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WHAT DRIVES SATISFACTION? EXPLORING CONSUMPTION VALUES OF KOREAN INSTANT FOOD CONSUMERS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract:

This study examines consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food among Malaysian consumers through an extended Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) perspective. Although previous Malaysian studies have investigated awareness, preference, cultural acceptance and consumption intention towards Korean food, limited research has examined the joint contribution of multiple consumption-value dimensions to consumer satisfaction, particularly with the inclusion of

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halal value as a context-specific consideration. The study examines eight dimensions: emotional, quality, social, epistemic, functional, conditional, price and halal value. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 316 Malaysian consumers with experience in Korean instant food. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29. At the 10% significance level, social value (β = .127, p = .072), conditional value (β = .099, p = .055), and price value (β = .117, p = .079) demonstrated significant positive unique relationships with consumer satisfaction, whereas the remaining consumption-value dimensions did not demonstrate significant unique relationships. The findings extend TCV to the foreign-food consumption context by demonstrating that selected consumption-value dimensions make unique contributions to satisfaction and that their relative contribution is context dependent. The findings imply that marketers should strengthen the social appeal, situational relevance and perceived value for money of Korean instant food, while credible halal assurance should be maintained to support product acceptability and consumer confidence in the Malaysian market.

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Keyword:

Consumer Satisfaction, Halal, Korean Instant Food, Theory of Consumption Values.

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Introduction

The growing internationalisation of food consumption has increased consumers' exposure to products from different cultural contexts. In Malaysia, the growing visibility of Korean food is closely associated with the diffusion of Korean popular culture, or Hallyu, which has influenced consumers' attitudes, perceptions and consumption interests towards Korean products and cuisine (Raman & Im, 2024; Zaini et al., 2024). Korean food consumption also extends beyond restaurants to packaged and convenience-oriented products. Jeong and Choi (2018) found measurable awareness and preference for various Korean food products among Malaysian consumers, particularly younger consumers. This makes Korean instant food a relevant context for examining consumer satisfaction from a multidimensional consumption-value perspective.

From the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) perspective, consumers evaluate products based on functional, emotional, social, epistemic and situational benefits, while price perceptions influence evaluations of value for money (Sheth et al., 1991). In the Korean food context, consumers may also consider taste, quality, convenience, novelty and cultural experiences. Razak et al. (2024) similarly highlighted the relevance of authentic taste, health

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perceptions and Korean cultural exposure in Malaysian consumers' acceptance of Korean food. Social and cultural influences may also shape consumption, with attitudes towards Korean culture, normative social influence and perceived behavioural control found to be relevant to Korean food consumption intentions (Zaini et al., 2024).

The Malaysian context further introduces halal assurance as an important consideration when evaluating imported food products. Halal status, certification and related product information may influence perceptions of acceptability, trust and purchase-related decisions, particularly where consumers seek assurance about ingredients and product authenticity. Previous Malaysian research has demonstrated the relevance of halal awareness and certification in consumer responses towards halal products (Chong et al., 2022). Thus, Korean instant food represents a distinctive context in which functional, economic, social, emotional, cultural and halal-related values may coexist.

Consumer satisfaction, however, extends beyond product quality alone. It is traditionally conceptualised as an evaluative response arising from consumers' comparison of expectations with subsequent experience or perceived performance (Oliver, 1980). Satisfaction may also reflect the value consumers perceive from the benefits received relative to the resources expended, including money, time and effort (Oh, 2000). Previous research further confirms that perceived value is an important determinant of consumer satisfaction, indicating that consumers evaluate both the benefits and sacrifices associated with the consumption experience (McDougall & Levesque, 2000). Therefore, satisfaction with Korean instant food may reflect consumers' overall evaluation of both the consumption experience and the value derived from it.

Korean instant food provides a relevant context for examining the multidimensionality of consumption value because it combines convenience and ease of preparation with the social and cultural meanings associated with Korean popular culture, social-media exposure and the growing visibility of Korean food. Imported food consumption may also involve evaluations of price, perceived value for money and situational suitability. In Malaysia, these considerations are further complemented by halal assurance, as consumers may evaluate imported food based on halal status, ingredients and certification. Therefore, Korean instant food provides a meaningful context for examining whether conventional TCV dimensions and context-specific halal value contribute differently to consumer satisfaction.

