

# A Comparative Study of Muslim and Non-Muslim Perceptions of Halal Food: Examining Trust and Confidence in Malaysia

Chong Ye Hao<sup>1</sup>, Nor Hazana Abdullah<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Management and Technology, Faculty of Technology Management and Business,  
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Batu Pahat, Johor, MALAYSIA

\*Corresponding Author: [hazana@uthm.edu.my](mailto:hazana@uthm.edu.my)

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## Abstract

Halal food is widely consumed in Malaysia by both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers; however, recurring concerns regarding consumer trust and confidence in halal certification have raised questions about how halal-labelled products were perceived across different religious groups. This study aimed to compare the perceptions of halal food between Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in Selangor and Johor Malaysia, focusing on factors that influenced their trust and confidence in halal-labelled products. A quantitative survey method was conducted with 324 respondents using quota sampling and data were analysed using SPSS. The Mann-Whitney U test was employed to identify the comparative differences, revealing a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the two groups. The results showed Muslim consumers placed a stronger reliance on halal certification and religious assurance, whereas non-Muslim consumers associated halal with aspects such as food safety, hygiene and overall product quality. Consequently, these findings highlighted that bridging the perception gap requires strengthening the credibility of certification authorities and implementing inclusive communication strategies that resonate with both communities. This research suggested that future studies could further investigate how cultural or generational factors influence perceptions of halal food.

## 1. Introduction

The global demand for halal food has shown impressive growth over the past few years. According to the "State of Global Islamic Economy Report 2022" the global halal product consumer spending worldwide reached \$2 trillion in 2021 and expected continue growing to \$2.8 trillion by 2025 (Prayuda et al., 2023). This expansion is not just due to the Muslim population but also because of rising from non-Muslim consumers seeking for ethically produced, hygiene and health benefits food options (Billah et al., 2020).

In Malaysia, halal food plays important role of the national economy and cultural identity. In 2023, Malaysia's halal exports reached RM59.46 billion with halal food comprising a significant portion of 2 that figure (Halal Industry, 2023.). However, consumer trust and confidence particularly in diverse and urban region by heavily influenced by their perception of product credibility, transparency and assurance mechanisms (Herianti, H., et al., 2023). For Muslim consumers, halal compliance is often non-negotiable factor in religious obligation. Oppositely, for non-Muslim consumers, halal food may be judged based on attributes such as food safety, ethical treatment of animals and hygiene (Nordin, et al, 2022).

## 1.2 Problem Statements

In 2023, the global halal food market was valued at \$2.09 trillion, yet it represents only a small segment of the overall global food industry, reflecting limited acceptance among non-Muslim consumers (Sutton, 2023). While Malaysia is a major importer of halal food products, the acceptance of imported halal food still remains a challenge, particularly among non-Muslim consumers. Although halal food consumption is growing worldwide, its adoption outside Muslim-majority markets remains limited due to religious perceptions, certification complexities, and a lack of awareness of its broader food safety and ethical benefits. (Rowena, K., et al., 2024).

The research comparing Muslim and non-Muslim perceptions, specifically regarding trust and confidence is limited. A review of 205 studies on halal food consumption in Malaysia shows that only 108 have specifically addressed consumer trust, while 28 examined consumer confidence in imported halal food in the past 5 years. Most studies prioritize Muslim consumers, neglecting how non-Muslims perceive halal food in terms of trust, quality, confidence assurance. This gap limits the understanding of why halal food still remains a niche market globally despite its growing presence in non-Muslim majority countries.

The acceptance of imported halal food remains a barrier to global market expansion, due to inconsistent certification standards, religious perceptions and limited awareness among non-Muslims (Mohd et al., 2021). In Malaysia, concerns over halal authenticity persist, especially after past disputes regarding mislabelling and fraudulent halal claims (Maifiah et al., 2022c). Meanwhile, in global markets, non-Muslim consumers often perceive halal food as being exclusive to Muslims, rather than recognizing its broader food safety, ethical and quality benefits. Without a clear understanding of both Muslim and non-Muslim consumer perceptions, businesses and policymakers struggle to develop effective trust-building strategies, limiting the industry's ability to integrate into mainstream global food markets.

Therefore, to achieve the research objectives the Muslim consumer trust and confidence on halal food are determined. Furthermore, the non-Muslim consumer trust and confidence on halal food also determined. Consequently, whether the trust and confidence differ between Muslim and non-Muslim consumer on halal food is identified.

