



**JOURNAL OF TOURISM,
HOSPITALITY AND
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT
(JTHER)**

www.gaexcellence.com/jthem



CUSTOMERS' LOYALTY AMONG GEN Z IN MALAYSIA'S FAST-FOOD RESTAURANTS: THE ROLE OF HALAL LOGO, PERCEIVED REPUTATION, TRUST AND BRAND

Natasahaslinda Sa'ad¹, Noralisa Ismail^{2*}, Fauziah Deraman³, Maisarah Abd Hamid⁴, Sulaiha Mohd Isa⁵, Ameleya Muhammad Ghazali⁶

¹Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun, Malaysia

 2023131583@student.uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8475-1320>

²Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun, Malaysia

 noral634@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0246-1445>

³Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun, Malaysia

 fauziahd@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8115-130X>

⁴Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun, Malaysia

 maisal79@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6601-1659>

⁵Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun, Malaysia

 sulai595@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1276-2099>

⁶Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun, Malaysia

 ameleya@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8877-7778>

*Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 16.07.2026

Revised date: 30.07.2026

Accepted date: 17.08.2026

Published date: 21.09.2026

Abstract:

The current study investigated the influence of selected factors that could lead to generation z customers' loyalty towards Malaysia's halal fast-food restaurants. The study was concerned about the impact of the halal logo, perception of reputation, customer trust, and brand on customer loyalty. Altogether 324 Muslim Generation Z customers from Malaysia participated in the study through answering the questionnaire available online through Google Forms, WhatsApp, Instagram, among others. The statistical tools used to analyze the data were the IBM SPSS Statistics version 27.0. In this study, Multiple

To cite this document:

Sa'ad, N., Ismail, N., Deraman, F., Hamid, M. A., Isa, S. M., & Ghazali, A. M. (2026). Customers' Loyalty Among Gen Z In Malaysia's Fast-Food Restaurants: The Role of Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, Trust and Brand. *Journal of Tourism Hospitality and Environment Management*, 11 (45), 720-737.

DOI: 10.35631/JTHER.1145043

Linear Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. It was found out that the halal logo, reputation perception, and brand had significant positive impacts on customer loyalty, whereas customer trust did not significantly affect customer loyalty. This implies that the customer trust is likely to influence customer loyalty in an indirect way through other variables such as brand and customer satisfaction.

Keywords:

Brand, Customer Loyalty, Fast-Food Restaurant, Gen Z, Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, Trust



© The authors (2026). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY NC) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact jthem@gaexcellence.com.

Introduction

The food service industry has made much progress over the last few decades under the impact of urbanization, technological development, and change in consumer behavior. In 2023, the industry had a value of around USD 3.5 trillion (Statista, 2024). As in any other country, Malaysia has a rapidly growing fast-paced food industry, characterized by prevalence of fast food in urban areas. In its turn, the fast food or QSR industry flourishes thanks to higher disposable income levels, urbanization, and increased need for convenient food options. Leading brands, such as KFC (Ahmed et al., 2026; Tarmidi et al., 2023; Song et al., 2022) and McDonald's (Ahmed et al., 2026; Tarmidi et al., 2023) are actively developing within the market.

One of the important target markets in the context of fast-food industry is Generation Z, which is referred to people born between 1997 and 2012 (Nandwani et al., 2025) or Gen Z. The reason behind this phenomenon is that this generation tends to have greater purchasing power, consumes quick-service meals, has higher level of engagement with digital technologies and often uses mobile applications, food delivery services, social media, and online reviews while choosing dining options (Nandwani et al., 2025). These traits undoubtedly represent the main characteristics of this generation that set it apart from previous generations. Moreover, Gen Z consumers often engage with food content and advertisements on social media, which strongly influences their food choices and buying behaviors (Nandwani et al., 2025).

Consequently, fast-food operators increasingly tailor their branding strategies, digital marketing campaigns, and customer loyalty programs to meet the preferences and expectations of this generation (Polas et al., 2022). Although Gen Z is gaining importance in the global market, research on customer loyalty among them in fast-food restaurants, particularly in developing countries, is scarce. Most available studies focus on regions outside Malaysia. For instance, Afandi & Marsasi (2023) examined the links between brand attitude, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions among Gen Z consumers in Indonesia's fast-food sector. Similarly, Albertaadinata et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review and found that most customer loyalty studies have concentrated on Millennials and Generation Y, with few addressing Gen Z. While there is research on Gen Z customer loyalty across countries, there is a lack of empirical studies specifically investigating the factors that influence Gen Z loyalty in Malaysia's fast-food restaurants.

Previous studies have identified strong connections between halal logos, customer trust, and customer loyalty in the food service industry with a specific fast-food restaurant segment (Shaari et al., 2021; Quoquab et al., 2019; Mohd Khamis et al., 2022). However, most research has focused on general adult customers or mixed-age groups rather than on Gen Z specifically. This limits the understanding of the unique perspectives and behaviors of Gen Z customers. Hence, this study aimed to bridge this gap by investigating the roles of halal logo, perceived reputation, customer trust, and brand image towards customer loyalty towards fast food restaurants, focusing on specific Gen Z customers in Malaysia.

