of trustworthiness, especially when it's backed by an official organisation like JAKIM in Malaysia. This makes customers to be more confident that the product follows Islamic rules (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2021; Zailani et al., 2011). The TPB also allows researchers see how different groups of people, based on their demographics and psychographics, are aware of and react to certification. Together, these theories give two-layered explanations: one from the point of view of behavioural intention and the other from the point of view of market communication. Both are important for understanding how halal consumption works in modern Muslim communities.

2.2. Halal Purchase Behaviour

Halal purchase behaviour refers to what people do and how they think when choosing, buying, and using goods and services that are in line with Islamic beliefs and are legal (halal) according to the Sharia. This behaviour includes the whole buying process, from realising a need and looking for information to evaluating, buying, and evaluating after the purchase. It is affected by various factors including religion, halal licensing, personal beliefs, and trust in halal standards. Businesses that want to sell to Muslims need to understand halal buying habits (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025).

A person's attitude, behavioural control, religion, awareness, subjective norms, and trust all play a role in how he chooses to buy halal goods. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is often used to assess these factors. It gives us a structured way to understand how psychological and environmental factors affect people's plans to buy and their real decisions to buy. For example, Najmudin & Ahyakudin (2024) find that how someone feels about halal products is a strong predictor of their intention to buy them. A more positive attitude makes it more likely that someone will buy them. Another important factor that affects intention is perceived behavioural control, which shows how easy or hard it is for people to get halal goods. This is especially true in collectivist cultures that value group harmony (Najmudin & Ahyakudin, 2024; Salmah & Shikur, 2023). Another important factor that affects halal usage is religiosity. People who are more religiously committed tend to buy halal products (Marso & Hasan, 2020; Setiawan & Mauluddi, 2020). It has also been shown that halal knowledge, especially about certification and labelling, has a big effect on intention. People who know more about halal goods are more likely to buy them (Saputro & Seyaningrum, 2023).

Some studies note that subjective norms—the idea that people are under social pressure to buy halal products—have a huge effect on purchase behaviour, while others suggest that these norms are not as important as personal attitudes and behavioural control (Fachrurrozie et al., 2023; Najmudin & Ahyakudin, 2024). Also, faith in halal certification and labelling doesn't always predict purchase intention. This suggests that consumers may depend more on their own motivations than on assurances from institutions (Setiawan & Mauluddi, 2020). Marketing should focus on improving consumers' positive views and sense of behavioural control by highlighting personal benefits, product authenticity, and ease of access. Hazmi & Utami (2024) also state that making people more aware of halal food through clear

labels and public education can boost customer confidence and their desire to buy. Though these psychological factors are important, culture, the economy, and new technologies are also important and should also be taken into consideration when making plans for the growing halal market.

2.3. Halal Certification Awareness

There are several factors that affect a person's decision to buy halal goods: what they know about them, whether they see the certification, and how they feel about the quality and morality of the products. Halal approval is very important for building trust with customers because it makes sure that businesses follow Islamic rules. Multiple studies (Maulida et al., 2024; Pratiwi & Falahi, 2023) have shown that trust is a key factor in people's plans to buy. It has been shown that halal certification has a big effect on what people in Indonesia buy. Both certification and awareness explain a lot of the differences in buying behaviour (Milah et al., 2024; Nugroho et al., 2021). According to Saleh & Rajandran (2024), halal knowledge also has a big effect on people's plans to buy, especially those who have learnt more about certification through schooling, community involvement, and social media use. Such awareness not only drives intention but also enhances the perceived value of halal goods by linking them to high quality and ethical production standards (Djakasaputra et al., 2023; Hazmi & Utami, 2024).

Labels that say "halal" on products are a strong visual cue that makes people more aware and builds trust, which ultimately leads to better buying decision. Visible halal certification and knowing about halal have been shown to have a big effect on how people act in places like Indonesia (Milah et al., 2024). But study also shows that halal labels may not always work in all situations. As Hazmi & Utami (2024) note, there are times when halal knowledge doesn't affect the link between visible certification and purchase intention. This means that other factors are at play. Also, halal certification can lessen the impact of factors from the Theory of Planned Behaviour, like attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, on people's decisions to buy halal goods, especially when it comes to bakery goods (Zulkfli et al., 2023). It's also important to understand the bigger picture in which these processes play out. For instance, Muslim customers often look for certification to make sure a product follows religious rules. Non-Muslim customers, on the other hand, may connect halal goods with cleanliness, safety, and moral standards. This wider appeal shows that halal-certified goods could reach a bigger market, as long as efforts to educate consumers and raise awareness about certification are planned well (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024). Based on these, the hypotheses are:

H1a. Halal certification awareness has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.

H1b. Halal certification awareness has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behaviour.

2.4. Perception of Halal Certification

Consumer perception, which is a multi-stage process that includes being exposed to, choosing, and interpreting stimuli based on one's own wants and experiences, is

a key factor in how people feel about halal certification (Pantano, 2011). Studies in a range of settings have found that people who are positive about halal certification often think it makes the market more competitive and builds trust and customer confidence. For example, Indonesian small and medium-sized business owners see halal certification as a useful way to grow their markets. However, they stress the need for better government support and information sharing to fully take advantage of the global halal market potential (Abdul et al., 2013). In the similar vein, small and medium-sized business owners in Hat Yai, Thailand, agree that Halal Food Certification (HFC) is important for business growth but are worried that information about halal hubs isn't getting out there enough. How they feel about halal certification depends on their gender, marital status, and reasons they want to apply (Abdul, 2014). In Malaysia, Generation Y Muslims, especially those in Klang Valley, believe greatly in halal certification, but there are still problems with logo recognition and information clarity (Khalek et al., 2017). Malaysian food producers have also pointed out problems with service quality, especially empathy. This means that JAKIM needs to focus more on customer services to build trust and engagement with stakeholders (Badruldin et al., 2012).

