AicE-Bs2024Bandung

12th Asia-Pacific International Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies
Savoy Homann Bidakara Hotel, Bandung, Indonesia, 04-05 Oct 2024

Shaping Consumers' Attitude and Purchase Intention towards Halal Sustainable Organic Food Products

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Abstract
Increased global recognition of organic food has prompted developed nations to adopt ecological agriculture concepts. This trend is also reflected within the sustainable Halal (permissible) organic food sector. This study examines whether Halal awareness, certification, social influences, and promotion affect consumers' attitude and subsequently, intention to purchase Halal organic food in Malaysia. Using convenient sampling technique, online surveys were conducted with 200 usable responses. A Smart PLS statistical software was used for data analyses. Results revealed that Halal awareness, certification, and social influence significantly affect attitudes, which, in turn, significantly influence consumers' intentions to purchase Halal organic food products. Implications are addressed.

Keywords: Halal Sustainable Organic Food Products, Halal Awareness & Certification, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Purchase Intention.

1.0 Introduction

Concerns about conventional agricultural practices, food safety, human health, animal welfare, and the environment drive increased global interest in organically produced products. In Malaysia, its population has gradually become distinctive in terms of addressing health and well-being issues. The demand for organic food products is also expanding rapidly, leading to an escalated awareness of healthy lifestyle practices (Bahrainizad & Abedini, 2023; Pang et al., 2021; Md. Ariff et al., 2014). Consumers believe it could contribute to global sustainability by preserving the environment and human health (Mohd Suki et al., 2022; Ayub et al., 2020; Ariffin, 2019a). Moreover, Ismail et al. (2018) mentioned that Halal (or permissible) products have gained a broader market globally over the last few decades. Nonetheless, the Halal concept still needs to be better understood by non-Muslim consumers due to unfamiliarity and minimal information on Halal consumption observed (Chong et al. (2022). Despite the need for more insights into non-Muslims' behaviour toward Halal consumption, limited evidence on such awareness towards the relatable benefits further restricts the sustainable business sector's ability to enter and develop the Halal organic food market effectively. Given this, a greater understanding of how Malaysian consumers view Halal organic foods, irrespective of religion, should be undertaken because it could facilitate food producers in potentially producing and marketing their products effectively. Following the above concerns, the aim of this study is to investigate influencing factors of consumers' purchase intention towards Halal sustainable organic food. Specifically, the study's objective examines whether Halal

awareness, Halal certification, promotion and social influence consumers' attitudes and, in turn, subsequently influence their intention to purchase Halal-based organic food in Malaysia.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour
The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991) attempts to understand and predict human actions based on their intentionality. It posits that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control primarily shape a person's intention to engage in a behaviour. By understanding these causes, TPB provides insights into various aspects of human behaviour and offers guidance on how interventions can effectively promote behaviour change. It can further enhance the understanding of intentional behaviour regarding whether perceived behavioural control over specific resources can influence their propensity to purchase and consume organic products (Vizana et al., 2021).In this context, perceived behavioural control on halal awareness, halal certification, and promotion is required to understand the rationale behind consumers' attitude towards halal sustainable organic food and, subsequently, their willingness to purchase halal sustainable organic food products.

2.2 Behavioural Intention
Behavioural intention reflects an individual's likelihood of adopting a behaviour (Ajzen, 2015). Vizano et al. (2021) mentioned that individuals generally make their own purchase decisions and that purchasing a product would be higher if they intend to purchase it. Intention to purchase Halal organic food products is driven by consumers who are aware of Halal products and, thus, may want to avoid taking any risk in the future (Marmaya et al., 2019).

2.3 Attitude
Attitude is one of the significant factors in determining a potential behaviour of interest (Ajzen, 1991). Garg and Joshi (2018) found a positive relationship between attitude and halal product purchase intention. Riptiono (2020) stated that Muslim consumers must have a positive attitude towards Halal products, especially on food and beverages that emphasise cleanliness and authenticity. On the other hand, the authors found that attitudes differ for non-Muslim consumers based on their religious viewpoints, such that those having a high level of religiosity would be more motivated to follow religious standards as compared to consumers with a low degree of religiosity. In Malaysia, non-Muslim consumers' attitudes positively influence their purchasing intention towards Halal food products (Pang et al., 2021). Non-Muslims were perceived to be more interested in Halal products if there are potential benefits observed in following the Halal concept during food production (Lee et al., 2017). Ariffin et al., (2019a) found that perceived Halal organic food plays a substantial role in non-Muslims' purchase behaviour since there is a significant positive interest in attitudes towards such organic food products.