## 1.3 Scope of the Study

The study investigates how Muslim and non-Muslim consumers perceive trust and confidence in halal food products. By compare these two consumer groups, the study aims to fill the current knowledge gap regarding their perceptions of halal perceptions of halal-certified products. The scope is confined to consumer behaviour and attitudes within Malaysian context, rather than focusing on manufacturing or supply chain technicalities. This study will be conducted in Selangor and Johor, Malaysia. These states were selected because their unique mix of Muslim and non-Muslim populations provides an ideal background for examining how both groups perceive the key variables. According to the key findings population and housing census of Malaysia 2020, Muslims constitute approximately 60% of the population in both states (61.1% in Selangor and 59.7% in Johor), ensuring a balanced and representative sample for comparative analysis (Department of Statistics Malaysia,2025). Quantitative data were collected through online questionnaires distributed via Google Forms.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing comparative insights into Muslim and non-Muslim consumer perceptions of halal food. Understanding these differences is crucial for enhancing market acceptance, improving certification transparency and informing policymakers to foster greater consumer confidence. The results may also guide halal food producers and marketers in tailoring their strategies to diverse consumer segments.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This section reviews relevant literature related to the key constructs of this study, including trust, confidence, and perception in the context of halal food consumption. Past studies are examined to highlight the importance of these constructs in shaping both Muslim and non-Muslim attitudes towards halal food. Specially, the chapter is organised to first define the fundamental concepts of "Halal" and "Halal Food," followed by a critical review theoretical models regarding "Trust" and "Confidence." Finally, these insights are integrated to construct the conceptual framework and research hypotheses of the study.

### 2.2 Halal

Halal is an Arabic term meaning "permitted" or "lawful" (Yunus et al., 2014). It is a crucial concept for Muslims, governing daily activities such as eating, drinking, and business transactions (Zakaria et al., 2018). Halal extends

beyond food to include lifestyle choices, financial dealings, and general conduct, grounded in Shariah law which clearly defines what is permissible (Rehman & Shahbaz Shabbir, 2010). The use of harmful ingredients, labour exploitation, and environmental damage are considered unlawful.

The halal label on products strongly appeals to Muslim consumers (Haque et al., 2015a). Halal also involves processes and standards like food safety, cleanliness, reliability, and quality assurance (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024). Therefore, halal encompasses all aspects of a Muslim's life, providing guidelines on what is permissible to earn the blessings of Allah.

## 2.3 Halal Food

Halal food refers to consumables permissible under Islamic law, covering not only ingredients but also preparation, processing, and handling methods. Food must be free from haram (forbidden) components and processed using equipment cleansed according to Islamic guidelines (Alqudsi, 2014; Rehman & Shahbaz Shabbir, 2010b).

Halal principles emphasize lawful ingredients, nutritional value, cleanliness and hygiene from cultivation to serving (Rehman & Shahbaz Shabbir, 2010). It integrates religious values, ethical sourcing, safety, and quality assurance (Mohd Suki, 2018). This includes the exclusion of pork and alcohol, humane slaughtering, and protection of labour and environment (Zakaria et al., 2018). In Malaysia, JAKIM oversees halal certification ensuring compliance with Shariah and Malaysia Standard MS 1500:2019, covering the entire production chain (Halal Foundation Editorial Team, 2022). Halal certification is respected by Muslims and increasingly trusted by non-Muslims for quality and safety (Haque et al., 2015a; Mohd Suki, 2018).

## 2.4 Definition of Trust

Trust occurs when one party believes another will act in a certain way (Anderson & Narus, 1990). It is a psychological state involving willingness to be vulnerable, expecting the other to act beneficially (Mayer et al., 2006). Trust is vital in social, economic, and consumer contexts, influencing decisions and reducing perceived risk, especially in health and ethical sectors (Gefen, 2000). This study adopts Mayer et al.'s (2006) definition of trust as the willingness to be vulnerable based on expectations of the other's actions, as it has been empirically validated in many studies.

## 2.5 Models of Trust

### *a) McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany's Model of Initial Trust*

McKnight et al., (1998) proposed a model of Initial Trust to explain how trust forms between parties without prior interaction. This model relies heavily on "institution-based trust," where consumers trust a structural assurance for example like logo and regulation rather than vendor personally. While this explains how consumers might initially trust a new halal logo, the major problem with his model for the current study is its exclusive focus on initial encounters. It fails to account for the habitual, repeated nature of food consumption in Malaysia, where trust is often built on long term confidence rather than just a first impression.

### *b) Gefen's Trust in E-Commerce Model*

Gefen's (2000) model focuses specifically on trust within online environments, emphasising vendor credibility and the "ease of use" of the technological platform. This model is relevant when consumers verify halal status via digital apps or QR codes. However, the limitation of this model is its narrow focus on the technological medium which the internet rather than product itself. It does not adequately address the essential attributes such as religious compliance, hygiene or ingredients which are the primary concerns for consumers evaluating halal food in a physical marketplace.

