# BUILDING CONSUMER TRUST THROUGH HALAL BRANDING: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MALAYSIA'S HALAL ECONOMY

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**Abstract.** The halal industry in Malaysia has seen significant growth driven by consumer demand for ethical and religious integrity, and as a global leader, the nation is actively refining branding strategies to associate products with safety and quality. This research aims to address the gap in understanding how brand awareness influences purchasing decisions through complex psychological mechanisms by developing a unified framework integrating trust, authenticity, and attitudes within the halal sector. The study adopts a conceptual methodology, synthesizing current literature to pinpoint theoretical and empirical deficiencies while leveraging the Theory of Planned Behavior to provide a rigorous explanation of consumer decision-making. Analysis reveals that traditional studies often overlook the integration of behavioral dimensions like trust and brand perception, highlighting a need for a more comprehensive model to effectively influence long-term consumer confidence. Ultimately, this study contributes a robust theoretical framework for future empirical validation, offering vital insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to strengthen Malaysia's position as a premier halal hub.
**Keywords**: *consumer trust, perception of authenticity, consumer attitudes, halal brand awareness, consumer purchasing behaviour*

## Introduction

The global halal industry has evolved into one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, driven by increasing Muslim populations, rising consumer awareness, and growing concerns regarding food quality, safety, and ethical standards (Wilson and Liu, 2011). Malaysia has become a leading halal market due to its strong halal governance, internationally recognized certification system, and active government support in promoting halal industries. In today's highly competitive marketplace, halal branding no longer represents only religious compliance; instead, it has become a symbol of quality assurance, product integrity, hygiene, safety, and trustworthiness among consumers (Ambali and Bakar, 2014). Consumers increasingly associate halal-certified products with superior quality and ethical manufacturing processes, making halal branding an important competitive advantage for businesses operating in the food and beverage industry. The growing importance of halal branding has significantly influenced consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly among Muslim consumers who prioritize halal compliance in their daily consumption decisions (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008). However, despite increasing awareness regarding halal products, consumer purchasing behaviour remains inconsistent due to varying levels of trust, authenticity perceptions, and attitudes toward halal brands. Many consumers continue to question the credibility of halal claims, especially with the emergence of misleading halal labels and inconsistent certification practices in certain markets. As a result, businesses face

increasing pressure to establish trustworthy and authentic halal branding strategies that can effectively influence consumer purchasing behaviour.

Malaysia is a world-leading halal hub with a trusted certification system. Today, a halal label means more than just religious compliance; it is a powerful symbol of safety, quality, and authenticity that directly shapes how people shop. The literature also highlights that halal certification is leveraged to reassure consumers about safety, quality, and cleanliness, reinforcing its role as a trust signal beyond mere religious compliance (Lee et al., 2023; Ismaja and Kijkasiwat, 2023). While Malaysia is a global leader with strong certification from JAKIM and HDC, consumers are still often confused by the many different halal logos. Research shows that brand awareness alone doesn't always lead to a sale, especially if consumers lack trust or doubt a product's authenticity. The need for a better model that explains how psychological factors actually turn brand awareness into a final purchase is crucially important. First, consumers are exposed to numerous halal logos and branding claims, creating confusion regarding product authenticity and credibility. Secondly, some halal-certified products fail to generate strong purchasing intentions due to weak brand trust and negative consumer perceptions.

Although Malaysia is widely recognized as a global halal hub, numerous challenges continue to affect consumer confidence and consumer purchasing behaviour toward halal products. One of the primary concerns involves the increasing number of halal branding claims and certifications in the market, which often create confusion among consumers regarding product authenticity and credibility (Wilson and Liu, 2011). Consumers today are exposed to various halal logos, marketing messages, and branding strategies, yet many remain uncertain about whether products genuinely comply with Islamic principles and halal standards. This situation has contributed to declining consumer trust in certain halal brands and increased scepticism regarding halal product authenticity (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008). Past research often studied halal awareness and certification separately, missing the deeper psychological factors. There is also little evidence on how trust, authenticity, and brand awareness work together to influence buying habits. This paper proposes a new framework that combines these elements to better explain consumer behavior in Malaysia's halal market.

## *Literature review*

### *Theory of Planned Behaviour*

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) helps explain how halal awareness turns into actual purchases. It shows that brand awareness influences consumer behavior through three main factors: attitudes, social norms, and personal control. When consumers have positive views, backed by cultural values and trust in the certification process, they are much more likely to buy halal products. TPB presented by Ajzen (1985; 1991), remains one of the most influential socio-psychological models for predicting and understanding human behavior across diverse areas. The central premise of TPB is that behavior is driven by behavioral intention, which is inclined by attitude (positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior), subjective norms (perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior), and perceived behavioral control (perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, analogous to self-efficacy). The sturdier the intention and the greater the perceived control, the more likely the behavior will occur (Sharma et al., 2013).

