

Consumer Intention towards Pork-Free Restaurants among Malaysian Youth

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ABSTRACT

The rise of pork-free restaurants in Malaysia reflects growing demand for inclusive dining options but also generates confusion among Muslim consumers, particularly youth, who may equate pork-free with Halal compliance. This study employed the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to examine the factors influencing Malaysian youths' intention to dine at pork-free restaurants. Five predictors were tested: attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, trust, and knowledge. Data were collected from 329 respondents through an online survey distributed via social media and analysed using variance-based partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that attitude, subjective norm, and trust significantly influence intention, whereas perceived behavioural control and knowledge do not. Notably, the structural model explained a substantial 79.9% of the variance in purchase intention, with attitude emerging as the strongest predictor. These results highlight the importance of shaping positive perceptions, strengthening social influence, and building consumer trust in food practices, while also underscoring the limitations of equating pork-free labels with full Halal assurance. The study contributes to the literature on Muslim consumer behaviour by clarifying the determinants of pork-free dining choices among Malaysian youth. Furthermore, it offers practical insights for policymakers, regulatory bodies, and restaurant operators, advocating for the enforcement of standardised labelling and targeted educational campaigns to enhance transparency, prevent misinterpretation, and boost overall consumer confidence.

Keywords: Consumer Intention, Halal Consumption, Malaysian Youth, Pork-free Restaurants, Theory of Planned Behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

The growing diversity of Malaysia's food and beverage industry has seen a notable rise in restaurants that label themselves as 'pork-free'. While the phrase implies the absence of pork in the food offerings, it does not necessarily guarantee adherence to Halal standards as outlined in Islamic teachings. This linguistic ambiguity has caused confusion among Muslim consumers, particularly Malaysian youth who are increasingly exposed to diverse culinary trends through social media and globalisation.

The proliferation of pork-free restaurants is partly driven by the demand for inclusive dining experiences that appeal to both Muslims and non-Muslims. However, many Muslims mistakenly assume that pork-free equates to Halal, despite important distinctions in food sourcing, preparation, and handling. As Halal compliance encompasses cleanliness, ethical slaughtering

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practices, and the absence of prohibited substances such as alcohol, pork-free labels fall short of providing religious assurance.

In Malaysia, where Islam is the official religion and Muslims make up the majority of the population, Halal compliance is not merely a religious obligation but also a socio-cultural expectation. However, many Muslim consumers, especially youth, have limited awareness or clarity regarding what constitutes a truly Halal-certified establishment. This leads to a reliance on superficial indicators such as the 'no pork' sign, resulting in a gap between religious compliance and consumer behaviour (Mohd Zahari et al., 2015). The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) does not regulate pork-free claims unless Halal certification is sought. As a result, establishments can market themselves as pork-free without necessarily adhering to comprehensive Halal guidelines. This undermines consumer trust and contributes to the normalisation of potentially non-Halal dining options among youth (Ul-Hassan Shah & Bakri, 2024).

Most existing literature focuses on Halal certification and its influence on consumer trust and purchasing decisions (Syed Marzuki et al., 2012). However, few studies investigate the behavioural and psychological motivations behind youth consumption at pork-free, non-Halal-certified establishments. The intersection between perception, social influence, and behavioural intention in this context remains underexplored, particularly through the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to bridge this gap by applying the TPB to examine the factors influencing Malaysian youth's intention to patronise pork-free restaurants. Specifically, this study aims to evaluate the direct influence of five key variables which are attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, trust, and knowledge on Malaysian youth's intention to patronise pork-free restaurants.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Halal Restaurants

Halal certification serves as a critical benchmark for ensuring that food products comply with Islamic dietary principles. As discussed by Syed Marzuki et al. (2012), Halal assurance extends beyond the mere absence of pork; it involves stringent oversight across the entire food preparation process, including ingredient sourcing, methods of slaughter, handling, and sanitation. This holistic approach to compliance is particularly vital for Muslim consumers who seek to uphold their religious obligations in their dietary choices.

Nonetheless, public understanding of the distinction between 'Halal' and 'pork-free' remains limited. Usman et al. (2023) noted that many consumers incorrectly equate pork-free labels with Halal status, overlooking other critical religious requirements such as the prohibition of alcohol and cross-contamination with non-Halal substances. This misconception is especially widespread among Malaysian youth, whose food choices are increasingly shaped by social media and peer culture.