Despite the growing popularity of Korean food in Malaysia, limited research has specifically examined consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food. Previous Malaysian studies have focused on awareness and preference for Korean food products (Jeong & Choi, 2018), acceptance of Korean food culture (Razak et al., 2024), Korean-food consumption intention (Zaini et al., 2024), and perceptions of Korean restaurants (Lee, 2020). While these studies demonstrate increasing consumer engagement with Korean food, they primarily address awareness, preference, acceptance and behavioural intention rather than satisfaction following consumers' evaluation or experience of Korean instant food. These outcomes are related but conceptually distinct.

More importantly, limited research has examined how multiple consumption-value dimensions jointly contribute to consumer satisfaction in the context of Korean instant food. Existing research tends to focus on selected behavioural, cultural or product-related factors, providing

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limited understanding of the unique contribution of different consumption values when considered simultaneously (Chong et al., 2022; Madun et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant because Korean instant food combines the characteristics of an imported product, convenience food and culturally symbolic consumption. Consumers may therefore evaluate it based on functional, economic, social, emotional, epistemic and situational considerations.

The Malaysian context also introduces halal value as a context-specific consideration. Unlike conventional TCV dimensions, halal value reflects consumers' perceptions of halal status, ingredients, certification and product acceptability. This consideration may be particularly relevant for imported food, where halal information can reduce uncertainty regarding ingredients and preparation. Previous research has demonstrated the relevance of halal certification and halal-related attributes in food-related consumer decisions (Razak et al., 2024; Zaini et al., 2024). However, limited evidence exists on whether halal value makes a unique contribution to consumer satisfaction when examined alongside conventional consumption-value dimensions.

This study makes three contributions. First, it extends research on Korean food consumption in Malaysia by shifting the focus from awareness, preference and purchase intention to consumer satisfaction with Korean instant food. Second, it applies TCV in an integrated multivariate framework to examine the unique contribution of different consumption-value dimensions to satisfaction. Third, it extends the conventional TCV framework by incorporating halal value as a context-specific consideration relevant to imported food consumption in Malaysia. The findings provide a more nuanced understanding of whether halal value directly contributes to satisfaction or plays a different role in consumers' evaluation and acceptance of imported food products. Therefore, this study addresses the gaps by applying an extended TCV framework to examine eight consumption-value dimensions and their unique relationships with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food among Malaysian consumers.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature and establishes the theoretical foundations of the study, followed by a description of the research methodology, including the research design, sampling, measurement and analytical procedures. The findings are subsequently presented and discussed in relation to the research objectives, existing literature and underlying theoretical perspectives. Finally, the paper concludes by highlighting the study's principal contributions and implications, followed by a discussion of its limitations and directions for future research.

Literature Review And Hypothesis Development

Theoretical Foundation

The Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) provides a multidimensional framework for understanding how consumers evaluate products and consumption experiences. Sheth et al. (1991) identified five consumption values: functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional value, each representing a different form of utility. Consumers may consider several values simultaneously, and their relative importance may vary across consumption contexts (Sheth et al., 1991). This multidimensional perspective is particularly relevant to food consumption, where products may provide utilitarian benefits, emotional experiences, social meanings and opportunities for learning (Choe & Kim, 2018; Choe & Kim, 2019).

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The applicability of TCV has also been supported by Sweeney and Soutar (2001), whose PERVAL scale demonstrates the relevance of functional, social, emotional and price/value-for-money dimensions in explaining consumers' perceived value and behavioural responses. In food research, Choe and Kim (2018) found that consumption value influences attitudes and behavioural intentions towards local food, while Choe and Kim (2019) developed a multidimensional local-food consumption-value scale linking value dimensions with satisfaction and post-purchase outcomes.

In the present study, TCV is extended to the context of Korean instant food by incorporating quality, price and halal value alongside the original TCV dimensions. These additional dimensions capture product-specific and contextual considerations that may shape consumers' evaluations. This extended framework therefore provides a broader basis for examining consumer satisfaction as an overall evaluation arising from the multiple benefits consumers perceive from Korean instant food and its consumption experience.