### *c) Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's Integrative Model*

Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) define trust as the willingness to be vulnerable based on the expectation of trustworthy behaviour, driven by Ability, Benevolence and Integrity. In the context of halal food, ability refers to the technical competence of certification bodies like JAKIM. Benevolence is the belief that authorities care about consumer well-being and Integrity ensure the manufacturer strictly follows to Shariah principles.

This research adopts Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's integrative Model because its multidimensional framework offers the most comprehensive lens for a comparative study. Unlike previous models, Mayer's framework effectively distinguishes between two groups: it allows the researcher to measure how Muslim consumers prioritise Integrity which strict Shariah compliance while non-Muslim consumers prioritise Ability for food safety and hygiene, making it the most suitable model for comparing diverse religious perceptions.

## 2.6 Previous Studies of Trust in Halal Food

Investment Trust strongly influences consumer behaviour regarding halal food, which carries religious and ethical importance. For Muslims, trust in halal certification ensures compliance with religious obligations. Non-Muslims often associate halal food with hygiene, quality, and ethical production (Haque et al., 2015a).

Studies show trust increases halal-certified food purchases among Muslims, who also influence others and moderate the link between religious commitment and buying behaviour (Usman et al., 2024). Trust enhances halal supply chain integrity and performance (Majid et al., 2023). It mediates between consumer knowledge and purchase decisions, reducing perceived risk (Rahman et al., 2021).

Factors shaping trust include certification credibility, supply chain transparency, and manufacturer reputation (Tieman, 2011; Aziz & Chok, 2013). Malaysia's JAKIM is a trusted authority locally and internationally (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024a). When halal status cannot be directly verified, consumers rely on logos, labels, and brand reputation (Bonne & Verbeke, 2007).

In Malaysia's multicultural society, building trust among Muslims and non-Muslims promotes religious compliance and inclusivity, improving satisfaction and loyalty (Zakaria et al., 2018; Mohd Suki, 2018). Non-Muslims view halal certification as a marker of cleanliness and safety (Aziz & Chok, 2013; Haque et al., 2015a). Institutional credibility, such as JAKIM certification, strongly influences non-Muslim purchasing decisions (Bonne & Verbeke, 2007).

In summary, trust in halal food is influenced by institutional credibility, brand communication, religious values and supply chain transparency, crucial for maintaining consumer confidence in multicultural markets like Malaysia.

H1: There is a significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslims consumers in terms of trust toward Halal Food.

## 2.7 Definition of Confidence

The Confidence refers to a person's belief in the reliability or truth of someone or something. In consumer behaviour, it means assurance in decisions and perceived product reliability. Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán (2005) view confidence as a consumer's feeling of security when interacting with a brand despite incomplete information. Garbarino & Johnson (1999) describe it as trust in a service provider's ability to perform as promised, especially under uncertainty. Confidence reduces perceived risk and fosters loyalty and satisfaction (Sweeney & Swait, 2008).

This study uses Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán's (2005) definition focusing on psychological assurance, important in contexts involving certification, ethics, and health such as halal food.

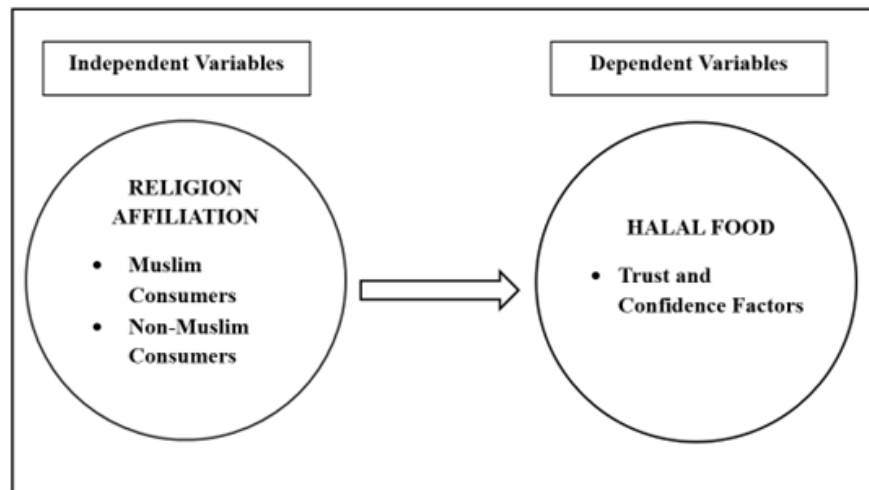
## 2.8 Previous Studies of Confidence in Halal Food

Demographic & Cultural Shifts Confidence levels are not uniform and vary by age and background. Among Muslims, younger generations rely on digital platforms and reviews, whereas older consumers priorities the authority of bodies like JAKIM (Saleh & Rajandran, 2025). Interestingly, non-Muslims also seek Halal products, viewing them as symbols of hygiene and ethical production rather than religious icons (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008; Ramlan et al., 2025). Their confidence is highest in multicultural hubs like Malaysia and Singapore, where Halal is seen as a "cleaner" choice (Awan et al., 2015).

