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A Conceptual Framework for Analysing the Effects of Religiosity and Self-Congruence on Halal Food Repurchase Intention in Muslim Gen Z Consumers

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between religiosity and consumer behaviour is also a long-term study area of interest, especially in the discussion of the state of halal consumption. Even though the relation between religiosity, purchase intention, and repurchase intention has been focused on in previous studies, scant effort has been made in relation to self-congruence, particularly in the Muslim Generation Z consumers. In this conceptual article, a model is proposed that illustrates the interrelationship between self-congruence as a moderator between the constructs of religiosity and repurchase intention of halal food products in the Klang Valley. The combination of Self-Congruence Theory, the Theory of Islamic Consumer Behaviours (TiCB), and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) solves the identified gap by viewing the study through the multi-theoretical perspective to explain the cognitive and identity processes behind halal purchasing behaviour. A theoretical contribution of the work is that self-congruence is a new moderator within the literature of halal consumer behaviour through the explanation of the interaction of religious values and personal identity affecting repurchase behaviour. In practice, the research gives halal marketers and companies related and culturally adapted approaches that consider the religious self-image of Muslim Gen Z consumers. The study is carried out on the territory of the demographically young and urban population of the Klang Valley, which gives the results specific to the context that can be used to market and brand halal products better. Together, the paper enhances the knowledge on how religiosity and self-congruence influence the Muslim Gen Z repurchase behaviour and provides invaluable insights to academics and practitioners who want to reach this fast-evolving market segment.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Religion plays an important role in determining individual behaviour and value systems as well as consumption habits. Within the area of consumer behaviour, with religiosity as an example, the degree of commitment and adherence to religious belief has been proven to be one of the core influences dictating the manner of product evaluation and consumer purchase behaviour (Newaz, 2014). Muslim consumers consider the consumption of halal food both religiously obligatory and a form of acknowledgement of religion and self-identity (Gunawan & Gaffar, 2021). Halal certifications have been received willingly since people believe that fulfilling religious requirements is significant and, hence, trust the halal certification label. (Hanim, L., & Noorman, M. S., 2023), demonstrating the interconnectivity of faith and consumer consumption, as well.

The study of the consumption of halal food products is imperative due to the global population of Muslims reaching 2.2 billion in the middle of the century (Febriandika, N. R., Wijaya, V., & Hakim, L., 2023) and the fact that 60 percent of the population in Malaysia is made up of Muslims, contributing to the growth of the national halal economy (Wan et al., 2014). In this context, Generation Z can be regarded as an especially relevant consumer group in Malaysia, which, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024), makes up 34% of the overall population. This group is highly digitally engaged, socially influential, and globally consumer culture-exposed, raising the question of how sustainable its halal repurchasing behaviours are.

Religiosity and intention to buy halal food are not new to research (Abdullah et al., 2022; Junaidi, 2021; Salleh & Afthanorhan, 2018). However, there are some major limitations that have existed. To begin with, most of the analyses focus on the initial purchase intention, whilst the issue of repurchase intention is understudied. Yet this area is related to brand loyalty and market retention (Ilyas et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2022). Second, studies largely do not consider Muslim Gen Z as a specific consumer group, despite the group being particularly different in social backgrounds and generational preferences that require a certain degree of consideration (Khalek et al., 2015; Septianto et al., 2021). Third, self-congruence, which refers to alignment of consumer identity and product image, has been theorised as one of the antecedents to symbolic consumption (Lo & Tseng, 2021; Zogaj et al., 2020), yet it has not been tested whether it plays the role of moderator between religiosity and repurchase intentions. Fourth, existing literature often uses single theoretical contradictions, but researchers believe that diversity should be used to introduce metatheoretical positions that can reflect the complexity of relationships and interactions between identity, religiosity, and consumption patterns (Li et al., 2022).