Although limited research directly examines the relationship between consumer perception of halal certification and purchase behaviour, findings from related fields provide strong evidence that consumer perception plays a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions. For instance, Wee et al. (2014) find that perceptions of safety, health, and environmental welfare significantly influence purchase intentions toward organic food and subsequently actual purchase behaviour—aligning with the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Similarly, perceptions of food safety threats, such as foreign material in products, lead to dramatic shifts in consumer avoidance behaviour, with up to 70% of respondents rejecting not just the affected product but also the broader product category (Wee et al., 2014). In the context of fresh produce, Lombart et al. (2019) show that although consumers perceive heavily misshapen fruits and vegetables as low quality, actual purchase behaviour is not significantly impacted, suggesting that other moderating factors, such as ethical values or price sensitivity may influence final decisions. Knuth et al. (2018) demonstrate that accurate perception of drought conditions leads consumers to adjust their purchase behaviour, highlighting how contextual awareness can guide more responsible consumption. Zhu et al. (2020) further reinforce this relationship by showing how misinformation and trust in sources directly impact consumer willingness to purchase umami seasonings. Collectively, these studies underscore a consistent pattern: when consumers perceive a product attribute—such as safety, quality, or compliance—as trustworthy and aligned with their values, their intention to purchase strengthens, often translating into actual behaviour. Thus, by drawing from adjacent domains, it is reasonable to propose that perception of halal certification, which is deeply tied to religious, ethical, and quality-related cues, would similarly influence consumer purchase behaviour. Thus, the followings are hypothesised:

H2a. Perception of Halal certification has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.

H2b. Perception of Halal certification has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behaviour.

2.5. Halal Certification Visibility

There have not been many direct studies on how the visibility of halal certification affects people's buying habits, but research in similar areas strongly suggests that labels and logos that people can see do have an impact on people's choices. Based on the Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973), logos and product labels are seen as visual cues that help people believe each other and share information more evenly. Labels that are clear, trustworthy, and put correctly have a big effect on people's trust and decisions to buy, especially when people value authenticity and following the rules (Wee et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2020). There have been a lot of studies on customer trust in halal labels and certification (Abdul, 2014; Khalek et al., 2017), but not many have looked at how visible the halal logo is as a factor in behaviour. This leaves a big gap in the literature because how people notice, understand, and act on halal labels may depend on how visible they are.

The study by Bashir (2019) directly backs up this case. Their study looks at foreign shoppers in South Africa and finds that seeing the halal brand has a big effect on their decision to buy. The logo serves as a sign of trust, quality, and religious compliance. They stated that the logo helped them feel more confident, and many of them statements that they only buy goods that have clear halal markings. Importantly, these statements are applicable to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers alike. This shows that certification visibility always improves the credibility of a product. These results exhibit that making halal logos more noticeable can boost customer trust and boost the use of halal products, especially in markets where Muslims are not the majority.

Commercial branding studies inform us how logo visibility affects how people act, and this is directly applicable to the halal industry. (Gabrielyan & Just, 2022) find that names that are properly aligned and easy to see make people much more likely to remember a brand and even be willing to pay more for it, especially for less well-known brands. This shows how important clear images and strategic placement are in influencing consumer choices. This means that a widely displayed halal logo could also be a deciding factor in product choices. In line with this, Hosseini et al. (2025) use deep learning and eye-tracking models to show that size, placement, and other design elements around a logo have a big effect on visual attention, which is a key indicator of buying behaviour. Most people look at logos that are in the middle or upper left area. Visual clutter, on the other hand, makes it harder to see branding elements. These results show how important it is for the halal logo to be seen as a way to improve customer trust, recognition, and buying choices. They also show that more applied research is needed to fully understand its role in the halal market. A systematic review by Zuhudi & Dolah (2021) classifies the effects of logos into six main areas: brand awareness, brand perception, brand attitude, brand image, purchase intention, and customer loyalty. This shows that logo visibility has various effects on consumer behaviour. Thus, the followings are hypothesised:

H3a. Halal certification visibility has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.

H3b. Halal certification visibility has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behaviour.

2.6. Consumer Trust in Halal Certification

Halal endorsement is a key part of building consumer trust, especially among Muslim buyers who put religious compliance at the top of their list when making purchases. Mahliza & Aditantri (2022) states that trust in halal certification acts as a go-between for certification and buy intention. This is especially true for halal cosmetics where consumers' behaviour is directly affected by how credible they think the product is. In another study, Mustaqim & Fazriani (2023) discover that certification makes people more loyal to a brand by letting them know that it follows religious and moral rules. This way of building trust is not confined to places where Muslims are the majority; Mujanah (2024) notes that in non-Muslim markets, halal approval also appeals to health-conscious and morally aware customers, who are more likely to buy because they think the product is trustworthy. When halal logos are backed up by strong certification systems, they can greatly improve how safe and high-quality a product is seen to be, which is a key factor in building customer trust and loyalty.

Halal certification also helps businesses perform better, especially small and medium-sized ones, by making people believe the brand and think it's of higher quality (Yanti, 2024). But how well it changes people's behaviour depends a lot on how well people know about it, how well they recognise the logo, and how honest they think the approval process is. Labelling mistakes, not following the rules, and fake halal logos can affect people's belief and trust in the product, as Ismail & Hussein (2019) point out. In Riau, Indonesia, by building trust among locals, halal certification has been shown to directly affect people's decisions to buy fast food (Identiti et al., 2024). In Mauritius, Mustun (2022) find that certified practices strengthen the relationships between buyers and sellers in the halal fast food sector. Still, problems exist; Saleh & Rajandran (2024) point out that many non-Muslim customers do not know or have a wrong idea about halal principles, which makes certification less useful as a buying signal. So, halal certification is a strong way to build trust and change people's behaviour, but it needs to be clear, consistent, and inform people about it in order to keep its authority and effect in an always-changing global market. Thus, we state the following hypotheses:

H4. Consumer trust on halal certification has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behaviour.

H5a: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between awareness and purchase behaviour.

H5b: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between perception and purchase behaviour.

H5c: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between visibility and purchase behaviour.

2.7. Religious Belief

Especially in the context of halal product consumption, religiosity has been a major cultural and psychological element shaping Muslim consumer behaviour. Its impact on buying behaviour is obviously larger among consumers with a high degree of religious dedication since halal certification guarantees adherence to Islamic dietary rules. According to Nawawi et al. (2018), religion affects the link between the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) three components—attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control—and purchase intention for halal personal care items. Rafiki et al. (2024) likewise discover that religiosity

greatly affects the correlation between halal brand awareness and buying choices. Along this line, Maulida et al. (2024) and Hazmi & Utami (2024) also observe that the impact of halal certification on purchase intention is more pronounced among those with high religious awareness. These results show that although crucial, halal certification does not function in isolation; its impact is amplified when consumers' spiritual or religious identity matches the religious value proposition of the product.

