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## HALAL CERTIFIED PRODUCTS PREFERENCES AMONG GENERATION Z IN MALAYSIA

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### Abstract:

The halal industry has experienced significant growth globally, driven by increasing consumer awareness, lifestyle changes, and demand for ethical and quality-assured products. In Malaysia, Generation Z represents an emerging consumer segment whose preferences towards halal certified products remain underexplored, particularly beyond religious considerations. Despite the widespread availability of halal certified products, limited empirical evidence exists on the factors influencing Gen Z consumers' preferences in the Malaysian context. This study aims to examine the influence of halal lifestyle and values, social circle influence, and perceived halal benefits of halal certified products on preferences towards halal certified products among Generation Z consumers in Malaysia. A quantitative research design was employed, using a structured questionnaire administered through an online survey. Data were collected from 200 Generation Z respondents using a snowball sampling technique. The data were analysed using SPSS, incorporating reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The results reveal that halal lifestyle and values and perceived halal benefits of halal certified products have a significant positive influence on preferences towards halal certified products. In contrast, social circle influence was found to

have no significant effect. The findings suggest that Generation Z consumers' preferences are primarily driven by personal values and perceived functional benefits such as health, safety, and quality, rather than social influence. This study contributes to the halal marketing literature by providing insights into Gen Z consumer behaviour and offers practical implications for halal producers and marketers in developing targeted strategies that align with the values and expectations of younger consumers.

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Generation Z; Halal Certified Products; Malaysia; Product Preferences; Social Influence



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## Introduction

The Muslim consumer population was estimated at 1.6 billion in 2020 and is projected to grow to 2.2 billion by 2030 (Usman et al., 2022). While for halal industry, it was valued at 2.2 trillion U.S. dollars in 2019 and is anticipated to reach 3.2 trillion by 2024 (Talib et al., 2020). Malaysia, as one of the world's leading Muslim-majority countries, has become a focal point for the halal industry and contributes significantly to this market as a key exporter of halal goods. Hence, it led to the increasing of Halal studies which garnered significant attention in the fields of marketing, management, and supply chain. On top of that, consumers today are more aware and conscious, which has resulted in a greater demand for high-quality products and services. This growing expectation has also contributed to the increasing popularity of halal-certified products among both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. Malaysia, with a significant Muslim population, has a robust demand for halal-certified products. The country is recognized globally as a leader in the halal industry, largely due to strong support from its government and institutions like JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia), which oversees halal certification. Halal certified products, which ensures that products comply with Islamic dietary laws, is not only a religious necessity but also a significant consumer preference for Muslim consumers, particularly among the younger generation. Halal-certified products refer as goods that meet the dietary and ethical standards outlined in Islamic law (Sharia). The certification received ensures these products are permissible (halal) for Muslims to use or consume and the process involves rigorous checks, including the exclusion of forbidden (haram) ingredients such as pork, alcohol, and improperly slaughtered animals, and adherence to hygienic practices during production and handling. Beyond food and beverages, halal certification extends to cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, clothing, and even financial services. For instance, it verifies that non-food items like cosmetics are free from prohibited substances and manufactured without contamination. Halal certification assures consumers of product safety, quality, and compliance with Islamic principles, benefiting businesses by increasing

trust and access to Muslim-majority and ethically conscious markets (Halal Food Council, 2024). Nevertheless, the general consumer behavior in purchasing halal-certified products remains underexplored and necessitates further investigation to identify the important factors influencing them to purchase halal certified product (Fauzi, 2023). Therefore, this study focusing on the Generation Z consumers in Malaysia and their preferences towards halal-certified products. Generation Z (Gen Z), often defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a cohort deeply shaped by technological and social transformations. They are the first truly digital-native generation, having grown up with smartphones, social media, and constant internet connectivity (Lev, 2021). Academically, Gen Z are characterized by their diversity, pragmatism, entrepreneurial spirit, and emphasis on social and environmental responsibility. Study by Widyanto, (2022) explained that Gen Z represents a growing segment of halal-certified product consumers, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been widely used to analyze Gen Z's intention to purchase halal products, showing that factors such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control play significant roles in their decisions (Sudarsono et al., 2024). In conclusion, the motivation for this study can be divided into three main categories. First, it aims to identify factors influencing the preferences of Gen Z consumers towards halal-certified products, extending beyond food and beverages. Halal certified products can be categorized as both physical goods and services, and focusing solely on one category would fail to fully capture the significance of certification in consumer decisions. Secondly, this study also focusing on the generation Z of non-Muslim consumers. The global halal industry is expanding not only in Muslim-majority nations but also gaining traction in non-Muslim countries. This trend is driven by non-Muslim nations actively advancing their halal industries in response to globalization, shifting demographics, and fostering bilateral ties with Muslim-majority countries. Consequently, the growth of the halal industry is aimed at catering to the Muslim market within non-Muslim regions (Konety et al., 2023). In line with study of Ali et al., (2021) explained that halal market is rapidly growing in non-Muslim-majority countries such as China and they are increasingly seeking halal products not for religious reasons but due to assurances of quality, safety, and ethical production practices (Ismail et al., 2024). Finally, halal represents an emerging business sector that is gaining increasing popularity (Fauzi, 2023; Haleem et al., 2020) particularly among generation Z. It is anticipated that halal-certified products will capture a larger market share in the near future, as more consumers recognize their importance in addressing food safety concerns related to cleanliness, quality, and sustainability (wholesomeness) (Ab Talib et al., 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: Does halal lifestyle trends and values have a positive and significant relationship on the preferences of halal-certified products among Generation Z in Malaysia?