Therefore, in the present study, the conceptual model is developed to integrate Self-Congruence Theory, Theory of Islamic Consumer Behaviour (TiCB), and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) that focuses on the impact of self-congruence on the relationship between religiosity and repurchase intention of halal food products among Muslim Gen Z consumers in the Klang Valley. With these gaps filled; hence, the paper contributes to halal consumption theory and context within the context of the emergent market.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Self-Congruence Theory

Self-Congruence Theory is the theory that explains the theory of consumer behaviour that focuses on the brand or product image alignment with the self-image of the consumer (Tsai et al., 2015). Studies have revealed that consumers tend to buy and stay committed to items of purchase that reflect either their present or their ideal self-image. Despite being previously applied in the context of consumer psychology, branding, and lifestyle products (Huber et al., 2018; Zogaj et al., 2020), this theory has not been fully realised in

relation to the realms of halal food consumption. There has been no study to date on the interaction between repeated consumption of halal food products and religiosity or self-congruence.

The current research brings about self-congruence as one of the moderating variables. The hypothesis is that the perceived strength of the connection between religiosity and an intention to purchase halal food products again is dependent on the degree to which religious values incorporated in the concept of halal consumption resonate with consumers. This new study uses the expansion of self-congruence theory into religious settings and emphasises the aspect of consumer identity.

2.2 Theory of Islamic Consumer Behaviour (TiCB)

The theory of Islamic consumer behaviour (TiCB) is the idea that the level to which Muslim consumer pattern is influenced by the Islamic values, morals, and religious demands is very high (Praswati & Prijanto, 2017; Junaidi et al., 2023). Although TiCB has been widely used to examine Islamic banking and initial acquisition of halal products, the explanatory power of TiCB in explaining halal repurchase behaviour of younger Muslims, especially Generation Z, seems not to have been well studied. In previous literature, the behaviour of Muslims as consumers is often generalised without taking into account either generational or psychological moderators.

In this study, TiCB acts to provide a framing where religiosity is viewed as a multidimensional concept that includes beliefs, social responsiveness, subjective norms, and knowledge in influencing the intention to repurchase halal food products. The theory grounds the nature of religious reasons for Halal consumption and incorporates the reasons into identity-related reasons.

2.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has been used as a broad theory in respect of consumers, since consumer behaviour research on halal consumption, to determine how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control motivate people towards actions of a given behavioural intent (Steinmetz et al., 2016). Regarding the halal case, studies that have applied TPB to the general intention in purchase remain undifferentiated and are sometimes concentrated less in repurchase behaviour because attitudinal consistency and behavioural reinforcement are required to be stronger. This paper uses TPB to determine the desire to buy halal food products again among the Muslim Gen Z customers, who often interact with various social groups and digital trends. TPB can be applied in comprehending the factors that lead to people making the decisions of purchasing or failing to purchase products again, based on internal psychological factors like personal attitude towards halal, as well as external factors like social pressure, perceived ease of accessibility to products. The specialty of this application is that it is coupled with the Theory of Islamic Consumer Behaviour (TiCB) and Self-Congruence Theory. TPB helps in providing the behavioural background, TiCB supports it by giving it the tie-in with religion, and self-congruence helps in aligning the identity. This multi-theoretical approach fills the void in the previous studies that have neglected the interplay between the religious values, identity, and long-term consumer behaviour. TPB was chosen as it has the capacity to identify the presence of both volitional control and the effects of social forces, which are particularly applicable to the Muslim Gen Z, as they have to operate in a highly modern and multicultural place such as Klang Valley.

2.4 Religiosity

Religiosity is well understood to be one of the key drivers of the consumer behaviour of Muslims, especially in regards to the consumption of halal. Nevertheless, the available research tends to view religiosity as a unidimensional concept and puts little emphasis on the multidimensionality of religious beliefs and behaviours and how they are applied in consumer-related choices (Salleh & Afthanorhan, 2018; Usman et al., 2022). This paper will fill that gap by assessing four varied facets of religiosity, such as belief,

subjective norms, knowledge, and social responsiveness, to appreciate the overall effects that religiosity has on the repurchase intention.