Furthermore, empirical research verifies that religiosity affects how people read and respond to halal labels and certificates. According to Umair et al. (2024), intrinsic religiosity greatly affects customer perceptions of halal-certified food, which then influences their buying decisions. Juliana et al. (2022) equally show that in online environments such as Shopee, religion affects the link between halal awareness and buying behaviour. Reinforcing the significance of religious belief exerting both a direct and indirect influences, Sidanti et al. (2023) show that religiosity and halal certification both influence consumer sentiments and purchase intention. Other studies, including those by Marso & Hasan (2020), Saleh & Rajandran (2024), and Setiawan & Mauluddi (2020), offer further support by demonstrating that religiosity increases the psychological commitment to halal consumption, particularly where halal labels and certifications are prominently displayed. Similarly, Amalia et al. (2018), Fachrurrozie et al. (2023), Najmudin & Ahyakudin (2024) discover that religiosity amplifies the impact of TPB variables such as attitude and perceived behavioural control on intention to buy halal products.

Not all research, nevertheless, come to the same finding on the moderating effect of religiosity. For example, Anggraini (2019) and El Ashfahany et al. (2024) document that although religion directly influences purchase intention, it does not alter the connection between halal awareness or TPB components and customer behaviour. This is consistent with Bashir's (2019) results, which show that halal logos are powerful buying signals even among non-Muslims in multicultural settings regardless of religion. Khalek et al. (2017) also discover that while Generation Y Muslims in Klang Valley frequently trust halal branding, their behaviour is not solely influenced by religiosity. These varied results imply that the moderating effect of religion can be relevant and is shaped by various elements including product category, market environment, or demographic characteristics such as age and education. Still, the larger trend throughout the literature—including studies by Ismail & Hussein (2019) and Abdul (2014)—supports the claim that religious belief increases the influence of halal certification on buying behaviour, therefore offering a solid foundation for future studies and for marketers to customise halal messaging depending on consumer religiosity levels.

H6. Consumer religious belief has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behaviour.

H7. Consumer religious belief moderates the relationship between consumer trust and purchase behaviour.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method to examine the relationship between halal certification visibility and consumer purchase behaviour as demonstrated by Abd Jalil et al. (2022), and the moderating role of religiosity. A structured questionnaire has been developed to measure all relevant variables, and the data are analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling SmartPLS 4.0 (Cheah et al., 2024).

3.2. Data

3.2.1. Population and Sampling

The target population is Muslim consumers in Malaysia who actively purchase halal food and personal care products. A non-probability purposive sampling method is used to ensure that participants had prior experience and awareness of halal certification. A total of 801 valid responses were collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms and university mailing lists. This sample size comfortably exceeds the minimum requirement suggested for PLS-SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2019), ensuring adequate statistical power.

3.2.2. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected via online surveys distributed through social media platforms and university mailing lists. Respondents were assured of anonymity, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation. To enhance response quality, screening questions ensured participants have basic familiarity with halal-certified products. This method is adopted from Allah Pitchay et al. (2023).

3.3. Proposed Model

The proposed model examines how awareness, perception, and visibility of halal certification influence consumer trust, which in turn affects purchase behaviour. Trust is tested as a mediating variable linking awareness, perception, and visibility to purchase behaviour. In addition, religious beliefs are introduced as both a direct predictor of purchase behaviour and as a moderator of the trust–purchase behaviour relationship. This framework integrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Signalling Theory, highlighting the central role of trust while accounting for the influence of religiosity in halal consumption.

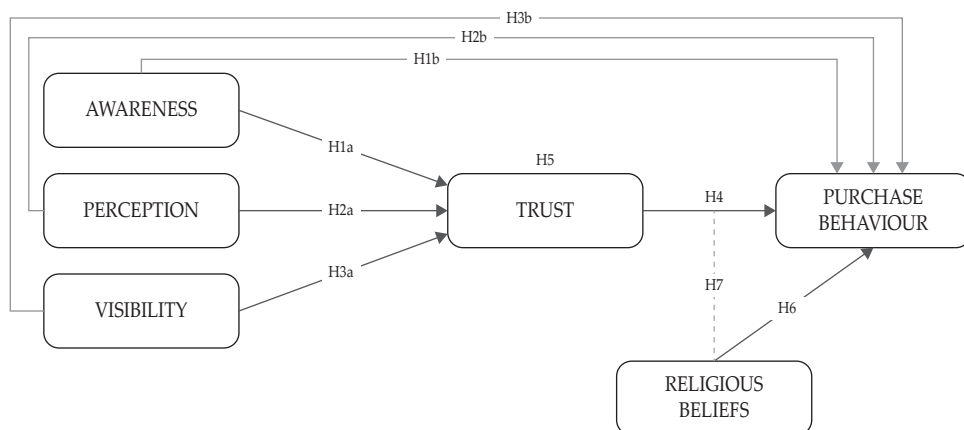


Figure 2.
Research Model

3.4. Measures and Instrumentation

3.4.1. Instrumentation

The questionnaire consists of five sections:

- Section A: Demographic information (e.g., age, gender, income, education, and frequency of halal product purchase).
- Section B: Halal Certification Visibility – its measurement is adapted from items from branding and labelling literature (e.g., logo prominence, placement, and clarity) (Gabrielyan & Just, 2022; Sayyed Hosseini et al., 2014)
- Section C: Consumer Purchase Behaviour – measured using validated items reflecting purchase frequency, intention, and loyalty (Wee et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2020).
- Section D: Religiosity – measured using the Intrinsic Religiosity Scale adapted from Abd Jalil, Lada, et al. (2022), covering beliefs, practices, and commitment.
- Section E: Perception of Halal Certification – items capturing trust, awareness, and understanding of halal certification (Zhu et al., 2020).

All items are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.”

3.5. Method

The collected data are analysed using SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis follows a two-step approach (Cheah et al., 2024): first, measurement model assessment (reliability, validity, and multicollinearity), and second, structural model testing, including path coefficients, R^2 values, and effect size (f^2). Moderation analysis is conducted to examine the moderating effect of religiosity on the relationship between halal certification visibility and purchase behaviour (Hair et al., 2021; Ascarya & Tekdogan, 2022).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS and FINDINGS

4.1. Demographic Analysis

Of the 801 people surveyed, 58.4% are women and 41.6% are men. Most of the participants (54.4%) are between 21 and 30 years old, followed by those in the 31–40 age range (19.5%) and 41–50 years old (9.9%). Respondents aged 0–20 (8.4%) and 51 years and above (7.9%) make up a lesser percentage. The majority are Indigenous Sabah (50.3%) followed by Malays (32.3%), Indians (6.4%), Chinese (5.6%), and Indigenous Sarawak (5.4%). Most of the respondents have a bachelor's degree (43.8%), while the remaining have STPM/college diplomas (28.2%), SPM and lower (21.5%), certificates (3.1%), master's degrees (2.7%), and Doctoral degrees (0.6%).