RQ2: Does social circle influence have a positive and significant relationship on the preferences of halal-certified products among Generation Z in Malaysia?

RQ3: Does perceived benefit of halal-certified products have a positive and significant relationship on the preferences of halal-certified products among Generation Z in Malaysia?

## Literature Review

This section discussed the literature review related to the halal certified product preferences among Generation Z in Malaysia, halal lifestyle and values, social circle influence and perceived benefit of halal certified products which is used as the variable in this study.

## ***Halal Certified Product***

The term "halal" which translates to "permissible" in Arabic, plays a central role in the daily lives of Muslims across the globe. The opposite of halal is haram, which means forbidden, or unlawful which Muslims are strictly prohibited from engaging in actions or behaviors deemed haram (Arifin et al., 2023). The concept of halal goes beyond food and drink, encompassing diverse aspects of daily life such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and finance. This in line with the studies of Alzeer et al., (2018) and Haleem et al., (2020) explained that the halal concept extends beyond food and diet, influencing various aspects of daily life. As globalization progresses and the Muslim consumer market grows, halal certification has gained greater importance. Familiarity with various types of halal certifications such as those for meat and poultry, dry goods, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and halal food service and industry training is crucial for both consumers and businesses (Halal Food Council, 2024). On top of that, the growing halal industry presents promising opportunities for both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers, corporations, governments, and retail business owners to engage in and benefit from this thriving market. Despite the significance of consuming halal products, many consumers particularly Muslim consumers may lack the knowledge or ability to verify their halal status (Usman et al., 2021). This highlights the critical role of halal certification, which is communicated through labels, logos, brands, and other certification identifiers. Halal certification is a process designed to verify that products and services comply with the standards outlined by Islamic law, or Sharia (Halal Food Council, 2024). Issued by authorized organizations, this certification is essential for Muslim consumers, providing assurance that the products they use or consume are permissible and such in Malaysia halal certification was issued by JAKIM. This certification serves as a guarantee to Muslim consumers in Malaysia, that the product complies with Shariah requirements, following strict guidelines for ingredients, manufacturing processes, supply chain management, and storage (Jaiyeoba et al., 2021). Consequently, the growing concern over halal product certification has opened new avenues for research and exploration. Aligned with the concept of *tayyib*, halal certified products particularly halal food emphasizes cleanliness and purity, focusing on evaluating its halal status, hygiene, safety, and non-toxicity (Alzeer et al., 2018; Arifin et al., 2023). Additionally, halal products must be pure, nutritious, non-hazardous, non-toxic, and wholesome (Haleem et al., 2020). This focus has become a critical aspect of the halal food sector, as numerous cases highlight issues stemming from the misuse or misinterpretation of halal certification (Hassan et al., 2022). In conclusion, the growing interest in halal products and services has attracted both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers, as these products are often viewed as symbols of quality, safety, and cleanliness (Rachmawati et al., 2022; Arifin et al., 2023). As a result, consumers prioritize products that display halal certification from recognized governing bodies.

## ***Generation Z Preferences Towards Halal Certified Products***

The entry of a new generation affects many areas of life such as education, culture, consumption patterns, economics, employment and many more. Generation Z, children born between 1997-2012, is the fourth generation in practice joins generation Y (1980-1990), generation X (1965-1980) and baby boomer generation (1945-1965). The generation Z constitutes about 32% of the world's population according to Finances Online Website. They are defined as the new learner generation (Lev, 2021) while early study of generation Z by Prensky (2001) referred them as digital natives which they grow up with constant access to digital technology, including smartphones, social media, and the internet. On top of that, they

are type of consumers which prefers personalized experiences, whether in shopping, entertainment, or social media. In country such as Indonesia, Generation Z Muslims are currently making a significant contribution to the halal industry. This is particularly noteworthy, as most members of Generation Z were raised by parents with stable financial foundations and grew up in a multicultural, technology-driven environment (Darlis et al., 2021). As for Malaysia, this generation constituting about 29% of the total population (Abdul Jabar, 2024) and they present a transformative opportunity for global halal brands. By aligning with their values, leveraging digital platforms, and emphasizing ethical and sustainable practices, halal brands can capture and sustain the loyalty of this influential demographic. As Generation Z's purchasing power continues to grow, brands that successfully connect with this group will secure a strong position for long-term success in the global market. Adapting to the preferences and behaviors of Generation Z is essential for halal-certified products to thrive in an ever-changing consumer landscape. Recent studies highlight that Generation Z in Malaysia is increasingly drawn to halal-certified products, not just for religious reasons but also because these products often meet their standards of ethical sourcing and healthiness. For instance, halal practices emphasizing purity, hygiene, and non-toxic processes resonate with their preferences for safe and sustainable consumption. Moreover, initiatives like Foodpanda Malaysia's "Bekal" platform specifically target this demographic by ensuring halal-certified food delivery services, reflecting the growing demand among young consumers. Such innovations also highlight the market potential for businesses catering to this group (Business Today, 2024). Previous study highlighted several factors that influenced generation Z towards halal certified products such as religious beliefs, subjective norms, and the perception of halal as a symbol of quality, safety, and ethical practices (Abdul Jabar, 2024). These factors underscore the importance of halal certification in decision-making, with many respondents actively seeking assurance about the permissibility and safety of products they consume or use. Other findings found that various factors like religiosity, halal knowledge, and environmental consciousness that shape the purchasing intentions of Gen Z Muslims in Malaysia (Irfany et. Al, 2023). This study highlights that halal certification and the perception of halal products as clean and high-quality significantly influence the generation Z purchase decisions. Meanwhile, a study by Wilson and Ayad (2022) explained the rapid growth of research on halal branding, noting, however, that the perspectives of young Muslim consumers remain underexplored. Other previous studies related to Gen Z are more focusing on the intention to purchase halal cosmetics products (Abdul Jabar, 2024; Satria & Indra, 2024; Sudarsono et al., 2024). Despite that, to promote the development of halal industry in Malaysia, it is crucial to emphasize consumer preferences, especially the primary factors driving their decisions to buy halal certified products. Hence, to address the gap, this study highlights the generation Z because they are important consumer demographic and shaping trends in fashion, technology, food, and entertainment. What most significant is that their purchasing decisions often reflect their values, such as sustainability and ethical practices.