While there is research on Gen Z customer loyalty across countries, there is a lack of empirical studies specifically investigating the factors that influence Gen Z loyalty in Malaysia's fast-food restaurants. Previous studies have identified strong connections between halal logos, customer trust, and customer loyalty in the food service industry with a specific fast-food restaurant segment (Shaari et al., 2021; Quoquab et al., 2019; Mohd Khamis et al., 2022). However, most research has focused on general adult customers or mixed-age groups rather than on Gen Z specifically. This limits the understanding of the unique perspectives and behaviors of Gen Z customers. Hence, this study aimed to bridge this gap by investigating the roles of halal logo, perceived reputation, customer trust, and brand image towards customer loyalty towards fast food restaurants, focusing on specific Gen Z customers in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Gen Z Consumers

A generation is defined as a cohort of individuals who share the same age group and have undergone or will undergo similar life experiences that shape their personalities (Vieira et al., 2024). Consequently, different generations can be distinguished based on factors such as birth location and date, upbringing, educational patterns, and cultural and social environments. As a result of growing up in the same macro environment, individuals in a particular generation tend to exhibit shared behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives.

Generation Z, often referred to as Gen Z, is the cohort that follows the Millennials. Pertaining to the exact birth years of Gen Z, a grey area has been recorded among the previous scholars. Gen Z is the first generation to grow up with the internet, social media, smartphones, and other digital technologies that have shaped their worldview and behavior. In terms of becoming potential customers, Gen Z known as value-conscious customers and tend to assess fast-food

brands using visible cues and credibility indicators before making purchase decisions. In addition, people that belongs to this generation mentioned as value personal traits such as loyalty (Diaconu & Dutu, 2020), assert and defend their rights, attach importance to environmental sustainability, and prioritize trust and quality (Beyaz, 2020).

Throughout history, the allocation of time and the use of technology have been subject to generational differences influenced by a multitude of factors. However, with the emergence and growth of Generation Z in the age of technology, they have become the largest and most important target audience for businesses and brands, leaving the previous generations behind. This group asserts and defends its rights, attaches importance to environmental sustainability, and prioritizes trust and quality (Beyaz, 2020).

While there is general agreement in the literature on identifying five generations, the exact dates demarcating each generation may vary. However, most sources agree that it includes people born after 1995 (Jayatissa, 2023). For the purposes of this study, the Pew Research Center's recommended generational definitions has been used which include the following cohorts: the Silent Generation (born between 1928 and 1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980), Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1996), GenZ (born between 1997 and 2012), and Generation Alpha (born from 2013 onwards) (Dimock, 2019).

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a strong commitment that leads customers to choose the same product or service again to meet their needs (Ali-Alsaadi et al., 2025). Loyal customers help stabilize a brand's revenue and improve its competitive position by reducing churn and increasing word-of-mouth referrals (Singh, 2021). Customer satisfaction is often reported as one of the best predictors of loyalty. Satisfied customers are more likely to revisit a restaurant, share positive experiences, and build long-term loyalty.

In halal restaurants, customer satisfaction significantly boosts customer-company identification, which in turn strengthens loyalty (Mursid & Wu, 2021). Similarly, Sumadi (2022) found that customer satisfaction influences the relationship between service quality, halal certification, and loyalty. In fast-food restaurants, customer loyalty is a key factor in management (Ahmed et al., 2023). Restaurant managers and owners highly value returning customers compared to occasional diners (Villanueva et al., 2023).

In the Malaysian market, the halal logo is vital for building customer loyalty (Quoquab et al., 2019) since most Malaysians are Muslim. In halal-certified fast food, loyalty is influenced not only by quality and satisfaction but also by perceptions of religious compliance and the ethical standards linked to halal certification. Recent studies show that halal certification boosts customers' trust in the product's compliance and quality, which in turn increases loyalty among Muslim consumers, especially younger groups like Gen Z (Sinaga et al., 2025).

Trust established by the halal logo positively affects how people see the brand. When Gen Z customers view a fast-food brand as dependable, ethical, and in line with halal principles, they are more likely to form positive associations with that brand. This strong brand image is key to encouraging repeat purchases and fostering long-term loyalty. Thus, halal logos, trust in halal

certification, and brand perception are connected factors that together influence customer loyalty among Gen Z in the fast-food industry (Quoquab et al., 2019; Azzumi et al., 2023).

Halal Logo and Customers' Loyalty

Malaysia has a Muslim population of 63.5% and is known worldwide for its strong halal governance and certification system (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2026). The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) oversees the Malaysian Halal Certification Scheme (MHCS). JAKIM sets the standards for halal assurance and builds consumer trust, particularly in the food sector. Recent research shows that Malaysian consumers are quite aware of the halal logo, highlighting its growing significance in food buying choices (Abu Bakar & Man, 2023).

The halal logo serves both as a religious requirement and a sign of quality and ethical standards in Malaysia, a diverse country with a large Muslim population. Once a food business meets the necessary criteria, JAKIM issues a halal logo. This logo indicates that the food meets Islamic ethical, hygiene, and nutritional standards. The importance of halal status in food establishments is clear, as Malays, who practice Islam, make up the largest demographic in Malaysia according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023).

Despite the common use of the halal logo, few studies have looked at its effect on customer loyalty among Gen Z. This group is young, tech-savvy, and increasingly shapes market trends. Gen Z spends a lot of time engaging with food-related content and ads on social media. This interaction can greatly influence their dietary choices and shopping habits (Nandwani et al., 2025). For Muslim Gen Z customers, the halal logo not only shows that the food meets religious requirements but also indicates product safety, good hygiene, and ethical production practices (Mohd Khamis et al., 2022).