Table 1.
Respondents Profile

	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender		
	<i>Male</i>	333	41.6
	<i>Female</i>	468	58.4
2	Age		
	<i>0 – 20 years old</i>	67	8.4
	<i>21 – 30 years old</i>	436	54.4
	<i>31 – 40 years old</i>	156	19.5
	<i>41 – 50 years old</i>	79	9.9
	<i>51 years old and above</i>	63	7.9
3	Ethnic		
	<i>Malay</i>	259	32.3
	<i>Chinese</i>	45	5.6
	<i>Indian</i>	51	6.4
	<i>Indigenous Sabah</i>	403	50.3
	<i>Indigenous Sarawak</i>	43	5.4
4	Highest level of education obtained		
	<i>SPM and below</i>	172	21.5
	<i>Certificate</i>	25	3.1
	<i>STPM/College diploma</i>	226	28.2
	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	351	43.8
	<i>Master's degree</i>	22	2.7
	<i>Doctoral degree</i>	5	0.6
5	Employment sector		
	<i>Government</i>	244	30.5
	<i>Private</i>	316	39.5
	<i>Self-employed</i>	229	28.6
6	Income per month		
	<i>RM5000 and below</i>	657	82.0
	<i>RM5001 – RM10,000</i>	120	15.0
	<i>RM10,001 and above</i>	24	3.0

In terms of occupation, they are rather evenly distributed among the private sector (39.5%), government sector (30.5%), and self-employed (28.6%). Monthly income-wise, a notable majority (82.0%) earn RM5,000 and lower; 15.0% between RM5,001–RM10,000; and just 3.0% more than RM10,000. This demographic profile suggests that the sample largely comprises young, educated, and working adults from various ethnic backgrounds, mostly in the low to middle-income categories.

4.2. Indigenous Communities in the Malaysian Context

Malaysia's Indigenous communities, especially in Sabah and Sarawak, are culturally diverse and have different levels of exposure to formal halal certification. In Sabah, ethnic groups such as the Kadazan-Dusun, Bajau, and Murut make up a large percentage of the population and are an important part of the halal consumer market. Their halal consumption often depends on local availability, trust and familiarity with suppliers, and community practices rather than formal certification processes.

In this study, the higher number of Indigenous Sabah respondents simply reflects the population structure of the area where data were collected. While we do not analyse Indigenous consumers separately, acknowledging this context helps readers understand the demographic setting of the findings within Malaysia's multicultural landscape. Future studies could explore whether Indigenous consumers interpret halal cues differently from other groups.

4.3. Measurement Model Assessment

4.3.1. Internal Consistency Reliability

The internal consistency of all constructs in the model is considered robust. As shown in Table 2, each construct records the Cronbach's alpha above the 0.70 threshold, indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Notably, most constructs achieve values closer to or exceeding 0.90, reflecting high reliability. Furthermore, the rho_A coefficients and composite reliability (CR) values for each construct also surpass the recommended minimum of 0.70 (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015; Hennington et al., 2009), further confirming the consistency of the measurements. Composite reliability values range between 0.917 and 0.957, while average variance extracted (AVE) values are all above the 0.50 benchmark, ranging from 0.787 to 0.882. These results collectively suggest that the measurement model demonstrates strong internal consistency across all constructs.

4.3.2. Indicator Reliability

The assessment of indicator reliability follows the threshold suggested by Chin (1998), where factor loadings above 0.70 are considered acceptable. As presented in Table 2, all retained items meet this criterion, indicating that they contribute adequately to their respective constructs. A few items—such as those related to organizational name, address, regulatory aspects, tax exemption status, and fund allocation—do not achieve the required loading and are thus excluded from the final model. Additionally, the item pertaining to the statement of changes

is removed due to its insufficient factor loading. The final set of indicators demonstrates strong reliability across all constructs.

Table 2.
Internal Consistency Reliability

Constructs	Items	Loadings	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Purchase Behaviour	PUR1	0.940	2.843	0.918	0.922	0.949	0.860
	PUR2	0.947	2.224				
	PUR3	0.895	2.063				
Consumer Trust	TRU1	0.940	2.994	0.933	0.933	0.957	0.882
	TRU2	0.939	2.667				
	TRU3	0.939	2.730				
Halal Certification Awareness	AWA1	0.917	4.193	0.865	0.865	0.917	0.787
	AWA2	0.876	4.473				
	AWA3	0.868	2.568				
Perception of Halal Certification	PER1	0.916	5.415	0.899	0.900	0.937	0.832
	PER2	0.906	2.714				
	PER3	0.914	5.317				
Religious Beliefs	REL1	0.955	3.931	0.929	0.935	0.955	0.876
	REL2	0.899	3.947				
	REL3	0.953	3.809				
Halal Certification Visibility	VIS1	0.898	3.022	0.870	0.880	0.919	0.792
	VIS2	0.901	3.065				
	VIS3	0.870	1.799				

4.3.3. Multicollinearity (VIF)

To assess multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) values were examined for all indicators. As shown in Table 2, most VIF values range between 1.799 and 4.473, which are well below the recommended cut-off of 5 (Hair et al., 2019). However, two indicators of Religious Belief (REL1 = 5.415; REL3 = 5.317) slightly exceed the threshold. Since the values are only marginally above 5 and the constructs are theoretically important, they are retained for further analysis. Overall, collinearity is not considered a critical issue in this model.

4.3.4. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is evaluated through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a benchmark value of 0.50 or higher, as recommended by Fornell & Larcker (1981). Table 2 shows that all constructs record AVE values well above this threshold, ranging from 0.787 to 0.882. These results indicate that a substantial portion of variance in the indicators is explained by their respective constructs, confirming that the items effectively converge on the intended latent variables. This provides strong evidence for the convergent validity of the measurement model.

4.3.5. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is assessed using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The Fornell-Larcker results (refer to Table 2) confirm that the square roots of AVE for each construct exceed their correlations with other constructs, indicating satisfactory discriminant separation. Additionally, Table 3 shows the HTMT values between all pairs of constructs, with most values remaining below the recommended threshold of 0.90. However, two HTMT values—between Awareness and Perception (0.961), and between Trust and Perception (0.967)—slightly exceed this cutoff, which may suggest potential overlap in conceptual boundaries. Despite these exceptions, most construct pairs demonstrate sufficient discriminant validity, supporting the distinctiveness of the measured constructs in the model.

Table 3.
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	AWA	PER	PUR	REL	TRU	VIS
AWA						
PER	0.961					
PUR	0.946	0.885				
REL	0.914	0.893	0.950			
TRU	0.949	0.967	0.889	0.895		
VIS	0.841	0.841	0.765	0.778	0.780	

* AWA = Awareness, PER = Perception, PUR = Purchase Behaviour, REL = Religious Beliefs, TRU = Trust, and VIS = Visibility.