Strategic Branding & Research Gap For non-Muslims, confidence depends on clear standards and cultural familiarity (Shafie & Othman, 2006; Wilson & Liu, 2010). Rebranding Halal as "ethical" or "sustainable" further broadens its appeal (Lever & Miele, 2012; Zakaria et al., 2015). In conclusion, while these factors are known, there is a distinct lack of comparative research specifically analyzing the difference in "confidence" perceptions between Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. This study aims to fill that gap.

H2: There is a significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslims consumers in terms of confidence in Halal food.

## 2.9 Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** *Conceptual Framework*

### 3. Research Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology used to examine the perceptions of halal food among Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia. It explains the research design, strategy, instruments, sampling method, and data analysis techniques. As described by Sileyew (2020), research methodology provides a structured approach to collecting and analysing data systematically, ensuring that the study's objectives are achieved with accuracy and reliability.

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive-comparative research design. This approach is utilised to quantitatively measure and compare the levels of trust and confidence between Muslim and non-Muslims consumers. Rather than seeking relationship, this design focuses on identifying significant differences in how these two distinct demographic groups perceive the integrity of halal food.

#### 3.2 Research Strategy

A quantitative survey strategy was employed to collect standardized data from a diverse group of respondents. As stated by Malhotra (2017), surveys are effective tools for gathering data on attitudes and opinions. In this study, the researcher used an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, enabling efficient data collection from Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in Selangor and Johor.

#### 3.3 Sampling Measurement

Measurement in research involves systematically assigning numbers to concepts or variables (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). The study's questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic information (Section A), trust toward halal food (Section B) and confidence in halal food (Section C). Sections B and C utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure levels of agreement, helping to quantify and compare responses between different religious groups.

##### a) Questionnaire

To gather data for this study, a structured questionnaire was utilised as the primary research instrument. This method ensures standardization, meaning all participants respond to an identical set of questions, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004; Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). The survey targeted Malaysian respondents, specifically encompassing both Muslim and Non-Muslim consumers.

The questionnaire was divided into two primary sections. Section A collected demographic data, while Section B measured the dependent variables. The trust variable consisted of five items adopted from Al-Ansi et al. (2019), focusing on provider integrity and labelling accuracy. The Confidence variable comprised five items adopted from Abu et al. (2017), assessing reliance on domestic (JAKIM) and international halal regulatory bodies. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

#### 3.4 Research Population and Sampling

##### a) Research Population

According to Bougie and Sekaran (2019), a population refers to the entire group of people or objects to which a researcher intends to generalize the study findings. The study targets consumers in Selangor and Johor, which have a combined population of approximately 11.6 million. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2025), Muslims constitute the demographic majority in both states (approximately 60%), with a substantial non-Muslim population (approximately 40%). This diversity allows for a robust comparison of trust and confidence levels across religious groups.

### ***b) Research Sampling***

Sampling involves selecting a subset of individuals from a population to represent the whole (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). This study uses non-probability sampling to target Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in Selangor and Johor who purchase halal food products. To determine the appropriate sample size, an a priori power analysis was conducted using G\*Power, which indicated a minimum required sample of 128 respondents to achieve a medium effect size ( $f^2 = 0.15$ ) with a power of 0.95. However, to ensure better representativeness for the large population, the researcher referred to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which recommends a benchmark of 384 respondents. Consequently, 357 questionnaires were distributed, resulting in 324 valid responses (90.76% return rate), which serves as a robust dataset for the comparative analysis.

## **3.5 Data Collection**

The study used both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through a self-administered online questionnaire distributed to Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in Selangor and Johor, while secondary data was obtained from academic journals, industry reports, and halal certification authority websites. This combination ensured a comprehensive understanding of the topic by integrating empirical evidence with contextual knowledge.

### ***a) Primary Data Collection***

Primary data was gathered using an online Google Form that included both closed-ended and Likert scale questions. The form was shared through various online platforms, including WhatsApp, email, and social media, to reach a broad and diverse audience. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, and participation was voluntary and anonymous to protect their privacy and encourage honest responses.