2.4 Social Influence
Social influence, also known as subjective norms, is an individual's perception that most people who are important to him or her think that he or she should or should not perform the behaviour in question (Ajzen, 1991; Yau & Ho, 2015). Subjective norms in Malaysia play an important role in purchasing since family, friends, and colleagues act as focal referencing points (Sohail et al., 2022; Putit & Muhammad, 2015). Recent studies (e.g. Sohail et al., 2022; Garg & Joshi, 2018) found that subjective norms significantly influenced consumers' purchase intention of Halal-based products. On the other hand, Hossain et al. (2019) stated that product pricing can also influence subjective norms based on an individual's decision to buy organic food products. Subjective norms or social influence may affect consumer behaviour in aspects related to the social relationships of consumers that motivate the consumption of organic food products (Wang et al., 2018; Curvelo et al., 2019). Wang et al. (2018) further found that social influence has a significant effect on Attitudes towards organic food.

2.5 Halal Awareness
The organic food industry in Malaysia is promising due to an increased awareness among its consumers concerning the health benefits of consuming organic food. However, non-Muslim Malaysian consumers need help navigating between green products and organic food products (Li & Jaharuddin, 2020). Ramadani et al. (2022) further stated that awareness only sometimes leads to understanding consumers. Instead, it is an ability to be more conscious because of concern towards Halal food products in the market. Hence, it is essential to raise consumer awareness about Halal products and their benefits, as it would contribute to consumers' propensity to purchase Halal organic food products. It is believed that if a consumer does not have prior awareness of a product, there is an excellent likelihood that they will not plan to purchase it, whether the products are Halal or non-Halal (Shahnia et al., 2024; Bashir et al., 2018; Arlisa et al., 2021).

2.6 Halal Certification
Halal certification reflects official recognition regarding the orderly preparation, slaughtering, cleaning, handling, and other relevant management practices by an authorised public agency such as *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia* (or JAKIM) (Aziz & Chok, 2013). Khan et al. (2016) mentioned that Halal certification entails certifying products or services as the Islamic Syariah law decreed. Consumers nowadays are becoming more conscious of Halal certification and labelling of the product ingredients (Ariffin et al., 2019a). This is because many retailers have failed to display their Halal certificates as they prefer to use the term "pork-free" to convince

customers (Ariffin et al., 2019b). In ensuring the Halal quality of goods produced for the consumer market, certification and verification are crucial in assuring potential consumers (Shania et al., 2024).

2.7 Promotion
Nowadays, promotion, specifically advertising, positively influences consumers' inclination to purchase the desired products or services. Advertising is a non-personal entertainment that promotes goods or services via mass media to reach the target audience (Hadadi & Almsafir, 2013; LaMarco, 2019). Generally, Muslim customers tend to examine the Halal status of products or services initially to determine whether these products are considered Halal (permissible) or Haram (forbidden). Liang et al. (2016) stated that promotion could influence Malaysian consumers' Attitudes toward purchasing Halal organic food products targeted in a vast market because of effective communication strategies that further enhance the unique characteristics of the food products. However, more research must be conducted to explain the underlying value of marketing promotion in measuring consumer intention to purchase (Haidir & Shakib, 2017).

Following the above, several hypotheses were developed. Figure 1 illustrated the proposed theoretical framework.
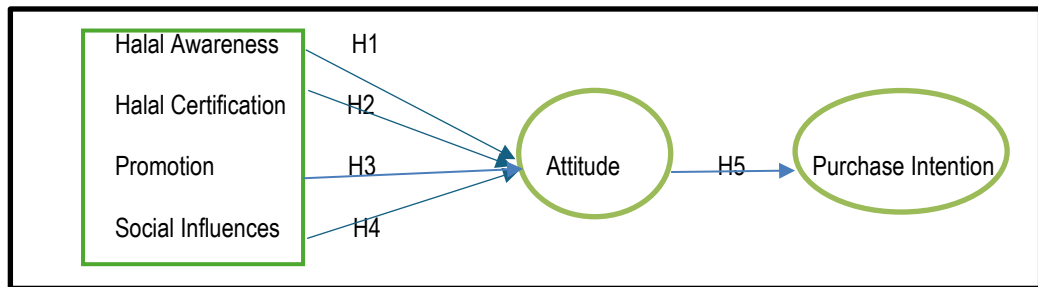