TPB suggests that purchase intention, and thereby actual purchase behavior, is driven by three proximal determinants: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Sari et al., 2023). Across halal marketing literature, TPB has been widely used to explain Muslims' and wider consumer cohorts' intentions to purchase halal products, including foods, cosmetics, and another certified goods (Fenitra et al., 2024; Hasan et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2017). In halal situations, researchers often extend the TPB model with constructs such as halal awareness, halal literacy, halal certification, religious beliefs, brand image, and halal marketing to better capture characteristic signals in halal decision-making (e.g., logos, ingredients, and certification status) (Hasan et al., 2024; Mulyarahardja et al., 2023; Silalahi, 2023; Fauzi, 2022; Khan et al., 2022). A repeated theme is that halal awareness, certification, and branding act as cues that shape attitudes and perceived safety/quality in ways that influence purchase intentions among both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in numerous markets (Silalahi, 2024; Zahra et al., 2023; Harun et al., 2022; Azam, 2016,).

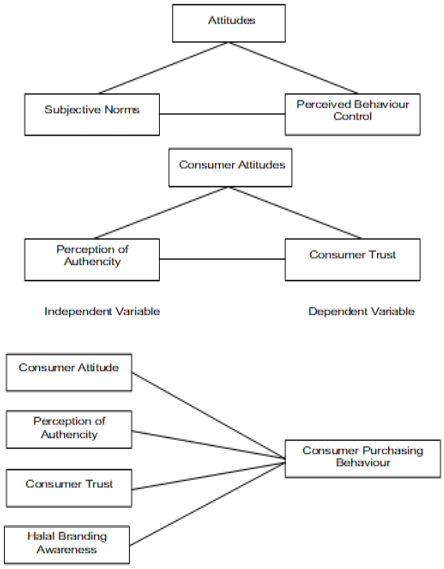



***Figure 1.*** *Underpinning theory of the theory of planned behaviour.*

### *The concept of consumer attitudes*

Consumer attitude discusses to consumers' overall positive or negative evaluations toward halal products and brands. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Icek Ajzen, attitudes significantly affect behavioural intentions and actual purchasing decisions (Ajzen, 1991). Positive consumer attitudes toward halal products are often formed by religious beliefs, perceived product quality, social influence, and prior consumption experiences (Aslan, 2023). Across halal cosmetics and halal food studies, attitude consistently develops as a strong predictor of purchase intention within the TPB outline, aligning with the core TPB proposition that favorable attitudes increase purchase intention (Yaacob et al., 2024; Mulyarahardja et al., 2023; Handriana et al., 2021;Ngah et al., 2021). Beyond generic attitudes, research frequently links positive attitudes to brand-related perceptions such as brand image or halal branding cues, suggesting that favorable evaluations of a halal brand bolster inclusive attitudes toward the product category and, in turn, purchase intention (Yaacob et al., 2024; Mulyarahardja et al., 2023; Ngah et al., 2021; Handriana et al., 2020). Studies show that

consumers with favourable attitudes toward halal products are more likely to purchase halal-certified goods steadily. Positive attitudes contribute to stronger emotional attachment and increased willingness to support halal brands (Wilson and Liu, 2011). In Malaysia, halal products are often associated not only with religious obedience but also with cleanliness, health, and product quality, which further strengthen consumer attitudes toward halal consumption (Ambali and Bakar, 2014).

### *The influence perception of authenticity to consumer purchasing behaviour*

Authenticity drives buying decisions. When consumers believe a halal claim is genuine, they are much more likely to buy. If consumers have doubts, their confidence drops and they stop purchasing. High authenticity leads to stronger sales and even higher prices, especially when supported by trust and quality. Studies in Asian markets, for example, show dimensions of authenticity (quality commitment, heritage, sincerity) predicting brand love and consequent behavioral outcomes (repurchase, price premium). Perception of authenticity mentions to consumers' beliefs that halal products genuinely reflect Islamic values, ethical standards, and authentic halal compliance practices. Authenticity is increasingly significant in halal branding because consumers today seek transparency, honesty, and honesty from brands. Consumers are more likely to trust and support halal brands that demonstrate genuine commitment to halal principles rather than simply using halal labels as marketing tools (Wilson and Liu, 2011).