### ***b) Secondary Data Collection***

Secondary data was sourced from scholarly publications, government databases, industry reports, and official halal certification bodies such as JAKIM. These sources provided background information, definitions, and relevant findings that supported the formulation of research questions and helped contextualize the primary data analysis. The integration of secondary data added depth to the study's theoretical foundation.

## **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data was analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were used to summarize respondent demographics and perception levels. For inferential statistics, the study employed the Mann-Whitney U Test. This non-parametric test was selected to statistically examine the significant differences in Trust and Confidence levels between Muslim and non-Muslim consumer groups, rather than investigating causal relationships.

### ***a) Descriptive Analysis***

Descriptive analysis involved calculating measures such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation to summarize the data collected from respondents. According to Kaliyadan and Kulkarni (2019), the sample without making probabilistic deductions is referred to as descriptive analysis. It emphasizes descriptive analysis to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables, particularly the perceptions of trust and confidence in halal. This analysis provided insights into general trends in consumer demographics, perception, and trust levels, enabling the researcher to understand the overall patterns in the dataset.

### ***b) Reliability Test***

In this study, reliability analysis was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. This method ensures that the questions consistently measure the intended variables. According to established academic standards, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable. Achieving this threshold confirms that the research instrument is stable and the data collected is suitable for further analysis.

### c) Normality Test

Normality tests, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, were used to assess whether the continuous variables followed a normal distribution. These tests were important in determining the appropriate statistical methods for further analysis, such as whether to use parametric or non-parametric tests for hypothesis testing.

### d) Inferential Analysis

Inferential statistical analysis is a branch of applied mathematics that uses random sampling to enable researchers to make informed statements about how confidently measurements from a sample represent the population parameters (Neuman, 2014). Common inferential tests include t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation analysis and Mann-Whitney U Test. These tests are essential for hypothesis testing, determining statistical significance, estimating population parameters and identifying patterns and trends. They allow researchers to draw valid conclusions and gain meaningful insights from the data collected. In this study, the researcher used the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyse the collected data and produce the results.

### e) Mann-Whitney U Test

Specifically, the Mann-Whitney U Test were used in this study to compare the perceptions of halal food between Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. This non-parametric test was selected because the data deviated from a normal distribution, while still assuming that the two groups are independent of each other. The test produces a U-value, corresponding Z-score and a p-value; if the p-value is less than the predetermined significance level (typically  $p < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis of no difference will be rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference between the mean ranks of the two groups (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2021). This analysis will allow the researcher to determine whether such as trust and confidence in halal certification, food quality or hygiene differ significantly between Muslim and non-Muslim respondents.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Survey Return Rate

The study targeted consumers in Selangor and Johor, where the total population is estimated at 11.6 million. To ensure the data was representative, the sample size was determined by referencing Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which suggests a benchmark of 384 respondents for large populations. A total of 357 questionnaires were distributed using a quota sampling technique. From this distribution, 324 valid responses were obtained, resilient a high response rate of 90.76%. This final sample size ( $N=324$ ) was deemed acceptable as it comfortably exceeds the minimum threshold of 128 respondents calculated via G\*Power analysis ( $f^2=0.15$ ,  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $P=0.95$ ), ensuring sufficient statistical power to detect significant differences between Muslim and non-Muslim groups. The survey return rate is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1** Survey Return Rate

| Population | Sample Size | Questionnaire Distribute | Valid Questionnaire Returned | Percentages |
|------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| 11,600,000 | 357         | 357                      | 324                          | 90.76%      |

### 4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the total of 324 respondents who participated in this study. For the gender distribution, female respondents constituted the majority at 59.9% ( $n=194$ ), while male respondents accounted for 40.1% ( $n=130$ ). Regarding age, the respondents were predominantly young, with the largest proportion falling within 22- to 30-year-old category (47.8%,  $n=155$ ). Consistent with this age profile, the big majority of respondents were single (72.5%,  $n=235$ ) and identified their primary occupation as students (58.0%,  $n=188$ ). This student-centric demographic is reflected in the financial data, where the highest percentage of respondents (42.3%,  $n=137$ ) reported a monthly household income of below RM 1,500. Finally, in terms of religious affiliation, the sample was composed of 55.6% ( $n=180$ ) non-Muslims and 44.4% ( $n=144$ ) Muslims.