### ***Halal Lifestyle and Value***

A halal lifestyle and value refer to the conduct of an individual who embraces the Islamic faith and practices it with sincerity, integrity, responsibility, dignity, and fairness (Handayani et al., 2023). A study by Mat et al., (2020) defined a halal lifestyle as an individual's approach to daily living that aligns with halal principles, encompassing their behavior, habits, activities, and interests while Mutmainah et al., (2023) explained halal lifestyle encompasses all activities conducted in accordance with Islamic law, aiming to fulfill an individual's needs. Thus, consumers who integrate religious values into their social, family, and economic activities, play

an active role in shaping lifestyle trends that align with Islamic principles, is a concept now referred to as the halal lifestyle. This is supported in a study of Sukardani et al., (2018) emphasized that the lifestyle of consumers follow in accordance with sharia is reflected in their everyday activities lead them to the Islamic principle of consuming halal products. Currently, this concept goes beyond basic needs and has evolved into a trend that can enhance an individual's social status. For businesses, adopting halal as a lifestyle is seen as a way to drive economic growth through exports, tourism, added product value, and various halal-related sectors. Meanwhile, on the consumer side, individuals who embrace the halal lifestyle are willing to pay a premium for products that carry halal certification. They are becoming more conscious of halal products, whether it's food or everyday items and pay close attention to the safety, hygiene, and quality assurance of what they consume, and are mindful of what they eat, drink, and use (Ambali et al., 2014). On top of that, focusing on halal details such as ingredients and packaging is another reflection of the strong rational connection to religion. Muslim consumers are increasingly seeking spiritual benefits from the products they purchase and consume, specifically those that align with Islamic values. As a result, the trend of halal lifestyles is growing and becoming a modern and widespread way of living. In addition, with the development of halal industry in the sectors such as food, healthcare and wellness, cosmetics, pharmacy, fashion and education, will indirectly create a global trend that makes halal lifestyle as a modern lifestyle. Due to this, the halal lifestyle has evolved into a global phenomenon, attracting interest from both Muslims and non-Muslims. Fundamentally, it seeks to promote a healthy way of living (Usman, et al., 2022). For Muslim consumers, the more they embrace a halal lifestyle, the stronger their identity as a Muslim becomes (Sukardani et al., 2018). Previous study related to halal lifestyle found that consumers have a heightened awareness of a product's halal status and are becoming more selective in choosing the products they use (Mutmainah et al., 2023). Other study found that a consumer's halal lifestyle reflects their values and personality in social interactions, and the growing trend of the halal lifestyle also influences consumption patterns (Kholidah & Arifiyanto, 2021). Even though the concept of halal lifestyle has become a growing trend and a widely discussed, but it is more focusing among millennial Muslims (Mutmainah et al., 2023). In conclusion, to address this gap, it is expected that living a halal lifestyle would influence preference of Gen Z consumers toward halal certified products. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: The preferences of Gen Z consumers in Malaysia towards halal certified products is significantly influenced by the halal lifestyle and value.

### ***Social Circle Influence***

Social influences pertain to the perceived social pressure that impacts an individual's choice to adopt or avoid a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Additionally, they include an individual's beliefs, which are shaped by how others perceive a behavior, whether positively or negatively (Ajzen, 1980). The social influences may originate from various reference groups, such as spouses, parents, or friends, who are likely to offer advice, share opinions, and provide support for an individual's actions. In consumer behavior, individuals are inherently engaged in decision-making processes (Wardhana, 2021). Their decision making and choices are influenced not only by personal judgment but also by the opinions of others they consider significant (Aisyah, 2016). Thus, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) highlights the significance of social norms in shaping individual behavior. Previous studies highlight the significant impact of social norms on Muslim consumers' decision-making process when selecting halal products (Abdul Jabar 2024; Saifudin et al. 2020) and proposed that this predictor enhance consumers' trust and purchase decisions regarding halal products (Azizan et

al., 2022). Other studies related to choosing halal cosmetics found that consumers' attitudes toward halal cosmetics, along with family and peer expectations, shape constructive behavior (Ali et al., 2019; Ibeabuchi et al., 2024; Ngah et al., 2021). In conclusion, social influence plays a crucial role in consumers' decision-making when choosing halal products. Therefore, this study expected that social circle might influence the preferences of halal certified products among Gen Z in Malaysia and the following hypothesis is developed:

H2: The preferences of Gen Z consumers in Malaysia towards halal certified products is significantly influenced by the social circle influence

### ***Perceived Benefits of Halal Certified Products***

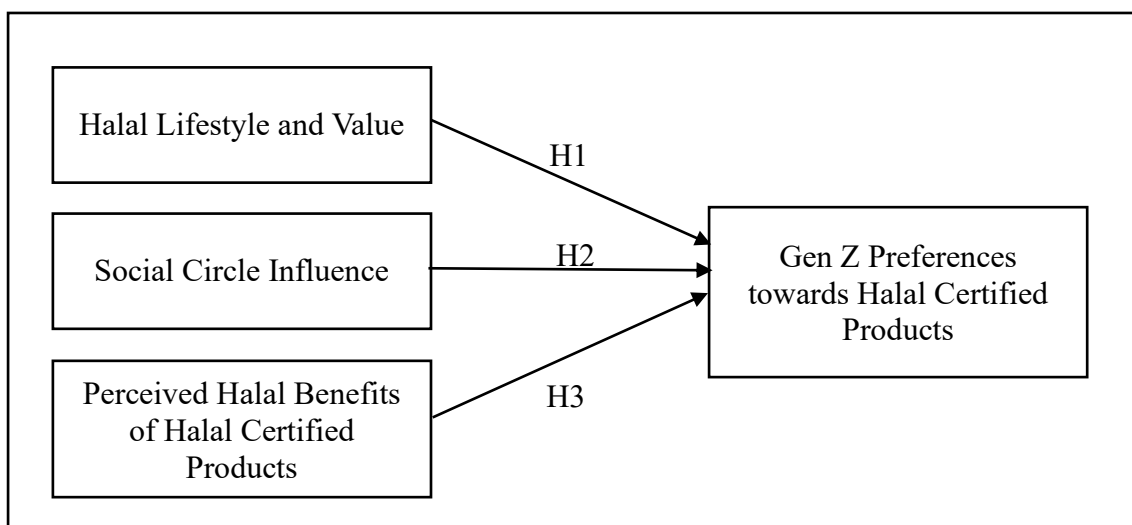
Perceived benefits of halal certified products, like the assurance of meeting strict religious guidelines, high quality standards, and ethical production practices, significantly influence consumer halal purchasing by building trust and confidence in the product. It will also lead to a greater likelihood of choosing halal-certified options when making buying decision. Essentially, the halal label and halal logo acts as a visible symbol of quality and adherence to Islamic principles, encouraging Muslim consumers to prioritize these products. A study of Suryawan et al., (2022) explained that positive consumers' perception is often associated with the belief that halal products are healthier, have a superior quality, and produced more ethically. Apart from that, the perceived benefits of halal certified products particularly halal food is views as reputation for being healthier and safer. Additionally, it is often regarded as higher in quality and more natural, making it appealing to health-conscious consumers. Even though Muslim consumers are the primary consumers of Halal certified products, but non-Muslim consumers nowadays are also becoming interested in it. However, barriers to consumption for both consumers may include the perception that halal certified products are more expensive, limited availability, and lack of knowledge about its benefits. Likewise, products that received halal certification as refer to halal certified products are essential for establishing trust and confidence among consumers (Saleh & Rajandran 2024). Meanwhile, for non-Muslim consumers, the presence of halal certification logos on products serves as a visual assurance where the products follow strict quality and safety standards (Calder, 2020). This in line with a study of Al-Teinaz and Al-Mazeedi, (2020) explained that Halal certification is a sign of quality assurance in many nations with a majority of non-Muslim population. Other study found that halal certified products which go through strict halal certification process enhances confidence and trust among non-Muslim consumers by ensuring transparency and traceability (Nusran et al., 2023). In addition, it allows non-Muslim consumers to purchase halal products with the assurance of high quality (Billah et al., 2020). Moreover, consumers with dietary restrictions may find halal options are safer or more suitable (Zin et al., 2021). In conclusion, the rapid expansion of the halal food market has been driven by its growing popularity among consumers, who perceive halal food as safe, hygienic, high-quality, and beneficial to health (Nurrachmi, 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The preferences of Gen Z consumers in Malaysia towards halal certified products is significantly influenced by the perceived benefits of halal certified products.

### **Research Framework**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is widely used in studies related to purchase intention among consumers because it provides a strong framework for understanding the psychological factors influencing consumer decisions. According to TPB, three key factors, which are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, directly shape an individual's

intention to perform a behavior, such as purchasing a product. Therefore, the conceptual framework for this study was formed based on the TPB to determine the preferences of halal certified products among Gen Z consumers in Malaysia. The proposed model attempted to explain the connection between three (3) independent variables: halal lifestyle and value, social circle influence and perceived benefits of halal certified products toward the dependent variable, the Gen Z preferences on halal certified products in Malaysia. This study extends the TPB by adding context-specific variables that better capture consumer behavior in halal purchasing. In line with a study by Alam et al. (2020) extended TPB to include perceived value and consumer effectiveness in predicting sustainable food consumption, including halal products, in Malaysia. This adaptability allows TPB to be applied across different cultures and product categories while maintaining its predictive power. Figure 1.0 illustrates proposed factors that may influence the preferences of Gen Z consumers towards halal certified products, and this model is applied in this study.