2.4.1 Religious Belief

Religious belief can be defined as the religious perception that is internalised by an individual, which is perceived to be religiously right or wrong (Firdaus et al., 2018). Evidence from previous studies (Al-Hyari et al., 2012) shows that religious belief affects the decision of Muslim consumers when it pertains to the selection of products with regard to halal compliance. Nevertheless, not many studies have addressed the effects of belief on long-term behaviour sequels, like repurchase, particularly in the younger population groups. The present paper addresses the concept of belief as the antecedent of sustained halal consumption, offering insight into the spiritual conviction of upholding contracts.

2.4.2 Subjective Norm

Subjective norms consist of the perceived effect of family, peers, and society on the behaviour of an individual. Some studies indicate that a lot of food decisions made by Muslims are stipulated by family habits and social settings (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020; Farah, 2021). Even though subjective norms are major topics within TPB-based studies in the context of halal studies, the interaction between subjective norms and religious motivation and generational identity is not frequently discussed, particularly when applied to repurchasing studies. This paper examines the subjective norms within a multidimensional model of religiosity that adds novelty to the understanding of their role in long-term consumption behaviours.

2.4.3 Knowledge

Religiosity determines the level of understanding of what can and cannot be consumed and has a role to play in consumer confidence to make compliant decisions (Salleh, A.S.A. & Suki, N.M., 2019). Though there are research papers that show the relationship between halal knowledge and purchase intention (Mirkhah & Karami, 2020), indeed, less research has been conducted on how knowledge affects the repurchase decision. The research seeks to determine the influence of different degrees of knowledge of religion into repeat purchase intent especially to the younger consumers who might use on-line sources or networks in the similarity that might be a source of information.

2.4.4 Social Responsiveness

They have the potential to not only influence Muslim consumer behaviour by personal faith but also by the expectations of the society around them based on Islamic teachings (Haque et al., 2019). Social responsiveness is the consideration of community norms based on religious ethics. Although its importance is noted in the previous studies, it is usually neglected in the empirical models of the halal repurchase behaviour. In this research, social responsiveness will be incorporated to capture the social pressure and cultural signals that influence the purchase behaviour of Muslim Gen Z in collectivist cultures of buying repeatedly.

2.4.5 Novelty and Justification

The newness in the study would be that religiosity is multi-dimensionally operationalised and is directly connected to halal repurchase intention. Past studies have concentrated so much on the purchase intention, that is, a single purchase or the general attitudes, without considering the way in which belief systems and communal aspects of identity are important in continued loyalty to behaviour. In fulfilling that gap, this study aims to provide a more measured and delineated perspective of religiosity and why, as well as test the role of religiosity in a moderated model, the moderator being self-congruence as a crucial identity-based moderator. This knowledge of dimensions is crucial to marketers, policymakers, and researchers who want to relate to the emerging and value-conscious Muslim Gen Z consumers.

2.5 Self-Congruence as Moderator

In this study, self-congruence is selected as a moderating variable because it is pertinent in describing how alignment to personal identity affects consumer behaviour. As a determination of the perceived identity congruence between a consumer (actual or ideal) and a product (image), self-congruence has been used in branding and lifestyle application and not much has been used in terms of religious consumption, especially halal food behaviour (Zogaj et al., 2020; Lo & Tseng, 2021). Past studies by Joshi and Garg (2022) state that religious customers tend to purchase halal products to sustain their self-image related to their faith. Nonetheless, the moderator of self-congruence in the association between religiosity and repurchase intention has not been tested yet in the current literature, apart from being missed out on the Muslim Gen Z generation that is highly affected by identity, image, and social perception. This paper fills that knowledge gap by examining the enhancing effect of religiosity on halal repurchase intention when aligning the self-reality of the consumer who is a Muslim with their behaviour defined by the consumption of halal food. Their approach of adding self-congruence raises a whole new perspective of identity-driven into the literature of consumer behaviour of halal consumers and provides practical implications to the marketers who want to create loyalty by aligning their branding to values.