Authenticity impacts consumers emotionally and psychologically because it enhances perceptions of integrity and legitimacy. Consumers who perceive halal brands as authentic tend to develop stronger emotional attachment, loyalty, and purchasing intention toward the brand (Erdem and Swait, 2004). In the situation of halal products, authenticity includes factors such as clear sourcing, credible certification, ethical manufacturing, and honest marketing communication. Nevertheless, existing literature on halal branding authenticity remains relatively limited. Most previous studies focus primarily on halal certification and awareness without examining broader authenticity dimensions. A traceability-centric authenticity framework should specify data points at each node (origin, processing, transport, storage, and handling) aligned to Halal Assurance System (HAS) requirements, with interoperability across regulatory bodies and certification entities. Multiple sources converge on the benefit of traceability for authenticity verification beyond certification alone (Dashti et al., 2024; Kusnadi et al., 2024).

### *The impression of consumer trust*

Trust is the foundation of halal consumption. Customers are reluctant to buy halal goods if they don't trust certifying organizations. Research indicates that trust increases customer loyalty and readiness to pay more for products with halal certification. Consumer trust refers to consumers' confidence that halal products genuinely comply with Islamic principles, halal certification requirements, and quality standards (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008). Trust is a major factor in buying decisions because shoppers rely on certification and brand reputation rather than technical checks. Since most consumers cannot verify halal compliance themselves, consumers must trust the labels and the brand's credibility. Studies have exposed that consumer trust positively influences halal purchase intention and brand loyalty (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Consumers are more likely to purchase halal products when they trust the credibility of halal logos,

certification authorities, and the ethical applies of the company. Trust reduces uncertainty and perceived risk, allowing consumers to make purchasing decisions with greater confidence (Erdem and Swait, 2004). Despite the status of trust, several matters continue to challenge consumer confidence in halal products. Cases involving fake halal logos, deceptive product claims, and inconsistent certification practices have weakened trust in certain halal brands. Additionally, many previous studies examine trust as an isolated construct without integrating it into broader halal branding frameworks. Limited empirical evidence exists regarding the facilitating role of consumer trust between halal branding awareness and consumer purchasing behaviour. Most researchers look at trust by itself instead of seeing how it fits into the bigger picture of halal branding.

### *The overview of halal branding awareness*

Halal branding is not just a religious assurance but also a symbol of quality, safety, and ethical responsibility. For Muslim consumers, halal certification is a religious obligation, while for non-Muslim consumers, it represents cleanliness, health, and trustworthiness. This dual awareness makes halal branding a powerful marketing tool. Yet, gaps in consumer understanding and inconsistencies in logo usage challenge its effectiveness. A central thread in the literature is that halal awareness (knowledge and understanding of halal standards and their implications) positively influences purchase intentions for halal products (Fachrurrozie et al., 2023, Khan et al., 2022, Rafiki et al., 2024). Being aware of halal standards is a strong predictor of what consumers will buy. For instance, in online food platforms in Indonesia, halal awareness directly contributes to purchase intention and interacts with attitude and subjective norms within the TPB framework (Fachrurrozie et al., 2023. Similar positive relations appear in studies of halal cosmetics and other halal product categories, where awareness, certification, and brand cues elevate purchase consideration (Nabilah and Zulaikha, 2024; Handriana et al., 2020). Halal branding that signals purity, safety, and quality tend to foster favorable brand attitudes, which in turn drive purchase decisions. Halal brand personality frameworks include purity, safety, sophistication, excitement, and righteousness, positing these dimensions as antecedents to awareness and perceived quality, thereby shaping brand equity (Ali et al., 2021).

### *The influence of halal branding awareness towards Malaysia market*

Halal branding awareness refers to consumers' ability to identify, understand, and evaluate halal-certified products and brands based on Islamic principles and halal compliance standards (Ambali and Bakar, 2014). In the Malaysian market, halal branding awareness has become increasingly vital because consumers are more concerned about the legitimacy and integrity of products they consume. Halal branding roles as an assurance mechanism that communicates religious compliance, product safety, cleanliness, and ethical production practices to consumers (Wilson and Liu, 2011). Previous studies have emphasized that halal awareness significantly influences consumer self-assurance and purchasing behaviour. Consumers with high halal awareness tend to pay closer care to halal logos, certification details, ingredient information, and manufacturing processes before purchasing products (Aslan, 2023). Halal branding awareness also shapes consumers' emotional attachment and loyalty toward halal brands, particularly when consumers observe the brand as transparent and

trustworthy (Erdem and Swait, 2004). While research on halal awareness is growing, most studies only look at how it directly leads to sales. Very few have explored how brand awareness indirectly affects behavior through psychological factors like trust, authenticity, and consumer attitudes. Furthermore, many studies fail to consider the evolving digital marketing environment, where halal branding awareness is increasingly formed through online platforms and social media engagement (Isa et al., 2024). Consequently, there is a need for a more comprehensive framework that explains the broader influence of halal branding awareness on consumer purchasing behaviour.