Figure 1 – Theoretical framework

3.0 Methodology
This study adopts a quantitative research design by using a convenient sampling technique. An online data collection of 250 questionnaire surveys was observed, and a subsequent return rate of 200 usable feedback was received. Sample sizes between 100 and 200 would be fitting and adequate (Hair et al., 2019). The research instruments used to measure all items for the survey questionnaire were adopted from previous research and adapted to this study. Data was analysed using SmartPLS 4.0 statistical software version 4.1.0.2 (Ringle et al., 2024) for descriptive and multivariate analyses. Web power websites were applied to assess multivariate normality. The Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis were also scrutinised to determine any potential non-normality of data. Furthermore, the common Method Bias was tested since a single source approach was applied in the data collection stage.

4.0 Data Analysis And Findings

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis
In this study, 200 usable data were collected and analysed to determine the demographic characteristics of targeted respondents. For gender, the highest percentage was female at 70.6% (n=141), followed by male respondents at 29.4% (n= 59. The age group ranged from 18 years and above. This study's highest age group was those between 36 and 40, at 71.9%(n= 144). Most of the respondents are single at 72.4% (n= 145). Moreover, the majority has at least a bachelor's degree qualification at 45.7%% (n= 91.4). In terms of ethnicity, most respondents were Malay at 76%% (n= 152)., followed by Chinese at 10.9%% (n= 22)., and Indians at 7.2% % (n=14). and others at 5.9%% (n= 12) respectively. Islam is the main religion at 80.1% % (n= 160), followed by Buddhism at 10% % (n=20), Christianity at 2.3% % (n=4.6%9), Hinduism at 4.5%% (n=9) and others at 3.1%% (n= 6.2). The analysis was based on 200 usable data from targeted respondents, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Demographic Profile

Profile	Descriptive Profile	Per cent	Frequency (n=200)
Gender	Female	70.6	141
	Male	29.4	59
Age	18 - 27 years old	71.9	144
	28 – 37 years old	7.7	16
	38 – 47 years old	11.8	24

	Above 48 years old	8.1	16
Marital Status	Single	75.1	145
	Married	24.9	55
Education	Postgraduate Degree	9.9	20
	Undergraduate Degree	45.7	91
	STPM/Matriculation/Diploma	32.1	64
	High School	12.3	25
Ethnicity	Malay	76.0	152
	Chinese	10.9	22
	Indian	7.2	14
	Others	5.9	12

The researchers have applied partial least squares (PLS) modelling by using the SmartPLS 4.0 version 4.1.0.1 (Ringle et al., 2022) statistical software. The aim is to examine the measurement and structural model as it does not require normality assumption and survey research is not normally distributed (Chin et al., 2003). Since data was collected using a single source, we first tested the issue of Common Method Bias by following the suggestion of Kock (2015) in testing the full collinearity. In this method, all the variables would be regressed against a standard variable, and if the VIF ≤ 3.3, then no bias from the single source data is observed. The analysis yielded a VIF of less than 3.3as illustrated in Table 2; thus, single-source bias is not a severe issue with the data.

Table 2. Full Collinearity Testing

Halal Awareness	Halal Certification	Marketing Promotion	Social Influence	Purchase Intention
1.256	1.618	1.316	2.445	2.481

4.2 Measurement model

The model developed was tested using a 2-step approach: the measurement model to assess the instruments' validity and reliability; and the structural model to examine the hypothesis developed. In Step 1, we measured the loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) for the measurement model. The loading values should be ≥ 0.5, the AVE should be ≥ 0.5, and the CR should be ≥ 0.7. As shown in Table 3, the AVEs are all higher than 0.5, and most of the CRs are higher than 0.7, except for the halal certification at 0.643. Nevertheless, the value is acceptable for exploratory research (Hair et al., 2014). The loadings were also acceptable, with six loadings having less than 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019). In step 2, we assessed the discriminant validity using the HTMT criterion suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) and updated by Franke and Sarstedt (2019). As shown in Table 4, the values of HTMT were all lower than the criterion of ≤ 0.90. As such, the six constructs are very distinct. These validity tests have shown that the measurement items are valid and reliable.