2.6 Muslim Gen Z Consumer Repurchase Intention

In this study, the selection of the key dependent variable is repurchase intention since it represents a more permanent, intense pattern in consumer commitment, especially in eating halal food. Although relevant literature (Karimah & Darwanto, 2021; Subri & Othman, 2022) has supported the findings that halal needs and religious sensitivity impact repurchase behaviour, the majority of literature spanning the history of the study involved the initial intention of buying a product with little to no focus on the psychological and behavioural processes involved in consumption repetition. Previous studies have established various factors like halal certification, brand image, trust, perceived value, and social influence (Wirakurnia et al., 2021; Shahid et al., 2022; Valendia & Purwanegara, 2022), but in many cases, the role of religiosity and alignment with personal self-definition systems in developing long-term loyalty has been ignored. The study fills that gap as it targets the Muslim Gen Z consumers, whose repurchase behaviour is formed not only based on product features but also under the influence of social values, expression of identity, and the impact of the digital world. Associating repurchase intention with religiosity and moderated by self-congruence, the present study presents a new model of determining the total impact of spiritual and psychological variables on continued preference for halal food products, both theoretically and practically, to the halal consumer behaviour research.

2.7 Conceptual Framework & Hypothesis

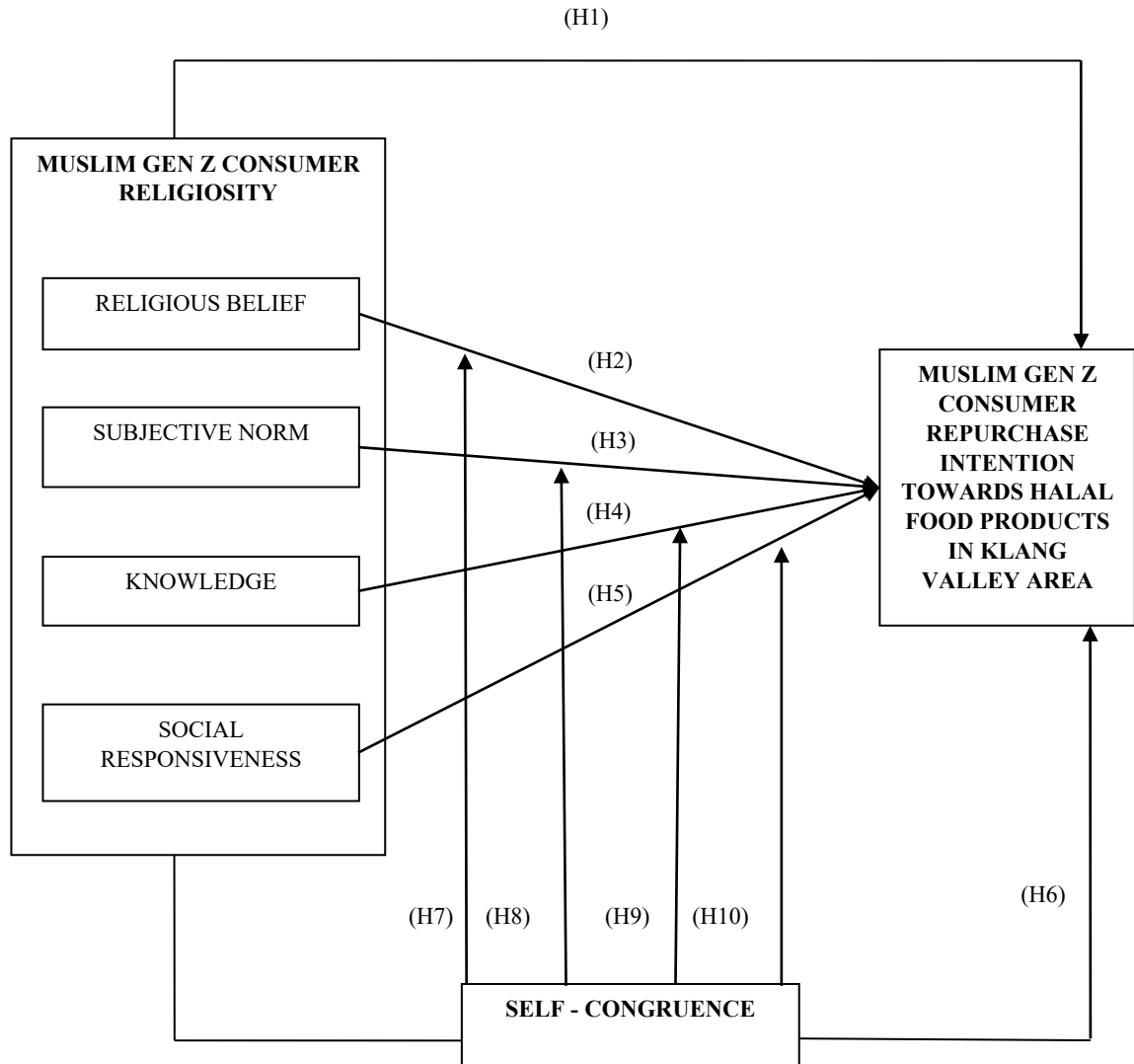


Fig. 1. The Conceptual Framework and hypothesis

H₁ –There is a positive relationship between religiosity and Muslim Gen Z consumer repurchase intention of halal food products.

H₂ – There is a positive relationship between religious belief and Muslim Gen Z consumer repurchase intention of halal food products.

H₃ – There is a positive relationship between subjective norm and Muslim Gen Z consumer repurchase intention of halal food products.

H₄ –There is a positive relationship between knowledge and Muslim Gen Z consumer repurchase intention of halal food products.

H₅ –There is a positive relationship between social responsiveness and Muslim Gen Z consumer repurchase intention of halal food products.

H₆: Self-Congruence moderates the relationship between religiosity factors and the repurchase intention of Muslim Gen Z consumers for halal food products.

H₇: Self-Congruence moderates the relationship between religious belief and the repurchase intention of Muslim Gen Z consumers for halal food products.