**Table 2** Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Demographic Profile | Category | N=324 | Percentage |
|---------------------|----------|-------|------------|
| Gender              | Male     | 130   | 40.1%      |
|                     | Female   | 194   | 59.9%      |

|                        |                    |     |       |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----|-------|
| Age                    | 21 and below       | 65  | 21.1% |
|                        | 22-30              | 155 | 47.8% |
|                        | 31-40              | 45  | 13.9% |
|                        | 41-50              | 33  | 10.2% |
|                        | 51 and above       | 26  | 8.0%  |
| Marital Status         | Single             | 235 | 72.5% |
|                        | Married            | 87  | 26.9% |
|                        | Divorced           | 1   | 0.3%  |
|                        | Widowed            | 1   | 0.3%  |
| Occupation             | Student            | 188 | 58.0% |
|                        | Employment         | 88  | 27.2% |
|                        | Unemployed         | 13  | 4.0%  |
|                        | Self-Employed      | 27  | 8.3%  |
|                        | Housewife          | 7   | 2.2%  |
| Monthly Housing Income | Retired            | 1   | 0.3%  |
|                        | Below RM1,500      | 137 | 42.3% |
|                        | RM 1,501-RM 3,000  | 83  | 25.6% |
|                        | RM 3,001-RM 5,500  | 46  | 14.2% |
|                        | RM 5,501 and above | 58  | 17.9% |
| Religion Affiliation   | Muslim             | 144 | 44.4% |
|                        | Non-Muslim         | 180 | 55.6% |

### 4.3 Reliability test of Pilot Study

Table 3 presents the results of the reliability test conducted during the pilot study involving 30 respondents (N=30). The analysis was performed to assess the internal consistency of the measurement items for the key variables. Referring to the table, the Trust variables (5 items) enhance a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.840. Similarly, the Confidence variable (5 items) recorded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.814. Both values surpass the acceptable threshold of 0.70 and are interpreted as "Very Good." These results indicate that the questionnaire with high internal consistency and is therefore reliable for use in the actual data collection.

**Table 3** Reliability Test of the Pilot Study

| Variables  | Number of Respondents | N-Item in Scale | Cronbach's Alpha | Interpretation |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Trust      | 30                    | 5               | 0.840            | Very Good      |
| Confidence | 30                    | 5               | 0.814            | Very Good      |

### 4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the main constructs investigated in this study. The analysis of the full sample (N=324) reveals generally high levels of perception. Specifically, the Trust factor recorded an overall Mean of 3.8241 (SD=0.71588), while the Confidence factor recorded a slightly lower Mean of 3.7315 (SD=0.69913). Since both values are above the neutral midpoint of 3.0, this indicates that on average, Malaysian consumers hold positive perceptions of halal food.

However, a breakdown of the data by religious group reveals distinct differences. Muslim consumers recorded higher mean scores for both Trust (3.97) and Confidence (3.85), falling well within the "High" category. In contrast, non-Muslim consumers displayed a "High" level of Trust (3.71) but a noticeably lower level of Confidence (3.64), which falls into the "Moderate" category. This distinction highlights that while non-Muslims generally trust halal providers, they remain less confident in the regulatory and certification aspects compared to their Muslim counterparts.

**Table 4** Descriptive Statistics for Muslim and Non-Muslim consumers

| Variables  | Group      | Number of Respondents | Mean   | Standard Deviation $\sigma$ |
|------------|------------|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Trust      | Muslim     | 144                   | 3.9722 | 0.75895                     |
|            | Non-Muslim | 180                   | 3.7056 | 0.65789                     |
| Confidence | Muslim     | 144                   | 3.8472 | 0.74307                     |
|            | Non-Muslim | 180                   | 3.6389 | 0.64923                     |

#### 4.5 Reliability test of Actual Study

Table 5 summarizes the results of the reliability test conducted on the full sample (N=324) to ensure the internal consistency of the research instrument before hypothesis testing. The analysis demonstrates high reliability for both key constructs. Specially, the Trust scale (5 items) give in Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.809, which is categorized as "Very Good." Similarly, the Confidence scale (5items) recorded a coefficient of 0.773, which is categorized as "Good" Since both Cronbach's Alpha values significantly exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70, the instrument is confirmed to possess strong internal consistency and is therefore deemed reliable for the purpose of this study is reliable.

**Table 5** Reliability Test of the Actual Study

| Variables  | Number of Respondents(N) | N-item in Scale | Cronbach's Alpha | Interpretation |
|------------|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Trust      | 324                      | 5               | 0.809            | Very Good      |
| Confidence | 324                      | 5               | 0.773            | Good           |

#### 4.6 Normality Test

Table 6 presents the results of the normality assessment for the study's key variables: Trust and Confidence. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov<sup>a</sup> test was selected as the primary indicator because the study's sample size (N=324) exceeds 50 respondents, making it the appropriate standard for larger datasets. The analysis shows that the significance value (Sig.) for both Trust and Confidence is 0.000. Since this value is significantly lower than the standard threshold of 0.05, the assumption of normality is rejected, indicating that the data is not normally distributed. Consequently, to ensure analysis, the study will utilize the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric method suitable for comparing differences between independent groups when data does not follow a normal distribution.