The halal logo acts as a clear assurance that a product or service follows Islamic dietary laws. It signals safety, hygiene, and ethical sourcing. This gives customers confidence that the food they eat meets both religious and quality standards. Recent studies indicate that halal identity, which includes halal cues and certification, greatly boosts customer trust and loyalty toward halal restaurants (Mursid & Wu, 2021). The same researcher notes that halal identity significantly enhances customer trust, which can lead to stronger loyalty toward halal restaurants.

These findings show that halal-sensitive customers consider trust in the halal logo and the brand's reputation as key factors for long-term loyalty in the fast-food sector. This study focuses on customer loyalty to a specific fast-food chain, based on signals experienced by current customers. Gen Z customers are highly digitally connected and value conscious. Therefore, a clear and trustworthy halal logo can improve their view of a brand's reliability and promote repeat purchases. Based on this reasoning, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Halal Logo positively influences Customers' Loyalty.

Perceived Reputation and Customers' Loyalty

Perceived reputation refers to how customers view a restaurant's credibility, reliability, and ability to deliver quality products and services consistently. In the fast-food industry, a positive reputation comes from consistent food quality, prompt service, cleanliness, good value, and positive customer experiences. Customers' overall assessment of a brand's quality, reliability, and ethical behavior reflects its perceived brand reputation. Brands with strong reputations are better at keeping customers and standing out in competitive markets (Mohd Khamis et al., 2022).

Recent studies have shown that a restaurant's reputation is a key factor in customer loyalty within the fast-food industry. Abdul Majid et al. (2024) found that customers are more likely to stay loyal to fast-food restaurants that reliably provide high-quality products and services. These qualities enhance the restaurant's overall reputation and boost customers' confidence in the brand. The authors suggested that maintaining a good reputation leads to repeat visits and positive recommendations, which are crucial for the long-term success of fast-food businesses. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Perceived Reputation positively influences Customers' Loyalty.

Customer Trust and Customers Loyalty

Customer trust means that customers feel confident a restaurant will consistently provide reliable products and services while keeping its promises and meeting their expectations. In the fast-food industry, trust builds through consistent food quality, food safety, clear business practices, halal compliance, and reliable service. When customers trust a fast-food restaurant, they are more likely to create long-term relationships, return to the restaurant, and recommend it to others. Because of this, customer trust is seen as a key factor in customer loyalty since it lowers perceived risk and strengthens customers' commitment to the restaurant (Hasan & Nadila, 2022).

In halal-certified fast food, trust includes confidence in both the safety of the food and the reliability of the brand. Recent evidence shows that trust influences the relationships between halal certification, brand reputation, and loyalty (Sinaga et al., 2025). Trust is especially important for Gen Z customers, who often seek reassurance through credible information and digital reviews. When customers believe a brand consistently maintains halal standards and ethical practices, they are more likely to form positive feelings toward the brand, leading to increased customer loyalty. Therefore, the third hypothesis is:

H3: Customer Trust positively influences Customer Loyalty.

Brand and Customer Loyalty

Brand includes brand image, identity, and perceived value. Together, these elements shape how customers see and experience the brand. Strong brands create emotional attachment, differentiate products, and enhance satisfaction, all of which contribute to loyalty. Customers are loyal to a particular brand because of their love for it and might revisit a particular fast-food restaurant due to satisfaction with food quality, service quality, and physical environment. This has proven that the quality may influence loyalty (Mursid & Wu, 2022).

In halal-certified fast food, brand strength signals quality, reliability, and ethical practices that are highly valued by Muslim customers. For Gen Z customers, brand perception can influence repeat purchase behaviour and advocacy. When customers identify with a brand and associate it with positive values, they are more likely to remain loyal over time. Based on this understanding, the fourth hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand positively influences Customers' Loyalty.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study adopts and adapts Quoquab et al. (2019) framework. The study proposes that the presence of the halal logo, perceived reputation, and customer trust result in customer loyalty. In addition to the proposed framework, the current research would add a new construct, brand (Mohd Khamis et al., 2022). to investigate its influence on customer loyalty in the context of fast-food restaurants in Malaysia.