H₈: Self-Congruence moderates the relationship between subjective norm and the repurchase intention of Muslim Gen Z consumers for halal food products.

H₉: Self-Congruence moderates the relationship between knowledge and the repurchase intention of Muslim Gen Z consumers for halal food products.

H₁₀: Self-Congruence moderates the relationship between social responsiveness and the repurchase intention of Muslim Gen Z consumers for halal food products.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The current research utilises a quantitative design, where quantitative data will be gathered and analysed statistically in order to achieve the purpose of testing the hypotheses and investigating the connection between the study variables, which are religiosity, self-congruence, and repurchase intention. The above design is beneficial when it comes to testing theoretical frameworks and identifying moderating influences.

3.2 Target population and sampling

The intended respondents are the Muslim Generation Z consumers of Klang Valley, Malaysia, and between 18 and 29 years of age. The specified generation Z is due to its extreme digital interaction, the growing buying capacity, and increased defenselessness to preferences produced by social-media-based communication that was born between 1995 to 2012 (Wiedmer, 2015). In the Malaysian setting, the population of this age bracket is estimated at about 14.8 million; hence, the median age was 28 years (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024).

The data will be collected through purposive sampling, which implies that the respondents will be selected based on strict criteria, such as age, religious affiliation (Muslim), and consumption of halal food products. The Klang Valley will be chosen as the research location because of its high population and diversity in culture, for example, Muslims. The major centres are Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, Subang Jaya, Klang, and Ampang Jaya (Fadzil & Ab Ghani, 2011).

3.3 Sample size and data collection

In the present study, completed questionnaires will be gathered through the use of both offline and online techniques. The distribution and collection processes will be handled by the same enumerators. A goal of about 330 respondents will be chosen in order to guarantee accurate data and act as a safety net for any possible inaccuracies in questionnaire answers. Based on G Power 4.0.9.6 calculations, the minimum required sample size for this study is 160 respondents ($f^2 = 0.15$, number of predictors = 8).