**Figure 1: Research Framework**

## Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the determinants influencing the preferences towards halal certified products among Generation Z consumers in Malaysia. In line with the proposed research framework, this study focuses on three independent variables, which are halal lifestyle and values, social circle influence, and perceived halal benefits of halal certified products and their influence on the dependent variable, preferences towards halal certified products. A structured questionnaire was developed based on established concepts from prior literature, with adaptations to suit the context of Malaysian Gen Z consumers. The questionnaire consists of multiple sections covering demographic information, independent variables, and the dependent variable, measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The target population of this study comprises Generation Z consumers in Malaysia, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Because this demographic is digitally active and widely dispersed across the country, a snowball sampling technique was employed to circulate the questionnaire through online platforms. Snowball sampling was appropriate for this study as it allowed researchers to reach a diverse range of Gen Z respondents efficiently through peer-to-peer sharing, reflecting their natural communication patterns across social media networks. A total of 200 valid responses were collected, which exceeds the minimum sample size requirement for multivariate analysis

and provides adequate statistical power for correlation and regression analysis. The questionnaire items for each construct were as follows: halal lifestyle and values (7 items), social circle influence (4 items), perceived halal benefits of halal certified products (3 items), and preferences towards halal certified products (5 items). These items were carefully adapted from prior research to ensure content validity, relevance, and alignment with the theoretical framework underpinning the study, namely the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Data collection was carried out through a Google Forms survey disseminated via social media channels, messaging platforms, and educational networks. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study, assured of data confidentiality, and informed that participation was voluntary. The online administration method was chosen to align with Gen Z's digital habits and to facilitate wider outreach across geographic regions. The collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Several analyses were performed. First, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Next, correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables. Finally, multiple regression analysis was performed to evaluate the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable and determine their predictive significance. These analyses provide comprehensive insights into the factors shaping Gen Z consumers' preferences for halal certified products in Malaysia.

## **Result and Findings**

This section presents the results and findings of the study based on the data collected from 200 Generation Z consumers in Malaysia. The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to examine the reliability of the measurement instruments and to test the hypothesised relationships among the study variables. Specifically, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were employed to address the research objectives and hypotheses. The results are presented systematically in the following subsections.

### ***Reliability Analysis***

The reliability of the measurement instruments in this study was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), which evaluates the internal consistency of items within each construct. As shown in Table 1, all four constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory to excellent reliability. The construct Halal Lifestyle and Values recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.841 across seven items, demonstrating good internal consistency. Social Circle Influence, measured using four items, produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.747, which is acceptable for exploratory research involving consumer perceptions. The construct Perceived Halal Benefits of Halal Certified Products showed excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.930 for its three items, indicating highly consistent responses among participants. Finally, Preferences for Halal Certified Products, the dependent variable, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.882 across five items, signifying strong internal consistency. These results confirm that all constructs used in this study are reliable and suitable for further statistical analyses, including correlation and regression. Table 1 summarizes the findings.

**Table 1: Reliability Test Result**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Halal Lifestyle & Values	0.841	7
Social Circle Influence	0.747	4
Perceived Halal Benefits of Halal Certified Products	0.930	3
Preferences for Halal Certified Products	0.882	5

### *Demographic Profile*

Section A of the questionnaire covers the demographic profile of the respondents, and the summary is presented in Table 2. This section includes key demographic information such as age, type of consumer, gender, race, experience purchasing halal certified products, and the types of halal certified products frequently purchased by Generation Z consumers in Malaysia. The following is a detailed analysis of the findings:

**Table 2: Summary of Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	60	30.0
	Female	140	70.0
Age	17–20 years	34	17.0
	21–23 years	148	74.0
	24–27 years	18	9.0
Types of Consumers	Secondary school students	23	11.5
	Form 6 / Pre-University	4	2.0
	University students	168	84.0
	Working individuals	5	2.5
Race	Malay	190	95.0
	Chinese	3	1.5
	Indian	6	3.0
	Others	1	0.5
Experience Purchasing Halal Certified Products	Yes	197	98.5
	No	3	1.5
Frequently Purchased Halal Certified Products	Food & beverages	195	97.5
	Cosmetics	3	1.5
	Medicine & pharmaceuticals	2	1.0

### ***Gender Distribution***

Table 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. Out of the 200 Generation Z consumers surveyed, 70% (n = 140) were female, while 30% (n = 60) were male. This indicates that female respondents form the majority of the sample. The higher participation rate among females is consistent with previous consumer-based studies, where female consumers tend to be more responsive to online surveys, particularly those related to product preferences and purchasing behavior. Understanding the gender composition is essential, as gender may influence attitudes, purchasing priorities, and perceptions towards halal certified products.

### ***Age Distribution***

The age distribution of respondents is also presented in Table 2. The largest proportion of participants were between 21-23 years old, representing 74% (n = 148) of the total sample. This is followed by respondents aged 17-20 years, who made up 17% (n = 34) of the sample. The remaining 9% (n = 18) were between 24-27 years old. These results illustrate that the majority of respondents are young adults within the core Gen Z age range who are currently pursuing tertiary education. This age distribution is expected, as digital data collection methods are more accessible to younger groups and aligns with their active online engagement.