Emotional Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Emotional value refers to the feelings and enjoyment consumers derive from consuming Korean instant food, including enjoyment, interest and willingness to recommend or consume the food again. According to TCV, products can generate utility through emotional experiences beyond their functional benefits (Sheth et al., 1991). Emotional value is also relevant to value co-creation and local-food experiences (Zhang et al., 2018; Choe & Kim, 2018). In the Malaysian halal-food context, Muhamed et al. (2019) also identified emotional value as relevant to consumer behaviour. Thus, positive emotional experiences are expected to enhance consumer satisfaction. Therefore,

H1: Emotional value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

Quality Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Quality value refers to consumers' perceptions of a product's performance, reliability and overall quality. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) identified quality/performance as an important dimension of perceived value alongside emotional, social and price/value-for-money dimensions. Quality is particularly relevant to food consumption because consumers evaluate food quality as part of their overall experience. Qin and Prybutok (2008) found that food quality was significantly associated with satisfaction in fast-food restaurants, while research on dining experiences has similarly highlighted the importance of perceived value and quality-related evaluations. For Korean instant food, quality value may include taste, ingredients, freshness, consistency, packaging and overall product performance. When consumers perceive the product to meet their quality expectations, they are more likely to report higher satisfaction.Thus,

H2: Quality value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

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Social Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Social value refers to the social significance consumers derive from Korean instant food, including cultural connection, uniqueness, social groups and trends. TCV defines social value as utility derived from social groups and social images (Sheth et al., 1991). Choe and Kim (2018) similarly demonstrated the relevance of consumption value to attitudes and behavioural outcomes in local-food consumption. Korean food may also serve as a medium of social interaction and cultural exposure, particularly through social media and Korean cultural content. Consumers may therefore experience greater satisfaction when Korean instant food provides a sense of social or cultural connection. Consequently,

H3: Social value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

Epistemic Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Epistemic value refers to curiosity, novelty, learning and the desire to experience something new (Sheth et al., 1991). This value is particularly relevant to food consumption because trying unfamiliar food can provide opportunities for cultural exploration and sensory discovery. Epistemic value has been found to be relevant to local-food perceptions (Choe & Kim, 2018) and Malaysian halal-food consumer decision-making (Muhamed et al., 2019). In the Korean instant-food context, epistemic value may involve exploring new foods, Korean lifestyles and eating practices. Therefore, consumers who derive greater novelty and learning value from the product are expected to experience greater satisfaction. Consequently,

H4: Epistemic value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

Functional Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Functional value refers to the practicality and performance of Korean instant food in meeting consumers' consumption needs. It includes aspects such as taste, ingredient quality, variety and perceived product performance. Functional value is one of the core dimensions of TCV (Sheth et al., 1991), while Choe and Kim (2019) demonstrated that multidimensional food-consumption value can explain satisfaction and post-purchase outcomes. Nystrand and Olsen (2020) also found that eating values are related to food-related attitudes, including utilitarian values. Accordingly, consumers who perceive Korean instant food as useful, tasty and reliable are expected to report higher satisfaction. Therefore,

H5: Functional value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

Conditional Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Conditional value refers to the utility a product provides under particular circumstances (Sheth et al., 1991). For Korean instant food, this may arise when consumers need a quick meal, encounter a promotion, seek something different or purchase food for a specific occasion. Situational factors can therefore influence how consumers evaluate food consumption value.

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In this study, conditional value reflects considerations such as the time and effort required to try a new product or menu. When Korean instant food is perceived as appropriate and valuable in a particular situation, consumers may experience greater satisfaction. Thus,

H6: Conditional value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

Price Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Price value reflects consumers' evaluation of whether the benefits received from a product justify the monetary sacrifice. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) identified price/value-for-money as an important dimension of perceived value. Empirical research also supports the relationship between price-related evaluations and satisfaction. Raji and Zainal (2016) found that monetary price was positively related to consumer satisfaction in Malay upscale restaurants, while research in supermarket and restaurant contexts similarly indicates that perceived value and price-related evaluations can contribute to satisfaction. For Korean instant food, price value is particularly relevant because consumers may compare imported Korean products with alternative instant-food products in Malaysia. Satisfaction may therefore increase when taste, quality, convenience and other benefits are perceived to justify the price paid. Thus,