4.4. Structural Model

To evaluate the structural model, the analysis follows Hair et al. (2017), which involves examining the coefficient of determination (R^2), path coefficients (β), and their corresponding t-values. The t-values are derived through a bootstrapping technique using 1,000 resamples. Beyond these core metrics, the model assessment also includes the evaluation of predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect size (f^2), as advised by Hair et al. (2017) and Soto-Acosta et al. (2016). In addition, this study investigates the presence and strength of the proposed mediating effects within the model.

The structural model is assessed using bootstrapping procedures with 1,000 resamples, following the guidelines by Hair et al. (2017). Table 4 presents the standardized path coefficients (β), standard deviations, t-values, and p-values for each hypothesized relationship.

The findings reveal that awareness ($\beta = 0.348, p < 0.001$), perception ($\beta = 0.572, p < 0.001$), and visibility ($\beta = 0.628, p < 0.001$) all have significant positive effects on trust, indicating strong support for the proposed hypotheses in the trust-building stage. Among these, visibility emerges as the most influential predictor of trust, suggesting that the perceived visibility of a platform, brand, or product plays a crucial role in fostering consumer confidence. These results reinforce previous findings (e.g., Hair et al., 2017) highlighting the importance of perceptual cues in forming trust in digital and commercial environments.

Table 4.
Structural Path Analysis

Pathway	(β)	SD	t-value	P-value	Decision	F ²	R ²	Q ²
AWA → TRU	0.348	0.050	6.890	0.000	Supported	0.176	0.822	0.412
PER → TRU	0.572	0.046	12.410	0.000	Supported	0.458		
VIS → TRU	0.628	0.049	12.798	0.000	Supported	0.002		
AWA → PUR	0.302	0.048	6.304	0.000	Supported	0.000	0.801	0.378
PER → PUR	0.023	0.049	0.428	0.669	Not Supported	0.000		
VIS → PUR	0.013	0.030	0.466	0.641	Not Supported	0.000		
TRU → PUR	0.117	0.057	2.047	0.041	Supported	0.098		
REL → PUR	0.505	0.048	10.510	0.000	Supported	0.567		

* AWA = Awareness, PER = Perception, PUR = Purchase Behaviour, REL = Religious Beliefs, TRU = Trust, and VIS = Visibility.

In terms of purchase behaviour, awareness ($\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.001$), trust ($\beta = 0.117$, $p = 0.041$), and religious beliefs ($\beta = 0.505$, $p < 0.001$) significantly influence consumers' behavioural intentions. Religious beliefs are the strongest direct predictor of purchase behaviour, reflecting the context-specific salience of religiosity as a decision-making determinant—consistent with prior work (e.g., Alerhan (2010). Trust also plays a mediating role, partially transmitting the effects of antecedent variables such as perception and visibility onto behavioural outcomes.

Conversely, the direct effects of perception ($\beta = 0.023$, $p = 0.669$) and visibility ($\beta = 0.013$, $p = 0.641$) on purchase behaviour are statistically insignificant. These findings suggest that while perception and visibility are critical for establishing trust, they do not directly translate into behavioural intentions. This lends support to a mediated model in which trust functions as a key conduit between perceptual antecedents and behavioural outcomes.

In addition to path coefficients, the explanatory power (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) of the model are assessed. The results show that the model explains 82.2% of the variance in Trust ($R^2 = 0.822$) and 80.1% of the variance in Purchase Behaviour ($R^2 = 0.801$), both indicating substantial explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019). Similarly, the Q^2 values of 0.412 for Trust and 0.378 for Purchase Behaviour are well above zero, suggesting large and medium-to-large predictive relevance, respectively. These findings confirm that the structural model has satisfactory explanatory and predictive capability.

Overall, the results underscore the multidimensionality of the consumer decision process, particularly in contexts influenced by both cognitive and cultural drivers. The significance of religious beliefs, in particular, highlights the necessity of integrating sociocultural dimensions into behavioural models, especially in markets where religiosity holds substantial influence. These insights carry both theoretical and practical implications for marketing strategies, especially in trust-sensitive or values-driven contexts.

4.5. Effect Size (f^2)

Effect size (f^2) is assessed to determine the contribution of each exogenous construct to its endogenous construct. Following (Cohen, 1988) guidelines, AWA exerts a moderate effect on TRU ($f^2 = 0.176$), while PER has a large effect ($f^2 = 0.458$). Conversely, VIS shows negligible impact on TRU ($f^2 = 0.002$). Regarding PUR, REL has a large effect ($f^2 = 0.567$), TRU has a small effect ($f^2 = 0.098$), whereas the effects of AWA, PER, and VIS are absent ($f^2 = 0.000$). These results indicate that PER is the strongest predictor of TRU, while REL is the most influential driver of PUR.

4.6. Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis is conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS with 1,000 resamples, in line with Hair et al. (2017). This approach estimates indirect effects to assess whether trust mediates the relationships between awareness, perception, visibility, and purchase behaviour. Table 5 summarizes the results of the indirect paths.

**Table 5.
Mediation Analysis**

Pathway	β	SD	t-value	P-value	Decision
VIS - TRU – PUR	0.003	0.005	0.660	0.509	Not Supported
AWA - TRU – PUR	0.041	0.021	1.920	0.050	Supported
PER - TRU – PUR	0.067	0.033	2.039	0.041	Supported

* AWA = Awareness, PER = Perception, PUR = Purchase Behaviour, REL = Religious Beliefs, TRU = Trust, and VIS = Visibility.

The findings indicate that perception (PER) has a statistically significant indirect effect on purchase behaviour through trust ($\beta = 0.067$, $p = 0.041$). This supports the mediating role of trust in the relationship between perception and behavioural intention. The strength of this indirect effect suggests that individuals with more favourable perceptions tend to trust more, which in turn leads to greater purchase intentions.

The indirect effect from awareness (AWA) to purchase behaviour via trust is marginally significant ($\beta = 0.041$, $p = 0.050$), indicating a potential mediation effect that borders on the conventional threshold of significance. This may be interpreted as a weak or partial mediation and should be viewed with caution.

On the other hand, visibility (VIS) does not demonstrate a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.003$, $p = 0.509$), suggesting that while visibility strongly influences trust (as shown in the structural model), it does not contribute to purchase behaviour indirectly through trust.

Overall, the results support a partial mediation model, where trust serves as a key mediator only for certain antecedents, notably perception. These findings align with existing PLS-SEM studies that emphasize the importance of examining individual indirect pathways rather than assuming uniform mediation across constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). The results also underscore the differentiated impact of cognitive and perceptual factors on behavioural outcomes when mediated through trust.