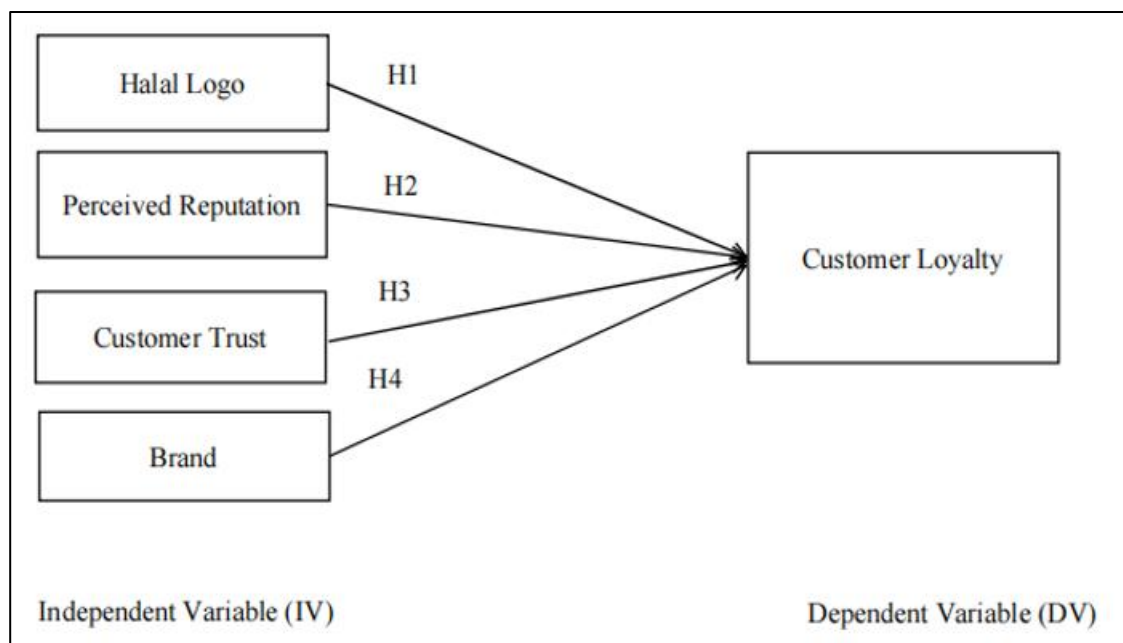


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source : Quoquab et al. (2019); Mohd Khamis et al. (2022)

Methodology and Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research methodology to explore the relationship between halal logo, perceived reputation, customer trust and brand with customer loyalty. The data collection involved a structured online survey of Muslim Gen Z customers within the age range of 20-30 years, who frequently consumed fast foods. The use of a quantitative method of data analysis is based on the need to statistically analyze the relationship between halal certification, brand trust, and brand reputation on customer loyalty.

Population and Sample

This research was conducted on the population of Gen Z Muslims in Malaysia, whose number was estimated at 3.65 million, based on Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024). G-Power software was used to determine the minimum sample size required, which was found to be 129 respondents. There were 324 respondents involved in this study, more than the minimum requirement needed and enough at 95% confidence level. Non-probability sampling method was used to collect data, using Google Forms, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Threads for the online survey. The respondents were also screened for their faith and experience in buying from halal fast food restaurants.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The questionnaire items were adapted from two different studies. The survey contained five parts, that is, halal logo, perceived reputation, customer trust, brand and customer loyalty. In investigating the role of Halal logo, Perceived Reputation, and customer trust towards customer loyalty, the questions were adapted from Quoquab et al (2019), which consist of 5 items for Halal logo, 4 items for Perceived Reputation, and 4 items for Trust. In addition, a new variable, which is Brand, has adapted 4 items from the study of Mohd Khamis et al. (2022). Finally, the measurement items for Customer Loyalty were adapted from Quoqab et al. (2019), as their study is set in a fast-food setting and their respondents were not specifically focused on any generation cohort.

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A pilot study with 30 respondents was conducted prior to the main data collection to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability of the measurement items. Necessary adjustments were made based on pilot feedback to improve the wording of questions and response options. Data collection was conducted online over a three-month period from 16 September to 16 December 2025, to reach digitally active Gen Z customers. Screening questions ensured that participants were Muslim and had experience purchasing from halal-certified fast-food restaurants. Participation was voluntary, and respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics, including mean, frequency, and percentage, were used to summarise respondents' demographic profiles. Multiple regression analysis has been used to test the formulated hypotheses and the impact of Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, customer trust, and brand on Customers' Loyalty.

Result and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographics of the 324 participants in this study. Majority of the participants were females (71.9%), while only 28.1% were males. As for age distribution, the majority of participants were aged 20–22 years (67.9%), while 18.2% were aged 23–25 years, hence the majority of the participants were from the younger generation of Gen Z.

All the participants were Muslim, as the topic of study involved consumption of halal certified fast foods in Malaysia. Majority of the participants (53.4%) had bachelor's degree, while 38% had Diploma degree. On the frequency of consumption of fast food, the majority of the participants consumed fast foods 2-3 times a week (27.5%) or once a week (25.5%). The most popular fast-food chain among the participants was KFC (36.1%), while MarryBrown accounted for 25.3%.

Table 1 : Demographic Profile of the Respondents (n=324)

Demographic Profile	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	91	28.1
Female	233	71.9
Age		
20-22	220	67.9
23-25	59	18.2
26-28	8	2.5
29-30	37	11.4
Religion		
Islam	324	100.0
Education Level		
Diploma	123	38.0
Bachelor's Degree	173	53.4
Bachelor's Master	8	2.5
Doctorate (PhD)	15	4.6
Other	5	1.5
Frequency of Consumption		
Once a week	86	25.5
2-3 times a week	89	27.5
Once a month	68	21.0
Rarely	81	25.0
Favorite Fast-Food Brand		
KFC	117	36.1
McDonalds	36	11.1
MarryBrown	82	25.3
Texas Chicken	45	13.9
Other	44	13.6

Source: Author's Own Work

Mean by Construct: Customers' Loyalty

The results of the analysis of Customers' Loyalty variables presented in Table 2 show mean scores of 4.5340 to 4.7191, which demonstrate a high level of loyalty towards the halal-certified fast-food brands. The highest mean score is obtained for the item "I prefer to shop at halal-certified fast food outlets more than the other non-certified outlets" (Mean = 4.7191, SD = 0.59263), while the second highest mean score is received for "I intend to keep on buying from halal-certified fast food brands" (Mean = 4.6265, SD = 0.69007) and third for "I will recommend halal-certified fast food brands to others" (Mean = 4.5772, SD = 0.73622).