H7: Price value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

Halal Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Halal value refers to the value consumers associate with the halal status, ingredients, certification and safety of Korean instant food. Halal assurance is particularly relevant in Malaysia because certification and ingredient information can help consumers assess product acceptability and reduce uncertainty regarding imported food. Muhamed et al. (2019), based on 1,550 Muslim respondents in Malaysia, found halal certification to be an important influence on consumer choice, alongside emotional and epistemic values. Madun et al. (2022) further highlighted the potential of halal certification to influence trust and consumer satisfaction in the Malaysian halal-food context. Thus, halal value may contribute to consumers' overall evaluation of Korean instant food. Consequently,

H8: Halal value has a significant relationship with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a hypothetico-deductive approach and employed survey data to examine the hypothesised relationships between consumption-value dimensions and consumer satisfaction. The data were gathered online using Google Forms and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29. The design was suitable for the purpose of eliciting standardised responses from a geographically dispersed sample of Malaysian respondents and for statistically analysing the relationship between several predictors.

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Population, Sampling and Data Collection

The target population comprised Malaysian consumers who had experienced consuming Korean instant food. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed. Data collection started in mid-May 2024 and lasted for about three months. The questionnaire link was sent via WhatsApp, Telegram, email, Instagram and Twitter so that the researchers could reach consumers from different backgrounds. The final sample consisted of 316 valid responses, and the reported analysis was based on these responses. The use of purposive online sampling may limit the generalisability of the findings; thus, the results should be interpreted as context-specific rather than representative of the Malaysian population.

Data Analysis

The data were gathered online using Google Forms and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29. The analysis was conducted as follows: demographic frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis and deductive analysis. Means and standard deviations were used to describe the constructs. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency. Pearson correlation was used to examine bivariate relationships with consumer satisfaction. The KMO measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to assess exploratory factor analysis. Finally, multiple regression was used to estimate the collective explanatory power of the measured predictors and their unique coefficients.

Results And Analysis

Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 316 respondents. The sample was predominantly female (63.9%) and aged 18–25 years (44.6%). Most respondents were Malay (67.1%) and single (62.0%). In terms of occupation, 44.9% reported being not working, while 24.4% and 18.4% were employed in the private and public sectors, respectively. The largest education group comprised diploma holders (26.9%), while almost half of the respondents reported a monthly income of RM1,499 or below (48.4%). Regarding household income, 47.8% reported earning between RM1,500 and RM3,500 per month.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	n	%	Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Women	202	63.9	**Education**	Diploma	85	26.9
	Men	114	36.1		Undergraduate	80	25.3
Age	18–25 years	141	44.6		STPM/O	61	19.3
	26–33 years	93	29.4		SPM	58	18.4
	34–41 years	29	9.2		Degree	31	9.8
	42–49 years	29	9.2		Master	1	0.3
	50 years and above	24	7.6	**Monthly income**	RM1,499 and below	153	48.4
Race	Malay	212	67.1		RM1,500–2,999	95	30.0

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Variable	Category	n	%
	Indian	50	15.8
	Chinese	44	13.9
	Bumiputera	6	1.9
	Sikh	4	1.3
Marital status	Single	196	62.0
	Married	120	38.0
Occupation	Not working	142	44.9
	Private sector	77	24.4
	Public sector	58	18.4
	Self-employed	26	8.2
	Retired	11	3.5
	Company owner	2	0.6
	RM3,000–4,499	58	18.4
	RM4,500–5,999	10	3.2
Household income	Below RM1,500	77	24.4
	RM1,500–3,500	151	47.8
	Above RM3,500	88	27.8

Reliability Analysis

Table 2 presents the reliability results for the study constructs. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the reported constructs ranged from approximately .70 to .90, indicating acceptable to high internal consistency. The reliability results therefore provide support for the internal consistency of the measurement items used in the study.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis of Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation
Halal value	0.82	High
Emotional value	0.79	Acceptable
Quality value	0.90	High
Social value	0.82	Acceptable
Epistemic value	0.83	Acceptable
Functional value	0.81	Acceptable
Conditional value	0.70	Reliable
Price value	0.80	High
Consumer satisfaction	0.82	Acceptable

Note. Cronbach's alpha (α) values are reported based on the reliability analysis

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between the eight consumption-value dimensions and consumer satisfaction. The results indicate that all eight consumption-value dimensions were significantly and positively correlated with consumer satisfaction. Quality value demonstrated the strongest correlation with consumer satisfaction ($r = .733$, $p < .01$), followed by social value ($r = .564$, $p < .01$), conditional value ($r = .476$, $p < .01$), halal value (r

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= .475, p < .01), price value (r = .369, p < .01), functional value (r = .368, p < .01), emotional value (r = .354, p < .01), and epistemic value (r = .231, p < .01).