Table 3. Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR
Attitude	ATT1	0.836	0.628	0.854
	ATT2	0.79		
	ATT3	0.695		
	ATT4	0.842		
	ATT5	0.791		
Halal Awareness	HA1	0.739	0.509	0.772
	HA2	0.697		
	HA3	0.714		
	HA4	0.715		

	HA5	0.702		
Halal Certification	HC2	0.809	0.58	0.643
	HC3	0.764		
	HC4	0.707		
Marketing Promotion	MP2	0.819	0.589	0.832
	MP3	0.704		
	MP4	0.768		
	MP5	0.752		
	MP6	0.789		
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.793	0.639	0.868
	PI2	0.793		
	PI3	0.758		
	PI4	0.83		
	PI5	0.821		
Social Influence	SI1	0.786	0.595	0.837
	SI2	0.799		
	SI3	0.828		
	SI4	0.768		
	SI5	0.665		

Note: Item HC1, HC5, PI6 and MP1 were deleted due to low loadings

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

	Attitude	Halal Awareness	Halal Certification	Marketing Promotion	Purchase Intention	Social Influence
Attitude	■					
Halal Awareness	0.711	■				
Halal Certification	0.883	0.722	■			
Promotion	0.625	0.611	0.628	■		
Purchase Intention	0.878	0.653	0.741	0.634	■	
Social Influence	0.792	0.644	0.824	0.718	0.845	■

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standard Beta	Standard Error	t-value	p-values	BCI LL	BCI UL	VIF
1	Halal Awareness -> Attitude	0.225	0.066	3.414	0.001	0.097	0.352	1.629
2	Halal Certification -> Attitude	0.305	0.076	4.033	0	0.159	0.458	1.766
3	Marketing Promotion -> Attitude	0.100	0.057	1.745	0.081	-0.012	0.211	1.648
4	Social Influence -> Attitude	0.307	0.085	3.626	0	0.147	0.477	2.031
5	Attitude -> Purchase Intention	0.755	0.034	22.403	0	0.676	0.812	1.00

4.3 Structural model

As recommended, we then assessed multivariate skewness and kurtosis (Jammalamadaka et al., 2021). The results showed that the data collected was not multivariate normal; Mardia's multivariate skewness (β = 1565.775, p< 0.01) and Mardia's multivariate kurtosis (β = 3938.498, p< 0.01). Following Hair et al. (2022) suggestion, the path coefficients, the standard errors, t-values, and p-values for the structural model was reported using a 10,000-sample re-sample bootstrapping procedure. Table 5 summarises the criteria used to test the hypotheses developed. First, we tested the effect of the four predictors on attitude; the R^2 value was 0.592 (Attitude), indicating that all these four predictors explained 59.2% of the variance in Attitude. Next, we tested the effect of Attitude on Purchase Intention, with an R^2 value of 0.570, demonstrating that attitude significantly explains 57% of the variance in Purchase Intention. In testing the hypotheses, we followed the procedures by bootstrapping the direct effect as shown in Table 5; for Halal Awareness→ Attitude (β = 0.225, p< 0.05), Halal Certification→Attitude (β = 0.305, p< 0.05), Promotion→Attitude (β = 0.100, p> 0.05), Social Influence→Attitude (β = 0.307, p< 0.05), and Attitude→Purchase Intention (β = 0.755, p< 0.05). Additionally, the confidence interval bias was corrected by

95%, and intervals were displayed straddling a 0 for the direct relationship of Promotion→Attitude, thus confirming the findings. Therefore, H1, H2, H3 and H5 were supported. However, the Promotion→Attitude (β = 0.100, p> 0.05) of H4 was not supported.

5.0 Discussion And Implications

All three H1, H2, and H3 hypotheses were significantly accepted from the data analyses and findings. This study substantially explained the total variance in attitude at 59.2% by these three main predictors (Halal awareness-H1, Halal certification-H2 and Social influence - H3). Promotion (H4) was, however, insignificant in influencing consumers' Attitudes towards Halal sustainable organic food purchases. Subsequently, Attitude (H5) explains 57% of the variance in Purchase Intention towards Halal sustainable organic food products among Malaysian consumers. It is also the strongest predictor (β =0.757) of purchase intention.