The lowest mean score is achieved for the item “I am loyal to fast food brands that are halal-certified” (Mean = 4.5340, SD = 0.81516). Thus, based on the above data, one can conclude that Gen Z customers demonstrate high loyalty towards the halal-certified fast-food brands.

Table 2: Customer Loyalty

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	I intend to continue buying from halal-certified fast-food brands.	4.6265	0.69007	High
2	I would recommend halal-certified fast-food brands to others.	4.5772	0.73622	High
3	I feel loyal to fast food brands that are halal-certified.	4.5340	0.81516	High
4	I prefer to visit halal-certified fast-food outlets rather than non-certified ones.	4.7191	0.59263	High

Source: Author's Own Work

Mean by Construct: Halal Logo

Table 3 provides the mean scores for halal logo statements with values ranging from 4.5340 to 4.7654, implying that there is a strong consensus regarding the importance of halal certification among survey participants. In addition, the highest mean value was recorded for “halal logo is an important factor in my food choice” (Mean = 4.7654, SD = 0.57871) followed by “I trust restaurants with valid halal certificates more” (Mean = 4.7500, SD = 0.60634) and “halal logo increases my confidence in a fast-food brand” (Mean = 4.7438, SD = 0.60375). The lowest mean value was recorded for “I usually check for halal certification before buying fast food” (Mean = 4.5340, SD = 0.81135), which implies the high level of significance of halal certification among the survey participants. Therefore, it can be concluded that Gen Z consumers in Malaysia have a high regard for halal certification.

Table 3: Halal Logo

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	I believe halal logo ensures the food is safe and clean.	4.7407	0.58944	High
2	The halal logo increases my confidence in a fast-food brand.	4.7438	0.60375	High
3	I usually check for halal logo before buying fast food.	4.5340	0.81135	High
4	Halal logo is an important factor in my food choices.	4.7654	0.57871	High
5	I trust restaurants with valid halal logo more.	4.7500	0.60634	High

Source: Author's Own Work

Mean by Construct: Perceived Reputation

The Perceived Reputation items analysis presented in Table 5 demonstrated mean scores between 4.3642 and 4.5278 which show that consumers have a positive perception of halal-fast food. The highest score was registered for “I feel more respected when choosing halal-certified fast-food brands” (Mean = 4.5278, SD = 0.77649), while “Halal-certified brands are

more reputable than non-halal brands” (Mean = 4.4568, SD = 0.75965) and “I believe halal-certified fast food brands care about their customers” (Mean = 4.4198, SD = 0.79650) took second and third places respectively.

The lowest mean was observed for “The fast-food brand I choose has a good reputation” (Mean = 4.3642, SD = 0.77704), indicating a high level of perceived reputation among respondents. Overall, the results suggest that Gen Z customers in Malaysia perceive halal-certified fast-food brands positively, valuing both the respect and care associated with these brands, which can contribute to higher Customer Loyalty.

Table 4: Perceived Reputation

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	The fast-food brand I choose has a good reputation.	4.3642	0.77704	High
2	Halal-certified brands are more reputable than non-halal brands.	4.4568	0.75965	High
3	I believe halal-certified fast food brands care about their customers.	4.4198	0.79650	High
4	I feel more respected when choosing halal-certified fast-food brands.	4.5278	0.77649	High

Source: Author's Own Work

Mean by Construct: Trust in Halal Certification

The analysis of Trust in Halal Certification items, as shown in Table 5, revealed high mean scores ranging from 4.4815 to 4.6914, indicating that respondents have a strong level of trust in halal certification and related authorities. The highest mean was reported for the statement “I trust that JAKIM ensures halal compliance in fast food outlets” (Mean = 4.6914, SD = 0.63718), followed by “I believe halal certification reduces the risk of consuming non-halal food” (Mean = 4.6759, SD = 0.66064) and “I believe halal certification bodies in Malaysia are reliable” (Mean = 4.6636, SD = 0.64007).

This lowest mean value was achieved by the item “I trust the halal logo present at fast food outlets” (Mean = 4.4815, SD = 0.76472). These results indicate a high degree of trust in the part of the respondents. Altogether, it can be seen that the Generation Z customers of Malaysia have high levels of trust in the halal certification, especially in the regulatory process by JAKIM, and in certified fast-food outlets.

Table 5: Trust in Halal Certification

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	I trust that JAKIM ensures halal compliance in fast food outlets.	4.6914	0.63718	High
2	I believe halal certification bodies in Malaysia are reliable.	4.6636	0.64007	High
3	I trust the halal logo displayed in fast food restaurants.	4.4815	0.76472	High

- 4 I believe halal certification reduces the risk of consuming non-halal food.

4.6759 0.66064 High

Source: Author's Own Work

Mean by Construct: Brand

From the results of analyzing the brand items presented in Table 6, it is clear that there are consistently high mean scores, which range from 4.6204 to 4.6481, showing a positive view of halal certified fast-food brands. The highest mean score was recorded for “A halal certified brand shows ethical and responsible behavior” (Mean = 4.6481, SD = 0.65810), followed by “Halal logo improves the image of the brand of fast-food restaurants” (Mean = 4.6296, SD = 0.68499), and “I perceive halal certified brands to be trustworthy” (Mean = 4.6235, SD = 0.66319).