The findings suggest that consumers who perceived higher levels of value across these dimensions also tended to report higher levels of consumer satisfaction. However, the strength of the correlations varied considerably across the dimensions, with quality and social value showing relatively stronger associations with satisfaction, whereas epistemic value demonstrated the weakest relationship. The inter-correlations among the independent variables were also generally positive, with several relatively high correlations observed, particularly between functional and epistemic value (r = .891, p < .01), functional and social value (r = .844, p < .01), and quality and social value (r = .839, p < .01). These relatively high inter-correlations indicate that the consumption-value dimensions are related to one another and should therefore be considered simultaneously in the subsequent multivariate analysis to determine their unique contributions to consumer satisfaction. Multicollinearity was assessed using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics. The results indicated that the predictor variables were within acceptable levels of multicollinearity.

Table 3 : Pearson Correlation among Constructs

Construct	Halal	Emotional	Quality	Social	Epistemic	Functional	Conditional	Price	Satisfaction
Halal	1.000								
Emotional	.485**	1.000							
Quality	.569**	.834**	1.000						
Social	.440**	.773**	.839**	1.000					
Epistemic	.473**	.671**	.756**	.793**	1.000				
Functional	.465**	.741**	.780**	.844**	.891**	1.000			
Conditional	.462**	.608**	.698**	.733**	.703**	.767**	1.000		
Price	.521**	.763**	.744**	.731**	.765**	.807**	.678**	1.000	
Satisfaction	.475**	.354**	.733**	.564**	.231**	.368**	.476**	.369**	1.000

Note. **p < .01 (2-tailed). Values represent Pearson correlation coefficients.

Factorability and Exploratory Factor Analysis

The data were assessed for their suitability for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO value of .799 indicated adequate sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's test was significant, $\chi^2(1,378) = 24,453.285$, $p < .001$, confirming that the correlation matrix was appropriate for factor analysis.

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Statistic
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO)	0.799
Bartlett's test of sphericity	$\chi^2 = 24,453.285$

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Test	Statistic
Degrees of freedom	1,378
Significance	< .001

Multiple Regression Analysis

The model summary of the multiple regression analysis examining the factors associated with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food. The regression model produced a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .850, indicating a strong overall relationship between the predictors and consumer satisfaction. The model explained 72.2% of the variance in consumer satisfaction (R^2 = .722), while the adjusted R^2 of .713 indicated that approximately 71.3% of the variance in consumer satisfaction was explained after adjusting for the number of predictors included in the model. The standard error of the estimate was .30745, indicating the extent of prediction error around the regression estimates. Overall, the results suggest that the predictors collectively provide substantial explanatory power for consumer satisfaction.

Table 5. Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.850[a]	.722	.713	.30745

Table 6 : ANOVA For Coefficient Values In Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	74.868	8	9.359	99.655	<.001
Residual	28.830	307	0.094		
Total	103.699	315			

Note. The regression model is statistically significant at p < .001.

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall multiple regression model was statistically significant, F(8, 307) = 99.655, p < .001. This indicates that the set of eight consumption-value dimensions, when considered collectively, significantly predicts variation in consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food. The null hypothesis that all regression coefficients are simultaneously equal to zero is therefore rejected, indicating that at least one of the predictors makes a statistically significant contribution to the model. However, the significant overall F-test does not indicate which individual consumption-value dimensions make significant unique contributions. The significance and direction of each predictor are therefore examined using the regression coefficients presented in the subsequent analysis.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients and Hypothesis Decision

	Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p	VIF	Decision
	(Constant)	.533	.112	—	4.753	< .001		
H1	Emotional value	.081	.051	.099	1.571	.102	1.25	Not supported

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H2	Quality value	.118	.072	.119	1.638	.102	2.31	Not supported
H3	Social value	.013	.072	.127	1.807	.072	1.89	Supported
H4	Epistemic value	-.076	.060	−.090	−1.268	.206	1.92	Not Supported
H5	Functional value	-.012	.079	−.014	−.152	.879	1.57	Not supported
H6	Conditional value	.076	.040	.099	1.925	.055	1.77	Supported
H7	Price value	.101	.057	.117	1.764	.079	2.15	Supported
H8	Halal value	.045	.027	.065	1.636	.103	1.68	Not supported

Note. $p < .10$ indicates a statistically significant relationship. Hypotheses were evaluated at the 10% significance level ($\alpha = .10$). β = standardized regression coefficient.