3.4 Data analysis

The final collected data will be subjected to an initial descriptive and exploratory analysis in the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29. Subsequently, structural equation modelling (SEM) shall be carried out in SmartPLS 4.0.9.6 to test construct validity and confirm the measurement and structural models, as well as occasions where necessary moderation effects are involved.

4.0 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This paper will add significant value to the body of literature on Islamic consumer behaviour by extending three related theories, such as the Theory of Islamic Consumer Behaviour (TiCB), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Self-Congruence Theory, to understand the repurchase intention of halal food products by Muslim Gen Z consumers. One main theoretical contribution is that self-congruence is considered as a moderating variable between religiosity and repurchase behaviour, thus allowing adaptations of self-congruence in a domain other than symbolic or brands, such as faith-based consumption. On a research level, the study also fills a gap that is under-researched since the study's target population is the Muslim Gen Z, and it throws light on identity-oriented practices of halal consumption. The results, as put by the managerial perspective, can be used by the halal marketers to develop identity-based approaches whereby the strategies resonate with the religious self-concept of the consumers, especially among the socially and digitally advanced Gen Z. Some of these strategies involve developing emotional leads, enhancing brand loyalty, and developing culturally appropriate campaigns that relate well to Islamic values. The research is placed in context in Klang Valley, a mixed urban environment with high figures of Muslim citizens, hence providing information that is relevant to companies in Malaysia and policymakers, with the aim of reaching out to the halal market. Taken together, the research helps the academic community to focus not on purchase but repurchase intention and offers practical advice to marketers who want to increase long-term tenure with a growing number of halal consumers.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The existing literature is usually focused on the initial purchasing intention and does not give attention to the continued behavioural tendencies that are part of consumer loyalty, and the moderating role of self-congruence in strengthening religious consumption. Besides, the literature on this topic has rarely attempted to integrate the existing theoretical orientations in order to help understand how religiosity, self-congruence, and consumer behaviour interact. In order to counter the gaps in these areas, a critical literature review was conducted. The results showed that even though religiosity has often been a factor to consider when it comes to looking at halal consumption, it is normally a unidimensional construct where the influences it has over repurchase behaviour are less attention. This can also be concluded with self-congruence, where fewer studies have been done on religious motivations on halal consumption, and more of the same has been conducted in the brand identity context. These gaps helped in the selection and justification of significant variables and gave reasons as to why three existing theories needed to be incorporated into this research, which are Self-Congruence Theory, Theory of Islamic Consumer Behaviour (TiCB), and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

Based on this, a conceptual framework was developed to study the role that religiosity plays in influencing the intention of individuals to repurchase halal food and the role that self-congruence plays in moderating this. The framework explains more comprehensively the cognitive, spiritual, and identity-related forces that support consumer loyalty in halal markets, therefore providing the foundation for future empirical research and practical interventions based on Gen Z Muslim values and perceptions of themselves in the Klang Valley. Conclusively, the framework closes existing gaps in theory and has great significance to both scholars and practitioners who work within culturally and religiously diverse markets.

6.0 CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

The contributions of authors to this paper are as follows: Mohamad Firdaus Mohamad Zaid carried out the research, wrote, and revised the article. Jati Kasuma supervised and centralised the research idea and helped to develop the conceptual framework. Yolanda helping on preparing and writing literature part. Ismalaili Ismail and Syahrul Hezrin Mahmud supervised the research progress. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the paper.

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8.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

We confirm that no conflicts of interest are related to the content discussed in this manuscript. We verify that the authors and co-authors wrote this work themselves and that it has not been previously published, nor is it being reviewed by another publishing organisation. None of the content in this manuscript has been considered by another journal or conference for publication. All contributors to the research have helped to design, carry out, and review the results, and all confirm that the data and results meet quality and credibility standards for publishing.

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