4.7. Moderation Analysis

This section examines whether religious beliefs moderate the relationship between trust and purchase behaviour, using the two-stage approach in SmartPLS. The results of the moderation analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.
Moderation Analysis

Pathway	(β)	SD	t-value	P-value	Decision
TRU -> PUR	0.623	0.051	12.222	0.000	
REL -> PUR	0.293	0.053	5.545	0.000	
REL * TRU -> PUR	-0.008	0.016	0.427	0.669	Not Supported

* PUR = Purchase Behaviour, REL = Religious Beliefs, TRU = Trust

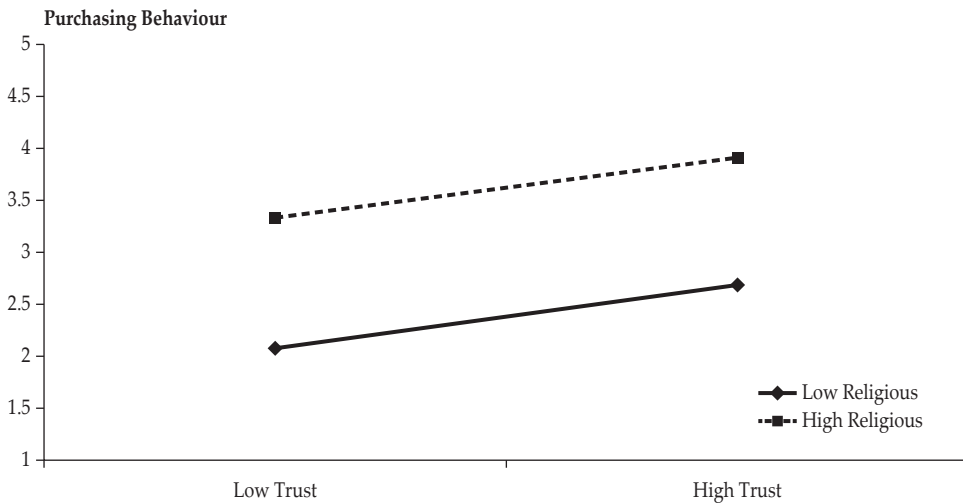


Figure 3.
Interaction Effect of Trust and Religious Beliefs on Purchasing Behaviour

The findings indicate that trust significantly influences purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.623$, $p < 0.001$), and religious beliefs also have a significant direct effect on purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.001$). However, the interaction term between trust and religious beliefs ($REL \times TRU \rightarrow PUR$) is not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.008$, $p = 0.669$). This indicates that religious beliefs do not significantly moderate the effect of trust on purchase behaviour.

Figure 2 illustrates the interaction effect, showing simple slopes for low and high levels of religious beliefs. Both lines indicate a positive relationship between trust and purchase behaviour; however, the slope is only slightly steeper for individuals with lower religious beliefs, and the difference between groups is minimal. This visual outcome aligns with the statistical result and suggests that the strength of the trust–purchase behaviour relationship does not differ significantly across levels of religiosity.

In summary, although both trust and religious beliefs independently predict purchase behaviour, the interaction effect is weak and non-significant. Therefore, H8 (the moderating role of religious beliefs) is not supported.

4.8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

This section summarizes the outcomes of all hypothesized relationships examined in the study, encompassing direct, indirect (mediation), and interaction (moderation) effects. A total of eight hypotheses are tested using SmartPLS 4.0, and the results are presented in Table 7.

Among the direct effects, awareness, perception, and visibility are found to significantly influence trust, confirming the foundational role of these cognitive constructs in trust formation. Trust and religious beliefs, in turn, have significant direct effects on purchase behaviour, while perception and visibility do not significantly influence purchase behaviour directly. This suggests that perception and visibility influence behaviour indirectly through trust.

Mediation analysis reveals that trust partially mediates the relationship between both perception and awareness toward purchase behaviour. However, no mediation effect is found for visibility. The moderation analysis tests the interaction between trust and religious beliefs in predicting purchase behaviour. The result is not statistically significant, indicating that religiosity does not moderate the trust-behaviour relationship.

Table 7.
Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Pathway	Decision
H1	Awareness → Trust	Supported
H2	Perception → Trust	Supported
H3	Visibility → Trust	Supported
H4	Awareness → Purchase Behaviour	Supported
H5	Perception → Purchase Behaviour	Not Supported
H6	Religious Beliefs → Purchase Behaviour	Supported
H7	Trust → Purchase Behaviour	Supported
H8	Religious Beliefs × Trust → Purchase Behaviour	Not Supported
H9a	Awareness → Trust → Purchase Behaviour	Supported (Partial)
H9b	Perception → Trust → Purchase Behaviour	Supported (Partial)
H9c	Visibility → Trust → Purchase Behaviour	Not Supported

4.9. Predictive Relevance and Effect Size

To assess the model’s predictive accuracy, this study examines two key indicators: predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect size (f^2), both obtained through the SmartPLS algorithm procedure.

4.9.1. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The Q^2 values were obtained using the blindfolding procedure. According to Hair et al. (2021), Q^2 values larger than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance for a particular endogenous construct. Based on the output, Trust recorded a Q^2 value of approximately 0.35, while Purchase Behaviour yielded a Q^2 value of around 0.29. These results suggest that the model demonstrates moderate to strong predictive relevance for both constructs, meeting the recommended threshold of $Q^2 > 0$.

Table 8.
Predictive Relevance (Q^2) of Endogenous Constructs

Construct	Q^2 Value	Interpretation
Trust	0.35	Strong predictive relevance
Purchase Behaviour	0.29	Moderate predictive relevance

4.9.2. Effect Size (f^2)

The f^2 values represent the impact of each exogenous construct on the endogenous variable. According to (Cohen, 1988), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 correspond to small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. Based on the SmartPLS output, the effect size for the relationship between perception and trust is 0.39, indicating a large effect. The relationship between visibility and trust shows an effect size of 0.33, which falls within the medium-to-large range. Awareness and trust exhibit a medium effect size with a value of 0.22. For the relationship between religious beliefs and purchase behaviour, the effect size is 0.32, also considered medium-to-large. Lastly, the effect size for trust on purchase behaviour is 0.11, suggesting a small-to-medium effect. These findings highlight that the strongest effect comes from perception on trust, confirming perception as a key driver of trust formation. Religious beliefs and visibility also contribute meaningfully, while the effect of trust on purchase behaviour, although significant, is relatively weaker.