The lowest mean score was recorded for “Image of halal in the brand affects my buying behavior” (Mean = 4.6204, SD = 0.72613), reflecting a strong positive perception. In conclusion, halal certification appears to improve the brand image of fast-food outlets among Gen Z consumers, thereby fostering ethical, responsible, and trustworthy brand perceptions that may increase consumer loyalty.

Table 6: Brand

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	My favourite halal certified fast food brand offered an affordable pricing.	4.6204	0.72613	High
2	My favourite halal certified fast food brand has attractive packaging design.	4.6235	0.66319	High
3	My favourite halal certified fast food brand has variety in menu selection.	4.6296	0.68499	High
4	My favourite halal certified fast food brand always persistence in promoting new product.	4.6481	0.65810	High

Source: Author's Own Work

Summary of Construct Mean Scores

In Customer Loyalty, the mean scores varied between 4.5340 and 4.7191, which indicates a high level of loyalty. The most agreeable item under customer loyalty was 'I prefer visiting halal certified outlets' (Mean=4.7191, SD=0.59263), while the least agreeable item was 'I am personally loyal to halal certified brand names' (Mean=4.5340, SD=0.81516).

For Halal Logo, participants identified its significance through their answers with average scores of 4.5340 to 4.7654. “Halal logo is an important factor in my food choice” was the most agreed upon among all the statements (Mean= 4.7654, SD=0.57871). For perceived reputation, mean scores ranged from 4.3642 to 4.5278, indicating mostly positive views of halal-certified fast-food brands. The highest-rated item was feeling respected when choosing halal-certified brands (Mean = 4.5278, SD = 0.77649). The lowest rated item was about the overall reputation of the selected brands (Mean = 4.3642, SD = 0.77704).

For Trust in Halal Logo, respondents showed high trust in both the certification and its governing authorities, with scores ranging from 4.4815 to 4.6914. The highest trust was in JAKIM's role in ensuring halal compliance (Mean = 4.6914, SD = 0.63718). Lastly, for Brand Image, mean scores were consistently high, ranging from 4.6204 to 4.6481. The item with the highest rating was the persistence promotion from the halal-certified brands (Mean = 4.6481, SD = 0.65810). Overall, these findings suggest that Gen Z customers have strong positive perceptions across all areas. This shows that halal certification, trust, perceived reputation, and brand image play important roles in shaping Customer Loyalty toward halal-certified fast-food brands in Malaysia.

To investigate the connection between Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, Customer Trust, and Brand towards the Customer Loyalty, Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was used. The reason for this choice is that MLR enables us to assess several predictor variables at once and their interaction as well as learn about the factors that have the strongest impact on customer loyalty. In particular, it is very helpful in studying Gen Z consumers who are tech-savvy and sensitive to brands' signals such as halal and reputation.

The results, shown in Table 7, indicate that Halal Logo ($\beta = 0.248$, $t = 4.898$, $p < 0.001$), Perceived Reputation ($\beta = 0.284$, $t = 5.183$, $p < 0.001$), and Brand ($\beta = 0.345$, $t = 6.182$, $p < 0.001$) significantly and positively affect Customers' Loyalty. Of these, brands had the most significant effect. This proves that brand perception, credibility, and ethical image play an important role in motivating Gen Z customers for repeated purchases. In contrast, Customer Trust ($\beta = 0.046$, $t = 0.840$, $p = 0.401$) was not statistically significant. It implies that while trust in the halal logo is significant, it does not influence loyalty in the absence of other factors such as brand and reputation.

Table 7: Multiple Linear Regression

Coefficients^a							
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	
1	(Constant)	.125	.178		.704	.482	
	HL_Mean	.296	.061	.248	4.898	.000	2.700
	PR_Mean	.277	.054	.284	5.183	.000	3.163
	CT_MEAN	.048	.057	.046	.840	.401	3.105
	B_MEAN	.354	.057	.345	6.182	.000	3.285

a. Dependent Variable: CL_Mean

Source: Author's Own Work

There was no problem with multicollinearity, as the value of tolerance for each variable exceeded 0.1 and VIF value was less than 10. In conclusion, the results obtained prove that Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, and Brand are significant predictors of customer loyalty for

halal-certified fast food in Gen Z of Malaysia, whereas Customer Trust has no significant effect on loyalty. The hypothesis H1, H2, and H4 were proved correct, whereas H3 was not proved as summarized in Table 8. Thus, it can be concluded that fast-food operators should ensure halal certification and take care of brand reputation and image to ensure customer loyalty.

Table 8: Regression Analysis Result

HYPOTHESIS	P-VALUE	REMARK
H1: Halal Logo positively influences Customer Loyalty	0.001	Accepted
H2: Perceived Reputation positively influences Customer Loyalty	0.001	Accepted
H3: Customer Trust positively influences Customer Loyalty	0.401	Rejected
H4: Brand positively influences Customer Loyalty	0.001	Accepted

Source: Author's Own Work

Discussion

According to the results of the research, the Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, and Brand have significant effects on Customer Loyalty, but Customer Trust does not have a significant effect on it. High importance of the Halal Logo demonstrates that visual confirmation acts as a reliable indicator for consumers. It increases trust in safety, hygiene, and conformity of products to religious regulations. Such outcomes correlate with the findings of previous research emphasizing the role of halal certification as one of the most important aspects which determines purchase decisions and customer loyalty (Quoquab et al., 2019; Saleh, 2024). For Generation Z customers, the halal logo means not only compliance with certain regulations, but also similarity to personal values.