### *The impact of consumer purchasing behaviour to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)*

Current research shows that halal branding usually boosts sales because consumers link it to safety, ethics, and religious duty. However, results vary across different markets, and consumers still don't fully understand how strong this connection is for every consumer group. TPB has become the central framework for understanding how consumer purchasing choices are formed and transformed. TPB posits that intention to perform a behavior is the immediate antecedent of the behavior, and that intention is shaped by three determinants: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Arias and Usiña-Báscones, 2024; Mejía et al., 2021; Blas et al., 2013). Buying behavior is shaped by both thoughts and emotions. When it comes to halal products, factors like awareness, trust, and authenticity are the main drivers. because current research in Malaysia is scattered, a more complete framework is needed. Essentially, a 'halal lifestyle' means living in a way that fully upholds Islamic teachings. The scope of the halal lifestyle covers food, medicine, cosmetics, travel, finance, media, and so on (Agustina et al., 2018). Halal certification is a security guarantee for a Muslim consumer to choose good food for him and follow religious rules. Food products that have a halal certificate are products that meet standards in safety and cleanliness (Legowati and Ul Albab, 2019).

## Results and Discussion

Research shows that simply being aware of a halal brand isn't enough to trigger a sale. Instead, consumers make decisions based on psychological factors like their own attitudes, how authentic the product feels, and how much they trust the brand. Previous studies have predominantly focused on halal awareness and halal certification as direct predictors of purchase intention without adequately examining the mediating behavioural devices that influence consumer decision-making (Aslan, 2023). While some studies suggest that halal awareness positively influences consumer purchasing behaviour, others report inconsistent findings due to differences in consumer perceptions, trust levels, and attitudes. Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding regarding how consumer trust, perception of authenticity, and consumer attitudes collectively facilitate the relationship between halal branding awareness and purchasing behaviour. Consumer attitudes and consumer trust also play a critical role because favourable evaluations toward halal products increase purchasing intentions. The integration of these variables provides a more holistic clarification of consumer purchasing behaviour compared to previous fragmented studies. Consumer attitude and consumer trust refers to consumers' favourable or unfavourable valuations toward halal products. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitudes and perceived

behavioural control significantly influence behavioural intentions. Consumer likely will purchase product when they favoured of the product. Because consumers are more persuaded to buy goods that they like, trust, and find appealing, consumer attitudes and consumer trust have a big impact on purchasing behavior. Customers who have positive opinions about a product are more likely to establish emotional attachment, confidence, and contentment with the brand, all of which eventually increase their desire to make regular purchases market that is modest.

Factors like quality, brand recognition, fair pricing, and halal certification build positive customer views. When people see a product as safe, authentic, and aligned with their religion, they feel more confident buying. This trust lowers perceived risk, leading to brand loyalty and repeat purchases. Ultimately, trust and positive attitudes are the core psychological drivers that turn interest into a sale by meeting both functional and emotional needs. Perception of authenticity reflects consumers' beliefs that halal products genuinely represent Islamic philosophies, ethical practices, and quality assurance. Authenticity influences emotional attachment and brand loyalty. Perception of authenticity reflects consumers' beliefs that halal products sincerely represent Islamic principles, ethical practices, transparency, and quality assurance throughout the production and distribution process. Authenticity is crucial in the halal industry because consumers demand halal products to be created, advertised, and delivered with honesty, integrity, and sincerity in adding to meeting religious criteria. Customers typically assess the legitimacy of halal products based on a number of criteria, such as the dependability of halal certification, ingredient transparency, ethical sourcing, cleanliness, safety necessities, and honest marketing messaging. Customers are more likely to gain confidence and emotional trust in a halal company when they believe it truly upholds Islamic values and ethical business practices.

## *Implications and recommendations*

### *Research implications*

This study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to better explain how halal brand awareness leads to sales. It provides a foundation for future researchers to test how trust and authenticity actually drive consumer decisions in Malaysia.

### *Managerial implications*

Businesses must move beyond simple advertising; they need to build genuine trust through transparent communication and strict halal standards. Managers should prioritize brand authenticity, while policymakers can use this framework to improve consumer education and enforcement.

### *Theoretical implications*

By integrating trust into the TPB, this study creates a more sophisticated model for markets where certification is essential. This new hybrid approach helps explain consumer behavior in any industry where trust and authenticity are the main priorities.

## Conclusion

This paper proposes a framework linking consumer attitudes, authenticity, and trust to halal brand awareness and buying behavior in Malaysia. It addresses a major gap by showing that awareness alone isn't enough; it requires trust and authenticity to turn interest into an actual purchase. This study helps both researchers and businesses understand how to use halal branding as a sign of quality and safety, ultimately strengthening Malaysia's global position.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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