### ***Types of Consumers***

Respondents were also categorized by their consumer status. The majority were university students, comprising 84% (n = 168) of the total sample. This is followed by secondary school students at 11.5% (n = 23), working individuals at 2.5% (n = 5), and Form 6/Pre-University students at 2% (n = 4). The dominance of university students reflects the nature of snowball sampling within educational networks, where participants often share the survey link among peers. This also suggests that halal-related product awareness may be highly relevant among young adult learners.

### ***Race Distribution***

Table 2 also presents the racial composition of respondents. A significant majority were Malay at 95% (n = 190), followed by Indian respondents at 3% (n = 6), Chinese respondents at 1.5% (n = 3), and others at 0.5% (n = 1). This distribution aligns with the cultural and religious relevance of halal certified products, which are more commonly consumed by Muslim-majority populations. The predominance of Malay respondents is therefore appropriate for the context of this study, which focuses on halal consumption behavior.

### ***Experience Purchasing Halal Certified Products***

An overwhelming majority of respondents reported having prior experience purchasing halal certified products. A total of 98.5% (n = 197) indicated "Yes," while only 1.5% (n = 3) stated "No." This finding suggests that halal certification is a familiar concept among Gen Z consumers in Malaysia, indicating their frequent exposure to halal-certified goods in daily life.

### *Frequently Purchased Halal Certified Products*

Respondents were also asked about the type of halal certified products they frequently purchase. The results show that food and beverages dominate purchasing behavior, with 97.5% (n = 195) selecting this category. Only 1.5% (n = 3) reported purchasing halal-certified cosmetics frequently, while 1% (n = 2) chose medicine and pharmaceutical products. This indicates that halal certification is most strongly associated with everyday consumable products, reinforcing the importance of halal assurance in food-related categories among Generation Z.

### *Correlation Analysis*

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between the key constructs in this study: halal lifestyle and values, social circle influence, perceived halal benefits of halal certified products, and preferences towards halal certified products among Generation Z consumers in Malaysia. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to evaluate these associations, as this method is suitable for determining linear relationships between continuous variables. Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis.

**Table 3: Summary of Correlation Analysis**

		Halal Lifestyle & Values	Social Circle Influence	Perceived Halal Benefits	Preferences for Halal Certified Products
Halal Lifestyle & Values	Pearson Correlation	1	.657**	.733**	.725**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	200	199	199	199
Social Circle Influence	Pearson Correlation	.657**	1	.611**	.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	199	199	199	199
Perceived Halal Benefits	Pearson Correlation	.733**	.611**	1	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	199	199	199	199
Preferences towards Halal Certified Products	Pearson Correlation	.725**	.553**	.788**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	199	199	199	199

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings reveal that all independent variables are positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable at the 0.01 significance level (2-tailed). This indicates that increases in halal lifestyle and values, social influence, and perceived halal benefits are all associated with stronger preferences for halal certified products among Gen Z consumers. The

results show that halal lifestyle and values ( $r = .725, p < .001$ ) have a strong positive correlation with preferences towards halal certified products. This suggests that Gen Z consumers who place greater emphasis on halal lifestyle principles, such as checking halal logos, seeking product information, and perceiving halal choices as appropriate behaviors, tend to exhibit stronger preferences for halal certified products. This association reflects the role of internal value alignment in shaping purchasing behavior. Similarly, social circle influence ( $r = .553, p < .001$ ) demonstrates a moderate positive relationship with preferences towards halal certified products. This implies that peer recommendations, family influence, and the purchasing behavior of close social groups play a meaningful role in shaping Gen Z consumers' choices. Although the correlation is moderate compared to the other variables, it highlights the relevance of subjective norms, consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), where social expectations influence individual decision-making. The strongest correlation observed in this study is between perceived halal benefits and preferences towards halal certified products ( $r = .788, p < .001$ ). This denotes a very strong positive relationship, indicating that when Gen Z consumers perceive halal products as healthier, safer, and superior in quality, they are significantly more likely to prefer purchasing halal certified products. This finding underscores the growing importance of quality, safety assurance, and ethical considerations that go beyond religious compliance alone. In addition to relationships with the dependent variable, the independent variables also exhibit strong intercorrelations. Halal lifestyle and values show strong associations with both social circle influence ( $r = .657, p < .001$ ) and perceived halal benefits ( $r = .733, p < .001$ ), suggesting that lifestyle choices, community expectations, and perceived value are intertwined components shaping halal consumption behavior. Likewise, perceived halal benefits and social influence are positively correlated ( $r = .611, p < .001$ ), indicating that social and individual evaluations of halal products often reinforce each other. Overall, the correlation results indicate meaningful and statistically significant relationships among all variables, providing support for the conceptual framework and justifying the continuation of hypothesis testing through regression analysis. The next section further examines the predictive power of each independent variable on the dependent variable.