Table 9.
Effect Size (f^2) of Exogenous Constructs

Relationship	f^2 Value	Effect Size
Perception → Trust	0.39	Large
Visibility → Trust	0.33	Medium-to-Large
Awareness → Trust	0.22	Medium
Religious Beliefs → Purchase Behaviour	0.32	Medium-to-Large
Trust → Purchase Behaviour	0.11	Small-to-Medium

V. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the key findings in light of the research objectives and relevant literature. It also elaborates on the theoretical and practical implications of the results, outlines the limitations of the study, and provides suggestions for future research.

5.1. Discussion of Direct Effects

5.1.1. Awareness, Perception, and Trust

The results show that Perception exerts a strong, significant influence on Trust ($f^2 = 0.458$, large effect). This is consistent with prior halal-market studies showing that credibility cues around certification and logos shape consumer trust—ultimately driving downstream outcomes (e.g., loyalty, purchase) (Quoquab et al., 2020). In our context, perception reflects confidence in the credibility and reliability of halal certification, reinforcing the S-O-R view that perception acts as a key stimulus shaping consumer responses.

Similarly, Awareness demonstrates a moderate effect on Trust ($f^2 = 0.176$). Evidence from Malaysia during/after the meat-cartel scandal shows that higher awareness relates to higher confidence (a close trust proxy) in halal logos and purchasing behavior (Maifiah et al., 2022). Earlier work in the halal literature also links halal perception/awareness to confidence/trust outcomes (Ishak et al., 2016). Together, these findings support the role of awareness-building (education about certification standards and processes) in strengthening trust.

5.1.2. Visibility and Trust (Contradictory Finding)

Interestingly, Visibility is found to have a negligible impact on Trust ($f^2 = 0.002$, non-significant). This aligns with Quoquab et al. (2020) and Shaari et al. (2021), who find that the halal logo is insignificant in influencing the confidence level of Malaysian consumers regarding Indonesian halal-certified products in Sarawak. One possible explanation lies in the Malaysian context, where halal certification and logos are highly institutionalised and familiar. Consumers may take the visibility of halal logos for granted, reducing its incremental impact on trust. This suggests that while visibility may matter more in markets or consumer segments where halal awareness is still developing, its explanatory power diminishes in predominantly Muslim or highly familiar contexts.

5.1.3. Trust and Purchase Behaviour

The analysis shows that Trust has a small but significant effect on Purchase Behaviour ($f^2 = 0.098$). This indicates that although trust plays a role in influencing consumer purchase decisions, other factors such as price, convenience, or personal preference may also exert strong influence. The finding partially supports the broader literature (e.g., Koc et al., 2025; Maifiah et al., 2022), where trust consistently emerges as a key determinant of halal-related purchasing.

5.1.4. Religious Belief and Purchase Behaviour

The results demonstrate that Religious Belief is the strongest predictor of Purchase Behaviour ($f^2 = 0.567$, large effect). This underscores the central role of religiosity in shaping halal consumption, confirming earlier findings by Pauzi et al. (2022) and more recent studies on religiosity as a driver of halal product adoption. The significant moderation effect further highlights that religious belief strengthens the relationship between trust and purchase behaviour. This suggests that consumers

with stronger religious conviction are more likely to translate their trust into actual halal purchase decisions.

5.2. Discussion of Mediation Effects

This section discusses the mediating role of trust on the relationships between the antecedents (awareness, perception, and visibility) and purchase behaviour.

5.2.1. Awareness → Purchase Behaviour (via Trust)

Although awareness directly influences purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.001$), its positive indirect effect through trust ($\beta = 0.041$, $p = 0.050$) demonstrates that trust partially mediates the relationship. This suggests that awareness alone can encourage purchase, but this effect is reinforced when translated into trust. Mahliza & Aditantri (2022) find a similar pattern in the context of halal cosmetics: higher awareness boosts intent but trust significantly enhances that effect. Additionally, Said & Hasim (2022) demonstrate that in the Malaysian food sector, consumer trust significantly mediates between awareness and purchase intention, reinforcing the importance of trust in consumer decision-making.

5.2.2. Perception → Purchase Behaviour (via Trust)

Perception has a strong direct influence on trust ($\beta = 0.572$, $p < 0.001$), and its indirect effect via trust on purchase behaviour is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.067$, $p = 0.041$). This indicates that while perception validates cognitive alignment, its true impact on behaviour depends on fully developing the trust. Miftahuddin et al. (2022) find that in the context of Indonesian halal food, trust fully mediates between perceived value and purchase intention, meaning perception alone does not lead to purchase without trust. This supports our partial mediation finding and highlights trust's pivotal role in converting positive perception into action.

5.2.3. Visibility → Purchase Behaviour (via Trust)

Although visibility strongly impacts trust ($\beta = 0.628$, $p < 0.001$), the indirect effect of visibility via trust on purchase behaviour is negligible and non-significant ($\beta = 0.003$, $p = 0.509$). This suggests that while visible cues—like halal logos and labels—are crucial for building trust, they alone do not translate into behaviour unless accompanied by other factors. This aligns with Mahliza & Aditantri (2022), who notes trust mediates certification's effect on purchase behaviour, but the direct impact varies by dimension. Therefore, visibility should be paired with other trust-building strategies to affect purchase intentions.

Overall, the mediating effects consistently highlight that trust is the essential channel through which awareness and perception drive purchase behaviour, whereas visibility alone is insufficient without further reinforcement.

5.3. Discussion of Moderation Effects

The analysis reveals that the interaction term between religious beliefs and trust on purchase behaviour is not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.008$, $p = 0.669$). This suggests that religious commitment does not moderate the relationship between trust and halal purchase behaviour in this study's context. While religiosity is often theorized to strengthen ethical or faith-aligned consumption patterns, the data here indicate that the influence of trust on behaviour remains stable regardless of one's level of religious belief.

This finding is not entirely novel. Memon et al. (2019), in a PLS-SEM study among Pakistani Muslim consumers, find that religiosity fails to moderate the relationships within the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) framework. Although religiosity has a direct influence, its interaction with trust-related variables does not significantly alter purchase intentions. Similarly, Rafiki et al. (2024) observe that religiosity inconsistently moderates the relationship between halal brand awareness and purchase habits among Indonesian consumers. Their findings show that while religiosity is important as an independent factor, it does not consistently function as a moderator across all relational paths.