**Table 6** Normality Testing

| Variables  | Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup> |     |       | Shapiro-Wilk |     |       |
|------------|---------------------------------|-----|-------|--------------|-----|-------|
|            | Statistic                       | df  | Sig.  | Statistic    | df  | Sig.  |
| Trust      | 0.104                           | 324 | 0.000 | 0.951        | 324 | 0.000 |
| Confidence | 0.085                           | 324 | 0.000 | 0.965        | 324 | 0.000 |

#### 4.7 Mann-Whitney U Test

Table 7 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was conducted to determine if there are statically significant differences in Trust and Confidence between Muslim and Non-Muslim respondents.

Regarding Trust, the analysis revealed a statically significant difference between two groups (U=10086.50, Z= -3.450, p=0.001). The Muslim group recorded a higher Mean Rank of 182.45, compared to the non-Muslim group, which had a Mean Rank of 146.54. This indicates that Muslim respondents showing significantly higher levels of trust towards halal food compared to Non-Muslim. However, the effect size calculation ( $r = 0.19$ ) suggests that while the difference is significant, the magnitude of the effect is considered small.

Similarly, for Confidence, the test results also indicated a significant difference (U= 10498.0, Z= -2.953, p= 0.003). Consistent with the previous finding, the Muslim group demonstrated a higher Mean Rank (179.60) than the Non-Muslim group (148.82). The effect size for this variable was calculated at  $r = 0.16$ , which is also interpreted as small.

In summary, the findings confirm that religious affiliation significantly influences consumer perception, with Muslim respondents demonstrating higher levels of both trust and confidence compared to Non-Muslim respondent. However, the small effect ( $r = 0.19$  and  $r = 0.16$ ) imply that while religious affiliation is a contributing factor, it not the sole determinant; other such as product quality, safety and brand reputation likely also play a substantial role in shaping these perceptionstime.

**Table 7** Mann-Whitney U Test

| Variables | Group   | N   | Mean Rank | Mann-Whitney | Z      | Asymptotic Sig. (P) | Effect Size (r) | Interpretation |
|-----------|---------|-----|-----------|--------------|--------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Trust     | Muslims | 144 | 182.45    | 10086.50     | -3.450 | 0.001               | 0.19            | Small          |

|            |            |     |        |         |        |       |      |       |
|------------|------------|-----|--------|---------|--------|-------|------|-------|
|            | Non-Muslim | 180 | 146.54 |         |        |       |      |       |
|            | Muslims    | 144 | 179.60 |         |        |       |      |       |
| Confidence | Non-Muslim | 180 | 148.82 | 10498.0 | -2.953 | 0.003 | 0.16 | Small |

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The final chapter synthesizes the research findings, offering a thorough analysis that highlights key discoveries and contrasts them with the existing body of literature. It also addresses the specific constraints encountered during the study and offers practical recommendations to guide future researchers. The chapter concludes with a concise summary of the entire research effort.

### 5.1 Overall Summary

From the total distribution of 357 questionnaires, 324 valid responses were obtained, yielding a high response rate of 90.76%. This final sample size exceeded the minimum requirement, ensuring sufficient data to effectively evaluate and compare the levels of Trust and Confidence in halal food between Muslim and non-Muslims consumers.

Demographically, the study revealed a younger, student-centric profile. Female respondents constituted the majority (59.9%,  $n=194$ ) and the largest age group was 22-30 years old (47.8%,  $n=155$ ). Consistent with this, 72.5% of respondents were single and 58.0% identified as students. Economically, the largest segment (42.3%) reported a monthly household income below RM 1,500. In terms of religious composition, the sample was fairly balanced but slightly toward non-Muslims with (55.6%,  $n=180$ ) compared to Muslim (44.4%,  $n=144$ ).

### 5.2 Summary based on Research Objective

#### 5.2.1 Research Objective 1

In The study utilized a structured questionnaire to measure the specific perceptions of Muslim consumers. The results indicate that Muslim respondents hold high levels of trust and confidence in halal food. In the Mann-Whitney U analysis, the Muslim group recorded significantly higher Mean Ranks for Trust (182.45) and Confidence (179.60) compared to the non-Muslim group. The internal reliability of these variables for the overall study was confirmed to be aligned with Trust achieving a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.809 which "Very Good" and Confidence achieving 0.773 which is "Good".

This elevated perception among Muslims aligns with the literature, which suggests that for this group, halal is a non-negotiable obligation governed by Shariah law. The high trust levels reflect a reliance on certification bodies like JAKIM to ensure food is free from haram components.