### ***Multiple Regression Analysis***

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the influence of the three independent variables, which are halal lifestyle and values (Mean\_B), social circle influence (Mean\_C), and perceived halal benefits of halal certified products (Mean\_D) on the dependent variable, preferences towards halal certified products among Generation Z consumers (Mean\_E). This analysis enables the identification of the strongest predictors and the extent to which each independent variable contributes to explaining the variance in Gen Z's halal product preferences. The Model Summary shown in Table 4 shows that the regression model produced an R value of 0.817, indicating a strong positive relationship between the set of predictors and the dependent variable. The  $R^2$  value of 0.668 indicates that approximately 66.8% of the variance in preferences towards halal certified products is explained by the three predictors included in the model. The Adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.663 further confirms that the model fits the data well, with minimal shrinkage after adjusting for the number of predictors. The standard error of estimate (0.36336) suggests good predictive accuracy for behavioral studies in social science.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.817 <sup>a</sup>	.668	.663	.36336

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mean\_D, Mean\_C, Mean\_B

The ANOVA results as presented in Table 5 below further support the model's significance. The F-statistic of 130.652 with a significance value of  $p < .001$  indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This implies that the combination of halal lifestyle and values, social circle influence, and perceived halal benefits significantly predicts Gen Z consumers' preferences for halal certified products.

The coefficients table (Table 6) provides detailed insights into the contribution of each predictor. The results show that perceived halal benefits of halal certified products (Mean\_D) emerged as the strongest predictor of preferences towards halal certified products, with a standardized beta value of  $\beta = 0.552$ ,  $t = 8.810$ , and  $p < .001$ . This indicates that Gen Z consumers place high emphasis on the health, safety, and quality assurances associated with halal certification when making purchase decisions.

**Table 6: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.929	.201		4.611	<.001
	Mean_B	.341	.071	.314	4.768	<.001
	Mean_C	.008	.052	.009	.161	.873
	Mean_D	.460	.052	.552	8.810	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Mean\_E

**Table 5: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	51.750	3	17.250	130.652	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	25.746	195	.132		
	Total	77.495	198			

a. Dependent Variable: Mean\_E

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mean\_D, Mean\_C, Mean\_B

The construct halal lifestyle and values (Mean\_B) was also found to be a significant predictor, with  $\beta = 0.314$ ,  $t = 4.768$ , and  $p < .001$ . This suggests that individuals who integrate halal-conscious behaviors and values in their daily lives are more likely to prefer halal certified products. This aligns with existing literature that highlights the role of lifestyle and value-driven consumption patterns among younger Muslim consumers. However, social circle influence (Mean\_C) did not show a significant effect on preferences, yielding  $\beta = 0.009$ ,  $t = 0.161$ , and  $p = .873$ . This indicates that peer or family influence does not significantly shape Gen Z consumers' halal product preferences in this study. The finding suggests that Gen Z may make halal-related purchasing decisions more independently, guided by personal beliefs,

product attributes, or perceived benefits rather than external social pressures. Overall, the regression analysis demonstrates that two variables, which are halal lifestyle and values, and perceived halal benefits, are significant determinants of preferences for halal certified products among Generation Z in Malaysia, with perceived benefits being the dominant factor. Social circle influence, however, does not significantly impact their preferences. These findings provide further clarity on the relative importance of individual-level and product-related factors in shaping halal consumption behavior among Malaysian Gen Z consumers.

## Discussion

This study examined the influence of halal lifestyle and values, social circle influence, and perceived halal benefits of halal certified products on preferences towards halal certified products among Generation Z consumers in Malaysia. The hypotheses developed in the literature review were tested using multiple regression analysis, and the discussion in this section is structured according to each hypothesis.

### *Halal Lifestyle and Values and Preferences towards Halal Certified Products (H1)*

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that halal lifestyle and values have a positive and statistically significant effect on preferences towards halal certified products among Generation Z consumers ( $\beta = 0.314$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H1 is supported. This finding suggests that Gen Z consumers who actively integrate halal principles into their daily lifestyle, such as checking halal logos, seeking halal-certified alternatives, and perceiving halal consumption as appropriate behavior, are more likely to prefer halal certified products. This result is consistent with prior studies that emphasize halal lifestyle as a key determinant of halal consumption behavior (Mat et al., 2020; Mutmainah et al., 2023; Sukardani et al., 2020). As highlighted in the literature review, halal lifestyle reflects not only religious adherence but also a broader value system associated with cleanliness, ethics, and responsibility (Handayani et al., 2023; Usman et al., 2022). The significant role of halal lifestyle and values also supports the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), where attitude towards behavior plays a crucial role in shaping behavioral preferences (Ajzen, 1991). In this context, halal lifestyle represents a favorable attitude toward halal consumption, which directly translates into stronger preferences for halal certified products. This finding further reinforces the notion that halal consumption among Gen Z is not merely habitual, but value driven.

### *Social Circle Influence and Preferences towards Halal Certified Products (H2)*

Contrary to expectations, social circle influence does not have a significant effect on preferences towards halal certified products ( $\beta = 0.009$ ,  $p = 0.873$ ). Thus, H2 is not supported. Although correlation analysis indicated a positive relationship between social circle influence and preferences, the regression results reveal that social influence does not independently predict Gen Z preferences once halal lifestyle and perceived benefits are considered. This suggests that Generation Z consumers may rely more on personal values and individual judgment rather than social pressure when making decisions related to halal certified products. This finding diverges from some earlier studies that emphasized the importance of subjective norms in halal purchase decisions (Ali et al., 2019; Ngah et al., 2021; Ibeabuchi et al., 2024). However, it aligns with recent literature suggesting that Gen Z consumers are more autonomous, pragmatic, and self-directed compared to previous generations (Lev, 2021). While friends and family may influence awareness, they may not directly determine final purchasing

preferences for halal products among Gen Z. From a theoretical perspective, this result implies that subjective norms, a key component of TPB, may play a weaker role in halal-related preferences for Generation Z compared to attitudes and perceived outcomes. This highlights a generational shift where internalized values outweigh external social expectations.