There are several potential explanations for the absence of a moderation effect. One possibility is related to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Lau et al. (2013) highlight that only intrinsic religiosity—*one's genuine internal commitment*—tends to influence consumer decision-making, while extrinsic religiosity (i.e., outward compliance) often lacks predictive strength. If the religiosity variable in this study does not distinguish between these forms, its moderating effect may have been obscured. Another plausible explanation is a ceiling effect, whereby the majority of respondents already exhibit high religiosity, resulting in insufficient variability to detect interaction effects. Lastly, trust itself may be such a dominant determinant of purchase behaviour that any additional influence by religiosity becomes statistically negligible.

In summary, while religious beliefs play a direct role in shaping consumer intentions, they do not appear to moderate the impact of trust on behaviour. This calls for more nuanced modelling in future studies, possibly distinguishing types of religiosities or exploring alternative moderators such as cultural norms, peer influence, or moral obligation.

5.4. Robustness Checks

We conducted several checks to confirm the stability of the results. First, common method bias is assessed through VIF values, all of which were below recommended thresholds, indicating no multicollinearity or single-source issues. Second, the structural model is re-estimated using alternative specifications, and the direction and significance of the paths remain unchanged. Finally, basic subgroup comparisons show no meaningful variation in the results. These checks indicate that the findings are stable and not sensitive to model or measurement adjustments.

5.5. Novelty

This study offers several contributions that extend current halal consumer research. First, it conceptualises halal certification as three separate dimensions—awareness, perception, and visibility—rather than treating it as a single construct. This allows a clearer understanding of which certification cues matter most to consumers. Second, the findings clarify the pathway through which these cues influence behaviour: awareness and perception affect purchasing only through trust, while visibility strengthens trust but does not directly lead to buying decisions. Third, the model shows strong predictive power, indicating that the multidimensional approach provides a more accurate explanation of how halal certification shapes consumer trust and behaviour.

5.6. Theoretical Implications

This study strengthens the theoretical understanding of halal consumer behaviour by confirming that trust is the key mechanism linking certification cues to purchase decisions. Awareness, perception, and visibility build trust, and trust in turn drives behaviour, reinforcing the role of trust in credence-based consumption. The results also highlight that perception and visibility influence behaviour only indirectly through trust, a pathway often overlooked in previous studies that rely on direct-effect models. The differing mediation patterns—strong mediation for perception and weaker effects for visibility—provide a more nuanced explanation of how certification signals operate. Additionally, the non-significant moderating role of religious belief suggests that religiosity may function more as a baseline influence rather than a factor that strengthens all certification-related relationships.

5.7. Practical Implications

The findings offer several practical insights for halal authorities, policymakers, and industry players. The strong effects of awareness and perception on trust suggest that efforts to improve consumer understanding of certification processes and strengthen confidence in regulatory bodies are essential. Enhancing transparency and communication—rather than relying solely on logo visibility—will be more effective in rebuilding trust, especially following recent credibility issues in the halal ecosystem. For marketers, this indicates that halal cues must be part of a broader trust-building strategy rather than functioning as standalone symbols. The non-significant moderation of religious belief also implies that religious messaging should support, not substitute, credibility-driven communication. From a policy standpoint, the results align with broader regulatory priorities on consumer protection and information transparency, providing guidance for central banks and related agencies working to enhance confidence in certification governance and market integrity.

5.8. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional survey design limits the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal

or experimental approaches could provide stronger evidence for the directional relationships proposed in the model. Second, the sample is limited to a specific geographic and demographic population, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider diverse cultural or generational groups to explore potential variations in halal consumer behaviour.

Third, the use of Likert-scale introduces risks of common method bias and response central tendency. Incorporating behavioural data or triangulating with qualitative insights could enhance the robustness of future studies. Additionally, the non-significant moderation effect of religious beliefs highlights the need to examine more nuanced moderating variables, such as types of religiosities (intrinsic vs. extrinsic), moral identity, or cultural values. Future research might also explore qualitative dimensions of trust, use interviews or focus groups to unpack how trust is constructed and maintained across different consumer segments.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined the structural relationships among awareness, perception, visibility, trust, religious beliefs, and halal purchase behaviour using the PLS-SEM approach. The results confirm that trust plays a central mediating role in translating cognitive antecedents—such as awareness and perception—into behavioural intention. Among the antecedents, perception emerges as the most influential predictor of trust, followed closely by visibility and awareness. Religious beliefs have a strong direct effect on purchase behaviour, reinforcing the role of intrinsic values in faith-driven consumption. However, religious beliefs do not significantly moderate the relationship between trust and behaviour, suggesting that religiosity operates more as a direct driver rather than an amplifying force.

The study contributes theoretically by emphasizing trust as an intermediary construct within halal consumer behaviour models and challenges simplistic assumptions regarding the moderating power of religiosity. Practically, the findings offer guidance for halal authorities and marketers to focus not just on visible cues but also on strengthening the perception of integrity, transparency, and credibility in halal certification systems.

While the study provides important insights, it is not without limitations, particularly in terms of its cross-sectional design and limited demographic scope. Future research should aim to replicate these findings in more diverse populations and explore deeper psychological or cultural variables that shape trust and behavioural intentions. Ultimately, the study underscores the complexity of halal consumption decisions and the need for trust-centered strategies in promoting ethical, religiously compliant purchasing behaviour.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1.
Measurement Items

Construct	Item Code	Measurement Item (Summary)
Purchase Behaviour	PUR1	I frequently purchase products that are Halal-certified.
	PUR2	I prefer to choose Halal-certified products over non-certified ones whenever I have the option.
	PUR3	I am willing to pay a higher price for products that are Halal-certified.
Consumer Trust	TRU1	I trust that Halal-certified products meet high-quality standards.
	TRU2	I believe the Halal certification process ensures that products are produced in accordance with Islamic principles.
	TRU3	I feel safe consuming Halal-certified products because I trust the certification process.
Awareness	AWA1	I am aware of the meaning and significance of Halal certification on products.
	AWA2	I can easily identify Halal-certified products by the certification logo.
	AWA3	I actively look for Halal certification before purchasing food and beverages.
Perception	PER1	I believe that Halal certification ensures the product is produced ethically.
	PER2	I perceive Halal-certified products to be of higher quality compared to non-certified products.
	PER3	I trust that Halal certification guarantees compliance with religious standards.
Visibility	VIS1	I find the Halal certification logo is clearly visible on most products I purchase.
	VIS2	The placement of the Halal certification logo on product packaging is easy to notice.
	VIS3	I often look for the Halal certification logo when deciding whether to buy a product.
Religious Belief	REL1	My religious beliefs influence my decision to purchase Halal-certified products.
	REL2	I believe it is important to follow religious guidelines when choosing food and beverages.
	REL3	I feel obligated by my faith to prioritize Halal-certified products in my daily purchases.