Given the exploratory and theory-extending nature of the study and the limited empirical evidence concerning consumption-value determinants of satisfaction towards Korean instant food in Malaysia, the study adopts $\alpha = .10$ as a more inclusive significance threshold for identifying potentially meaningful relationships. Accordingly, the related findings are interpreted cautiously as preliminary evidence and are not considered as statistically strong as findings meeting the conventional $\alpha = .05$ threshold.

The multiple regression analysis (Table 7) indicates that three of the eight hypothesised relationships were supported at the 10% significance level ($\alpha = .10$). Social value demonstrated a positive relationship with consumer satisfaction ($\beta = .127$, $p = .072$), supporting H3. Conditional value also demonstrated a positive relationship with consumer satisfaction ($\beta = .099$, $p = .055$), supporting H6. Price value demonstrated a positive relationship with consumer satisfaction ($\beta = .117$, $p = .079$), supporting H7. In contrast, emotional value ($\beta = .099$, $p = .102$), quality value ($\beta = .119$, $p = .102$), epistemic value ($\beta = -.090$, $p = .206$), functional value ($\beta = -.014$, $p = .879$) and halal value ($\beta = .065$, $p = .103$) did not meet the $\alpha = .10$ criterion and therefore H1, H2, H4, H5 and H8 were not supported.

Discussion of the Findings

Emotional value did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with consumer satisfaction at the 10% significance level ($\beta = .099$, $p = .102$); thus, H1 is not supported. In TCV, emotional value reflects the utility derived from feelings and affective states associated with consumption (Sheth et al., 1991). The finding suggests that emotional benefits may be less influential in explaining satisfaction when other consumption-value dimensions are considered simultaneously. This is consistent with Seungkwon and Shim (2013), who found that emotional value did not significantly influence consumer satisfaction in a fast-food context. Although Muhamed et al. (2019) found emotional value to be relevant to Malaysian halal-food decision-making, its role may depend on the behavioural outcome examined. Thus, emotional value may be more relevant to consumer decision-making than to post-consumption satisfaction in the present context.

Quality value did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with consumer satisfaction at the 10% significance level ($\beta = .119$, $p = .102$); thus, H2 is not supported. Quality/performance is an established component of perceived consumer value (Sweeney &

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Soutar, 2001), and previous foodservice research has reported significant relationships between perceived quality, perceived value and satisfaction (Joung et al., 2016). However, the present finding suggests that quality did not make a significant unique contribution to satisfaction when the other consumption-value dimensions were considered simultaneously. One possible explanation is that acceptable quality may be viewed as a basic expectation of established Korean instant-food brands rather than a distinctive source of satisfaction.

Social value demonstrated support for H3 at the 10% significance level (β = .127, p = .072). Social value refers to the utility derived from association with social groups and the enhancement of social self-concept (Sheth et al., 1991). The finding suggests that Korean instant food may generate satisfaction through its social and cultural meanings, particularly given the influence of Korean popular culture, social media and peer influence. This is consistent with Seungkwon and Shim (2013), who found that social value contributed to consumers' evaluations of food-related consumption experiences. Thus, social value may enhance satisfaction by enabling consumers to participate in shared cultural interests, contemporary food trends and social experiences.

Epistemic value did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with consumer satisfaction at the 10% significance level (β = −.090, p = .206); thus, H4 is not supported. Epistemic value reflects curiosity, novelty, knowledge acquisition and the desire for new experiences (Sheth et al., 1991). Although Korean instant food may provide opportunities to explore unfamiliar flavours and Korean food culture, novelty may be more relevant to initial trial or purchase than to post-consumption satisfaction. This finding differs from Seungkwon and Shim (2013) and Muhamed et al. (2019), who reported significant roles for epistemic value in fast-food satisfaction and Malaysian halal-food decision-making, respectively. These differences may reflect variations in product category, consumption context and behavioural outcome.