### ***Perceived Halal Benefits of Halal Certified Products and Preferences (H3)***

The findings demonstrate that perceived halal benefits of halal certified products exert the strongest and most significant influence on preferences towards halal certified products ( $\beta = 0.552$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H3 is strongly supported. This result indicates that Gen Z consumers place high importance on the tangible benefits associated with halal certified products, particularly in terms of health, safety, and quality. This is consistent with previous studies which found that halal certification serves as a signal of product quality, hygiene, and ethical production, appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers (Haleem et al., 2020; Suryawan et al., 2022; Saleh & Rajandran, 2024). The strong predictive power of perceived halal benefits suggests that halal certification is increasingly viewed beyond religious compliance and more as a quality assurance mechanism, especially among younger consumers. This supports findings by Arifin et al. (2023) and Rachmawati and Suroso (2022), who reported that halal-certified products are often associated with trustworthiness and superior standards. From a managerial perspective, this implies that Gen Z consumers are motivated primarily by what halal certification delivers, rather than who endorses it. This also explains why social circle influence becomes insignificant in the regression model, as perceived benefits overshadow external social factors.

### ***Overall Model Discussion***

The regression model explains 66.8% of the variance in preferences towards halal certified products ( $R^2 = 0.668$ ), indicating a strong explanatory power. The significant F-statistic ( $F = 130.652$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) confirms that the model is statistically robust. Among the predictors, perceived halal benefits emerged as the dominant factor, followed by halal lifestyle and values, while social circle influence did not contribute significantly. Overall, the findings suggest that Generation Z's halal product preferences are driven primarily by personal values and perceived outcomes, rather than social conformity. This reflects an evolving halal consumer landscape where functional and ethical considerations play a central role.

### ***Conclusion and Recommendations***

This study examined the factors influencing preferences towards halal certified products among Generation Z consumers in Malaysia, focusing on halal lifestyle and values, social circle influence, and perceived halal benefits of halal certified products. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, this research contributes to the growing body of halal consumption literature by extending the understanding of how value-based, social, and benefit-driven factors shape Gen Z purchasing preferences beyond food-related contexts. The findings reveal that all independent variables are positively and significantly correlated with preferences towards halal certified products, indicating that halal lifestyle orientation, social influence, and perceived benefits are interrelated in shaping Gen Z consumption behaviour. However, the multiple regression analysis provides more nuanced insights. The results demonstrate that perceived halal benefits of halal certified products are the strongest and most significant predictor of Gen Z preferences, followed by halal lifestyle and values. In contrast, social circle influence does

not show a significant direct effect when other variables are considered simultaneously. These findings suggest that while social influence plays a role at the associative level, Gen Z consumers' preferences are primarily driven by their internalised values and perceived tangible benefits, such as health, safety, and quality assurance. From a theoretical perspective, the results partially support the hypotheses developed in this study. Hypotheses related to halal lifestyle and values and perceived halal benefits are supported, whereas the hypothesis concerning social circle influence is not supported in the regression model. This outcome aligns with emerging evidence that Generation Z consumers tend to exhibit higher levels of autonomy and critical evaluation in consumption decisions, relying less on peer pressure and more on personal beliefs and perceived value. The findings also reinforce the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behavior, particularly the attitudinal and belief-based components, in explaining halal consumption preferences among younger consumers.

In terms of practical implications, the results offer important insights for policymakers, halal certification bodies, and industry players. Marketing strategies targeting Generation Z should move beyond religious appeals alone and emphasise the functional and ethical benefits of halal certified products, including product safety, quality assurance, transparency, and health-related attributes. Halal certification authorities such as JAKIM may also consider strengthening communication strategies that highlight these benefits to enhance the perceived value of halal certification among young consumers. For businesses, especially those operating in highly competitive consumer markets, positioning halal certification as a symbol of superior quality and responsible production may enhance brand preference and consumer trust among Gen Z. Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of snowball sampling and the dominance of university students may limit the generalisability of the findings to the broader Generation Z population in Malaysia. Second, this study focuses on preferences rather than actual purchasing behaviour, which may be influenced by situational and economic factors not captured in the current model. Future research could address these limitations by employing probability sampling techniques, incorporating behavioural measures, or examining moderating variables such as religiosity, income level, or digital marketing exposure. In addition, qualitative approaches could be used to gain deeper insights into how Generation Z interprets halal certification in relation to identity, ethics, and lifestyle choices. In conclusion, this study highlights that Generation Z consumers' preferences towards halal certified products are shaped more strongly by perceived benefits and internalised halal values than by social influence. As the halal market continues to expand globally, understanding these preference structures is crucial for sustaining consumer engagement and ensuring the long-term relevance of halal certification in an evolving consumer landscape.

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