H1 and H2 findings revealed that halal awareness and halal certification significantly affect Attitude, thus support past studies. For example, Chong et al. (2022) and Riptiono (2020) found an incremental observation among Muslim and non-Muslim communities toward Halal products, which could be perceived as healthier and more secure. Shahnia et al. (2024) found that in ensuring the Halal quality of goods produced for the consumer market, halal awareness, certification and verification are crucial to assure potential target consumers. Ramadani et al. (2022) further stated that awareness only sometimes leads to understanding consumers. Instead, it is an ability to be more conscious because of concern towards Halal food products in the market. Hence, it is essential to raise consumer awareness about Halal products and their benefits, as it would contribute to consumers' propensity to purchase Halal organic food products. Hence, H1 and H2 were supported.

Additionally, the H3 finding is also significant in that social influence positively impacts Attitudes towards halal organic food products among Malaysian consumers. Social influence is the second strongest predictor (β= 0.307) towards Attitude. This finding supports Sohail et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2019), who revealed that social influence also affects non-Muslims' attitudes and purchase intentions of halal products. Non-Muslim respondents have also been influenced by the significant people in their lives when buying halal organic food. Meanwhile, Sohail et al. (2022) and Garg & Joshi (2018) further confirmed the significant role of social influence in adopting halal cosmetic products. Thus, social influences such as friends', relatives', and close family members' opinions facilitate consumers gain knowledge and build confidence in halal sustainable organic food. Moreover, Malaysian consumers require preliminary affirmations and opinions from significant others to determine how much it can influence their propensity to purchase Halal organic food. However, this finding is not surprising as Malaysia is a Muslim country; products are generally in demand, widely used and accepted by the community. Also, it justifies that consumers' adoption of new products is mainly motivated by social recognition and approval influences (Ajzen, 1991; Pavlou & Chai, 2002; Putit et al., 2021). Thus, H3 was supported.

The H4 finding is insignificant. It is found to have a negative impact (P > 0.05, β=0.100) on purchase consumers' Attitudes towards Halal sustainable organic food purchases. This is consistent with past research by Nasirun et al. (2019), which investigated the role of marketing mix and halal certificate in the purchase intention of agriculture-based products, to which promotional influence was insignificant in consumers' purchase intention. In this study context, the respondents may perceive that halal organic product promotions is not an important factor in influencing their attitude towards their purchase intention since they are already familiar with the concept of halal and organic products. Thus, H4 was rejected.

Lastly, the H5 finding is significant and supports recent research. For example, Shania et al. (2024) found that a positive Attitude towards a halal product will result in a positive response to its benefits. On the other hand, Vizano et al. (2021) found that consumers' attitudes towards organic food were significantly positive as they responded positively to the health benefits. Also, Lee et al. (2017) revealed that non-Muslims were more interested in Halal products if potential benefits could be observed in following the Halal concept during food production. Pang et al. (2021) further stated that non-Muslim consumers' positive attitudes significantly influenced purchase intention towards Halal food products. Kamalul Ariffin et al. (2019) and Nora & Sriminarti (2023) also confirmed that attitude significantly influences consumers' intention to purchase halal organic foods.

Consumers' rising concern over health nowadays thus opens another potential opportunity for Malaysian Halal food producers. Both the Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia have favourable attitudes towards Halal organic food. For Muslim consumers, choosing Halal food is obligatory and is considered a religious requirement based on Islamic teachings. Non-Muslim consumers value Halal because of its health benefits, which are essentially voluntary based on an individual decision rather than a religious obligation and requirement. Given this, having a significant positive attitude could lead to a greater propensity to undertake purchase intention amongst Malaysian consumers, which later transforms into actual purchase behaviour. As Halal-certified food products guarantee hygiene and cleanliness, the concept is parallel to fulfilling the needs of health-conscious consumers on how they want their food to be produced or prepared.

6.0 Conclusion

In essence, this study aimed to examine the extent to which halal awareness, certification, social influences, and promotion may influence Malaysian consumers' Attitudes towards Halal sustainable organic products; Attitude in turn affects their purchase intention behaviour. From a business perspective, the study's results imply that companies must constantly review their existing strategies within the halal organic food-based business sector. Applying new effective marketing strategies may ensure continuous sustainability of their product availability and business performance in the long run. Several limitations were observed involving a focus on quantitative research design, and intentional behaviour only. Qualitative research could be further undertaken to explore other potentially significant

issues affecting consumers' willingness to purchase halal sustainable organic products. Future research could further investigate continuance acceptance of such behaviour amongst consumers across different nations.

Funding Acknowledgement

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes towards the understanding of individuals' sustainable consumption behaviour and sustainable production of food products and services within the industrial business sectors. It also contributes to the achievement of Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), that includes SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) respectively.

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