Functional value did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with consumer satisfaction at the 10% significance level (β = −.014, p = .879); thus, H5 is not supported. Functional value represents the utility derived from a product's performance and ability to meet practical needs (Sheth et al., 1991). Although convenience and ease of preparation would normally be expected to influence satisfaction with instant food, Korean instant food is inherently convenience-oriented, meaning that these benefits may already be taken for granted. This finding contrasts with Seungkwon and Shim (2013), who found functional value to be a significant predictor of satisfaction. The non-significant coefficient should therefore not be interpreted as indicating that consumers do not value functional benefits, but rather that functional value did not make a significant unique contribution within the integrated model.

Conditional value demonstrated support for H6 at the 10% significance level (β = .099, p = .055). Conditional value refers to the utility derived from a product under particular situations or circumstances (Sheth et al., 1991). In the present context, Korean instant food may provide greater satisfaction when it meets specific needs, such as limited preparation time, convenience requirements, particular occasions or promotional situations. The finding reinforces the context-dependent nature of TCV, suggesting that consumers evaluate not only the product itself but also how well it fits their immediate consumption circumstances. Conditional value had the smallest p-value, indicating the strongest statistical evidence among the three

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significant relationships, whereas social value had the largest standardised β, indicating the largest standardised regression coefficient.

Price value demonstrated support for H7 at the 10% significance level (β = .117, p = .079). Price value reflects consumers' evaluation of whether the benefits received are reasonable relative to the monetary cost incurred (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The finding is consistent with Konuk (2019), who demonstrated the importance of price fairness and perceived value in consumer satisfaction. For Korean instant food, this relationship may be particularly relevant because imported products may carry a price premium. Consumers may therefore experience greater satisfaction when the taste, convenience, portion and overall consumption experience are perceived to justify the price paid.

Lastly, halal value did not reach the 10% significance level (β = .065, p = .103); thus, H8 is not supported. Although halal considerations are highly relevant in the Malaysian food market, the non-significant unique contribution does not imply that halal value is unimportant. Rather, halal value may operate as an assurance or threshold condition that establishes product acceptability and reduces uncertainty, rather than directly increasing post-consumption satisfaction. This interpretation is consistent with Muhamed et al. (2019), who found that halal certification influenced consumer choice while other consumption-value dimensions contributed to consumer decision-making. Thus, halal assurance may be particularly important at the choice and trust stage, whereas post-consumption satisfaction may depend more strongly on social, situational and economic value.

Implications Of Study

This study examined eight consumption-value dimensions associated with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food among Malaysian consumers using an extended Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) perspective. The findings provide partial support for the proposed relationships. At the 10% significance level, social value (β = .127, p = .072), conditional value (β = .099, p = .055) and price value (β = .117, p = .079) demonstrated significant positive unique relationships with consumer satisfaction. Conditional value recorded the smallest p-value among the significant predictors, indicating the strongest statistical evidence of an association, whereas social value recorded the largest standardised regression coefficient.

The findings provide several theoretical insights. First, the results demonstrate that consumption-value dimensions do not contribute uniformly to consumer satisfaction. Rather, their relative importance depends on the specific consumption context and the outcome being examined. The findings therefore support the multidimensional nature of TCV while demonstrating that individual value dimensions may make different levels of unique contribution when examined simultaneously.

Second, the inclusion of halal value as a context-specific extension of TCV provides an important finding. Although halal value was positively related to satisfaction at the bivariate level, it did not demonstrate a significant unique contribution when the other consumption-value dimensions were considered simultaneously. This suggests that halal assurance may perform a different role from conventional consumption values, potentially functioning as an

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acceptability or assurance condition rather than as a direct differentiator of post-consumption satisfaction.

The study therefore contributes to the literature by demonstrating how TCV can be applied to a foreign-food consumption context in which cultural, economic, situational and halal considerations coexist. More broadly, the findings demonstrate that the contribution of individual consumption values should be interpreted within the specific cultural and consumption context rather than assumed to be uniform across product categories and behavioural outcomes.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that businesses marketing Korean instant food in Malaysia should place greater emphasis on the three value dimensions that demonstrated significant relationships with consumer satisfaction: social value, price value and conditional value.

For social value, marketers could strengthen the connection between Korean instant food and Korean food culture, social trends and shared consumption experiences through culturally relevant campaigns, social media content, community activities and product storytelling. Such strategies may enhance the social meaning associated with the product and encourage consumers to view Korean instant food as more than simply a convenient food option.