#### 5.2.2 Research Objective 2

For non-Muslim respondents, the analysis showed comparatively lower Mean Ranks for Trust (146.54) and Confidence (148.82). However, the overall descriptive statistics for the entire sample showed high mean scores with Trust 3.8241 and Confidence 3.7315, suggesting that while non-Muslims score lower than Muslims, they still maintain a generally positive perception.

Literature indicates that non-Muslims typically associate halal food with attributes such as hygiene, safety and food quality rather than religious compliance. The slightly lower confidence levels may stem from a lack of religious understanding or concerns regarding past food fraud incidents, highlighting that their trust is built more on "assurance of safety" rather than "assurance faith."

#### 5.2.3 Research Objective 3

The inferential analysis using the Mann-Whitney U Test confirmed significant disparities between the two groups. For Trust, the test came out a significant difference ( $U=100086.50$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), rejecting the null hypothesis. Similarly for Confidence, a significant difference was found ( $U=10498.0$ ,  $p=0.003$ ). These p-values, being less than 0.05, confirm that religious affiliation acts as a distinguishing factor in how halal food is perceived.

Crucially, however, the effect size calculation revealed a small effect for both Trust ( $r=0.19$ ) and Confidence ( $r=0.160$ ). This is an important finding; it implies that while the difference is statistically significant, the magnitude of the difference is not extensive. This suggests that while Muslims and non-Muslims differ, they likely share common ground is not extensive. This suggests that while Muslims and non-Muslims differ, they likely share

common ground such as a mutual desire for food safety and quality which prevents the gap in their perception from being extremely large. students.

### 5.3 Implication of Research

This research provides empirical evidence that religious affiliation significantly influences consumer sentiment towards halal food, validating the need for target approached in the industry. For Muslim consumers, trust is driven by religious loyalty; therefore, implications for marketers involve emphasizing strict Shariah compliance and visibility of the halal logo to maintain this established trust.

Conversely, for non-Muslim consumers, the implication is that trust likely derived from the “halo effect” of halal certification representing hygiene and quality. Manufacturers should tailor their communication to this group by highlighting the stringent food safety protocols in halal certification, rather than focusing solely on religious aspects. This dual-narrative approach can help bridge the gap and expand the market reach of halal products beyond the Muslim community.

### 5.4 Limitations of The Research

The study encountered several limitations that should be acknowledge. Firstly, the geographical scope was restricted to Selangor and Johor, meaning the findings may not be generalizable to rural areas or other states in Malaysia where demographic compositions and exposure to halal markets differ.

Secondly, the demographic profile introduced a bias; the sample was heavily skewed toward students (58%) and young adults aged 22-30 (47.8%). This specific demographic often has lower purchasing power and different consumption habits compared to elder, working-class households, potentially skewing the “Confidence” scores. Lastly, the use of quantitative survey limits depth of understanding for the study, this is because while we know that non-Muslims have lower trust, which the data does not explicitly explain the reason.

### 5.5 Recommendation for the Future Research

In order to address these limitations, future research should aim to widen up the demographic scope. Researchers are advised to purposefully sample older age groups and working professionals to see if income and maturity moderate trust levels. Expanding the geographical area to include states with different religious compositions such as Kelantan versus Penang would also provide a more holistic national perspective.

Furthermore, future studies could benefit from mixed methods approach. Integrating qualitative interview would help clarify the “neutral” or lower scores among non-Muslims, uncovering whether these stem from indifference or genuine concern.

### 5.6 Conclusion

Furthermore, future studies could benefit from mixed methods approach. Integrating qualitative interview would help clarify the “neutral” or lower scores among non-Muslims, uncovering whether these stem from indifference or genuine concern. In conclusion, this study has successfully achieved its objected of identifying and comparing the perceptions of trust and Confidence in halal food among Malaysian consumers. Through the analysis of 324 respondents, the research confirmed that religious affiliation is a significant differentiator which is Muslim consumers demonstrate higher trust and confidence, driven by religious obligation, while non-Muslim show positive but comparatively lower engagement, driven likely by safety and quality associations.

However, the discovery of small effect sizes in the analysis is a critical takeaway. It suggests that the divide between two groups is not unbridgeable. By recognizing that halal certification serves dual purpose which are spiritual assurance for Muslims and quality assurance for non-Muslim; and the industry can foster a more inclusive market environment that respects religious values while promoting universal standards of food integrity.

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### Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

## Author Contribution

*The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** A.R.A.R. and R.C.; **data collection:** A.R.A.R. and R.C.; **analysis and interpretation of results:** A.R.A.R. and R.C.; **draft manuscript preparation:** A.R.A.R. and R.C. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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