Likewise, Perceived Reputation also has a significant impact on loyalty, corroborating past studies which state that renowned brands have the tendency to retain their loyal customers (Mohd Khamis et al., 2022). A positive reputation portrays the aspect of reliability, quality, and integrity, hence creating a bond between the consumer and the brand. However, for Generation Z consumers, the reputation is not only about the attributes of the products but also involves the social responsibility and integrity of the brand in accordance with halal principles.

The research hypotheses suggested that Customer Trust was going to be a significant predictor of customer loyalty. However, unlike what was hypothesized, there was no statistically significant effect of Customer Trust on customer loyalty. The finding implies that trust is not an independent predictor of customer loyalty when Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, and Brand are included in the model. Although previous studies have found that trust is critical in forming customer loyalty, its direct effect on loyalty may become insignificant when more powerful predictors, such as Brand, are considered.

Alternatively, it is possible that the influence of Customer Trust on customer loyalty occurs indirectly, not directly. As found in previous research, customer trust has an ability to influence such factors as brand credibility, customer engagement, and customer satisfaction positively, leading to customer loyalty. In other words, Brand is likely to act as an intermediary variable through which trust affects customer loyalty. In other words, customers who trust a restaurant will first have a positive attitude toward its brand before they start patronizing it. Further research needs to pay attention to Brand, customer satisfaction, or customer engagement.

In conclusion, this research has shown that although Customer Trust remains an essential aspect of the relationship between customers and businesses, Customer Trust is not significantly impacted by Halal Logo, Perceived Reputation, and Brand, and does not have any effect on customer loyalty among Malaysian Generation Z customers. Instead, it is the Brand aspect that plays a greater part in loyalty formation. It means that the management of fast-food restaurants in Malaysia should be concentrated both on building the brand perception and credibility, as well as on establishing the relationship of mutual trust with customers. The research provides useful insights for brand managers seeking to attract and retain customers, as the areas where attention should be paid include brand perception, ethics, and halal certification.

Conclusion

In this regard, the study shows that Halal Logo, Reputation, and Brand are significant in forming the Customer Loyalty among Gen Z customers in the Malaysian fast-food industry. On the contrary, Customer Trust does not significantly influence customer loyalty in the fast-food industry and hence implies that just relying on trust will not necessarily lead to repeat patronage. The results show that customer loyalty of Gen Z is more affected by visible elements of branding and reputation of the product and halal logo. This is because of the nature of Gen Z consumers whereby they are very informed about different products and hence evaluate food brands through various means.

From the findings of the study, there are several practical implications that can be drawn for managers in fast-food companies, especially those marketing to the Gen Z Muslims. First, fast food brand marketers should pay attention to building the brand image through consistent communication, proper positioning, and quality assurances because the influence of brand perception on customer loyalty was found to be the greatest one. Second, reputation is important for successful operations. Fast food marketers should make sure that their brands stand for trustworthiness, ethics, and good customer care. Third, fast food marketers should take into account the impact of Gen Z consumers' peer influence because the generation is very much Internet-oriented and is greatly influenced by online reviews.

Moreover, brands must ensure that they promote the certification of halal by ensuring the visibility of halal logos in marketing communications. Visibility of halal guarantees will help increase the confidence of consumers, especially the Muslim consumers whose major consideration when making their food choices is religious compliance. Though Customer Trust did not turn out to be a significant predictor in this research, customer trust is still an important contributor. Thus, fast food brands must continue to earn the trust of customers through food quality and religious compliance.

Conclusively, an effective strategy that encompasses brand development, reputation management, and halal certification is essential for capturing and retaining the loyalty of Generation Z consumers. Through the integration of the above factors, fast-food brands can achieve customer loyalty and competitive advantage in Malaysia's halal fast-food market.

-
- Acknowledgements:** The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Terengganu for providing the necessary resources and support throughout this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who contributed valuable insights and constructive feedback, which greatly enhanced the quality of this paper.
- Funding Statement:** No Funding
- Conflict of Interest Statement:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors have contributed to this work and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission to the International Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management (JTHER).
- Ethics Statement:** This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards. All procedures involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Terengganu, approval number 100-UiTMCTKD (PJI.23/4) JPN. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes.
- Author Contribution Statement:** All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript. Sa'ad. N and Deraman. F were responsible for methodology and data collection. Noralisa. I and Ghazali. A were responsible for conceptualization and literature review. Hamid. M.A handled the analysis and interpretation of results. Isa, S.M was responsible for the drafting and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.
-