With respect to price value, managers should ensure that consumers perceive the product as offering reasonable value for money. Appropriate pricing strategies, promotional bundles, discounts, product-size options and clear communication of product benefits may strengthen consumers' perceptions of economic value. Since price value demonstrated a significant positive relationship with satisfaction, maintaining an appropriate balance between price and perceived benefits is particularly important.

The significant relationship between conditional value also highlights the importance of positioning Korean instant food according to relevant consumption situations. Marketing strategies could emphasise occasions in which the product is particularly suitable, such as quick meals, convenient home consumption, sharing with family or friends, or situations where consumers require an accessible food option. Rather than relying solely on the intrinsic characteristics of the product, marketers can communicate how Korean instant food fits consumers' specific needs and circumstances.

Although quality, functional, emotional, epistemic and halal values did not demonstrate significant unique relationships with consumer satisfaction in the present model, these attributes should not be disregarded. Maintaining acceptable product quality, functional performance and credible halal assurance remains important for meeting consumers' expectations and maintaining market acceptance. However, the findings suggest that greater strategic emphasis may be placed on social relevance, value for money and situational suitability, which demonstrated significant relationships with consumer satisfaction.

Future Research and Limitations

Future research should consider several limitations of the present study. First, the cross-sectional design captures consumer perceptions at a single point in time and therefore does not

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allow changes in consumption value and satisfaction to be examined longitudinally. Future studies could investigate whether the relative importance of different consumption values changes with repeated consumption, increasing familiarity with Korean food or changing levels of exposure to Korean popular culture.

Second, the study focused on Malaysian consumers and Korean instant food, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other countries, cultural groups and foreign-food categories. Comparative studies could examine whether the relative importance of social, conditional and price value remains consistent across different imported food products and cultural settings. Third, future research could examine whether halal value influences satisfaction indirectly through variables such as perceived trust, perceived risk, product acceptability or purchase intention. This would provide a more complete understanding of whether halal value functions primarily at the pre-purchase stage or whether it also contributes to post-consumption evaluations.

Finally, future studies could employ qualitative or mixed method approaches to investigate why social, conditional and price values demonstrated significant unique contributions while emotional, quality, epistemic, functional and halal values did not. Such approaches could provide deeper insight into the meanings consumers attach to Korean instant food and help explain the mechanisms through which different consumption values are associated with satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study examined the consumption-value dimensions associated with consumer satisfaction towards Korean instant food among Malaysian consumers using the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV). Eight dimensions were examined, namely emotional, quality, social, epistemic, functional, conditional, price and halal value. The findings provide partial empirical support for the proposed relationships. At the 10% significance level, social value, conditional value and price value demonstrated significant positive unique relationships with consumer satisfaction, whereas the remaining dimensions did not demonstrate significant unique contributions.

The findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating the usefulness of TCV in understanding consumer satisfaction within the context of foreign instant-food consumption in Malaysia. They further suggest that the contribution of consumption-value dimensions varies according to the specific consumption context and outcome examined. The inclusion of halal value as a context-specific extension also provides insight into the possibility that halal assurance may serve primarily as an acceptability or assurance condition rather than as a direct differentiator of post-consumption satisfaction.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that marketers should pay particular attention to the social relevance, situational suitability and perceived value for money associated with Korean instant food, while continuing to maintain acceptable product quality and credible halal assurance. Overall, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of consumer satisfaction with Korean instant food in Malaysia and provides a basis for future research to further examine how conventional and context-specific consumption values interact in shaping consumer evaluations.

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Author Contribution Statement: All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript. Nik Rozila Nik Mohd Masdek and 'Ismah Osman was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, and overall supervision of the study. 'Ismah Osman and Nik Rozila Nik Mohd Masdek handled data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. Nadhratul Ain Ibrahim, Zahirah Hamid Ghul, Norsaliza Abu Bakar, Nor Harlina Abd Hamid, Ririn Tri Ratnasari and Suraya Husin contributed to the literature review, drafting, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) The author(s) declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used during the preparation of this manuscript. The following tool(s) were used: ChatGPT. The tool was used for language editing, grammar improvement, translation, data analysis. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the author(s), who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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