References

- Abdul Majid, M. A., Azman, A. B., Mohd Zaki, M. I., Zahari, H. & Hassan, H. (2024). Investigating customer loyalty: can fast-food restaurants keep them coming back? *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts*, 16 (1). pp. 244-263. ISSN 1985-8914; 2590-3837
- Abu Bakar, I., & Man, S. (2023). Consumers' knowledge and readiness to accept the implementation of mandatory Malaysia Halal Certification Scheme (MHCS). *International Journal of Allied Health Sciences*, 7(5). <https://doi.org/10.31436/ijahs.v7i5.850>
- Afandi, M. T. R., & Marsasi, E. G. (2023). Fast food industry investigation: The role of brand attitude and brand loyalty on purchase intentions in Generation Z based on Theory of Reasoned Action. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 8(11), e03782. <https://doi.org/10.54268/baskara.v5i2.16005>
- Ahmed S., Al Asheq A., Ahmed E., Chowdhury U. Y., Sufi T., Mostofa M. G. (2023). The intricate relationships of consumers' loyalty and their perceptions of service quality, price and satisfaction in restaurant service. *TQM Journal*, 35(2), 519–539.
- Ahmed, F., Rahman, M. A., Mia, M. S., & Magazzino, C. (2026). Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in The Fast-Food Industry of Malaysia. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 1754-1769.
- Albertaadinata, A., Sudarmiati, S., & Hermawan, A. (2025). Analyzing customer loyalty among Generation Z food consumers: A systematic review. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 4(1), 144–156.
- Ali-Alsaadi, A. A., Cabeza-Ramírez, L. J., Santos-Roldán, L., & González-Mohino, M. (2025). Understanding Customer Loyalty in Fast-Food Restaurants: Exploring the Moderating Effect of Relational Benefits in the United Arab Emirates. *Sage Open*, 15(2).
- Azzumi, N., Rahman, N. A. A., & Latif, R. A. (2023). Exploring halal perception among Gen Z and Millennials in Southeast Asia: A cross-generational perspective. *Journal of Halal Consumer Studies*, 5(1), 55–70.
- Beyaz, R. (2020). Z Kuşağı tüketicilerin kişilik özellikleri ve bilinçli tüketim eğilimleri arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi. *Gençlik Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8(22), 51-75.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2026). <https://open.dosm.gov.my/dashboard/kawasanku>
- Diaconu, M., & Dutu, A. (2020). Employees Behavior within Labor Market: Generation Z Vs. Generation Y. *The USV Annals of Economics and Public Administration*, 20(1(31), 113–119.
- Dimock, M. (2019). Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>
- Hasan, G., & Nadila, K. (2022). The effect of service, price, quality, and brand image on customer loyalty through trust in fast-food restaurants. *International Journal of Research – GRANTHAALAYAH*, 10(1), 150–163. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v10.i1.2022.4481>
- Jayatissa, K. A. D. U. (2023). Generation Z—A new lifeline: A systematic literature review. *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(2).
- Mohd Khamis, W. N. F., Jalis, M. H., Azmi, A., & Abd Rahman, A. E. (2022). Attributes affecting quick service restaurants revisit intention among student of higher learning institutions. *Esteem Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6, 30-46.

- Mursid, A., & Wu, C. H. J. (2022). Halal company identity and halal restaurant loyalty: the role of customer satisfaction, customer trust and customer-company identification. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 13(12), 2521-2541.
- Nandwani, R., Mahajan, A., Chan, V. W. K., Chui, K. T., Muley, A. S., & Lo, K. K. H. (2025). Social media usage and advertising food-related content: Influence on dietary choices of Gen Z. *Nutrients*, 17(24), 3930. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu17243930>
- Polas, M. R. H., Raju, V., Tabash, M. I., Hossain, M. I., Karim, A. M., & Dadang, A. (2022). Customer's revisit intention: Empirical evidence on Gen-Z from Bangladesh towards halal restaurants. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22(3), e2572. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2572>
- Quoquab, F., Mohammad, J., & Sukari, N. N. (2019). Driving customer loyalty in the Malaysian fast food industry: The role of halal logo, brand image, and trust. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 10(3), 768–789.
- Saleh, N., & Rajandran, K. (2024). Halal certification as a symbol of food safety and ethics in Malaysia. *Journal of Food Ethics and Marketing*, 5(1), 33–48.
- Shaari, J. A. N. B., Khalique, M., & Ottot, H. B. (2021). Halal Logo and The Confidence Level of Malaysian Customers on Indonesian Halal Certified Products. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, 27(5), 1-8.
- Sinaga, S., Astika, S., & Nasrudin, A. R. (2025). The Effect Of Halal Certification On Brand Loyalty By Mediation Of Purchase Intention Towards Local Indonesian Products: The Case Of Gen-Z Indonesia Malaysia Border. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam*, 11(05).
- Singh, V. D. (2021). An overview on brand loyalty and customer loyalty. *ACADEMICIA an International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 11(12), 34–39. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-7137.2021.02628.8>
- Song, N.H., Wuryaningrat, N.F., Ibrahim, A.F.M., Kee, D.M., Nasir, A.I.M., San, A.L.S., . . . Kawung, R. (2022). Manpower and Service Quality of Fast-Food Restaurant: KFC Restaurant. *Journal of Community Development in Asia*, 5(1).
- Statista. (2024). Global food service market value 2023. <https://www.statista.com/>
- Sumadi. (2022). Factors Influencing Muslim Consumer's Satisfaction and Loyalty of Restaurant in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Journal of Islamic Economics Lariba*, 8(2), 311–326. <https://doi.org/10.20885/jielariba.vol8.iss2.art4>
- Tarmidi, Z., Yap, W. K., Kon, H. X., Azmy, S., & Hassan, N. (2023). Analysing spatial pattern of the three major fast-food chain restaurants in Johor Bahru Johor, Malaysia. *Journal of Advanced Geospatial Science & Technology*, 3(2), 63-76.
- Vieira, J., Gomes da Costa, C., & Santos, V. (2024). Talent Management and Generation Z: A Systematic Literature Review through the Lens of Employer Branding. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(3), 49. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14030049>
- Villanueva, M. C. C., Alejandro, A. F., & Ga-an, M. L. L. P. (2023). Measuring the service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty of selected fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 11(3), 1181-1207. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2023.113066>