Social platforms such as Instagram and Facebook often highlight trendy dining spots based on aesthetics and popularity, rather than religious compliance. As a result, youth may be more inclined to visit visually appealing, pork-free eateries without verifying whether the food is truly Halal-certified. Syed Marzuki et al. (2012) observed that this behaviour reflects a growing trend among young consumers to prioritise style and novelty over religious observance, thereby underscoring the need for better awareness and educational initiatives.

From an operational perspective, obtaining and maintaining Halal certification presents several challenges for restaurant operators. These include ensuring consistent access to Halal-certified ingredients, training staff in Shariah-compliant food handling procedures, and maintaining strict

hygiene protocols to prevent cross-contamination. Alamyar (2025) emphasised that while these efforts can enhance consumer trust, they require significant commitment and resources.

Despite the clear value of Halal certification, issues related to enforcement and public understanding recommend that regulatory authorities increase their vigilance in monitoring the use of ambiguous labels such as 'pork-free', which can mislead consumers. They also advocated for targeted educational efforts, particularly for younger demographics, to close the knowledge gap between Halal and pork-free dining.

Thus, Halal certification is instrumental in ensuring religious compliance and maintaining consumer confidence. Addressing the confusion between Halal and pork-free terminology, acknowledging the influence of social media, and resolving managerial and regulatory challenges are key to promoting informed dining choices among Malaysian youth.

2.2 Pork-Free Restaurants

The emergence of pork-free restaurants has become a growing trend, particularly in culturally diverse and religiously sensitive societies like Malaysia. The presence of the 'No Pork' label is often perceived as a convenient indicator of Halal compliance, especially in communities where pork is religiously prohibited. This label plays a strategic role in attracting Muslim customers by implying adherence to Islamic dietary guidelines, often without undergoing the formal Halal certification process.

The public's interpretation of the 'No Pork' label varies significantly across different demographic groups, while some consumers regard it as synonymous with Halal, others understand it only as a declaration that pork is not served disregarding other crucial aspects of Halal compliance, such as the use of certified Halal meat, the avoidance of alcohol, and proper food handling (Mohd Harun et al., 2022). This disparity points to the urgent need for standardised labelling practices and clearer communication to prevent misinterpretation.

Furthermore, many food outlets use the term 'pork-free' as a marketing tool to attract Muslim patrons, without fulfilling the broader Halal requirements (Azzahrani & Wulansari, 2024). This approach may mislead consumers, particularly younger ones, who are often less familiar with the intricacies of Halal observance. Such ambiguity undermines consumer trust and may inadvertently lead to the consumption of food that does not align with Islamic teachings.

Usman et al. (2023) further supported this view, revealing that Muslim customers' intention to dine at pork-free establishments is heavily influenced by their perception of Halal authenticity. Despite the proliferation of pork-free dining options, many consumers still distinguish between such venues and officially Halal-certified ones. It is therefore essential to reinforce the understanding that Halal encompasses a comprehensive set of religious criteria beyond the exclusion of pork.

Moreover, a study examined how pork-free establishments often exploit this confusion in their marketing, targeting Muslim consumers through partial adherence to Halal practices (Syed Marzuki et al., 2012). While such strategies may appeal to less observant individuals or those prioritising convenience, they create a false sense of compliance among consumers who equate pork-free with full Halal assurance.

In summary, while pork-free restaurants offer an option that may appear to respect Muslim dietary restrictions, the lack of clarity surrounding their practices often contributes to confusion and misplaced consumer trust. For Muslim consumers, especially youth, to make choices that are in line with their faith, more transparent labelling and focused education are necessary. These

measures will help bridge the gap between perceptions of religious authenticity and actual food consumption.

2.3 Malaysian Youth

The dining preferences of Malaysian youth, particularly regarding pork-free establishments, are shaped by a multifaceted blend of cultural, social, and religious influences. Understanding the motivations behind these choices necessitates a nuanced exploration of the demographic's identity formation and consumption behaviour.

As reported by Awang (2023), Malaysia officially defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 40, a broad category encompassing a highly diverse and dynamic population segment. Within this context, a recent study examined how patriotism and cultural values shape identity among Malaysian youth (Ghazali, 2024). These values often extend into lifestyle decisions, including food consumption. For many, the preference for pork-free restaurants reflects a broader commitment to upholding Islamic dietary guidelines and reinforces a collective cultural identity. Dining choices become not just acts of consumption, but expressions of religious and national belonging.

The pervasive influence of social media further amplifies these behavioural patterns. Digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are integral to the lives of young Malaysians, shaping how they engage with trends, peer networks, and public discourse. Through continuous exposure to visually engaging food content and peer recommendations, youth are more likely to gravitate toward restaurants perceived as religiously acceptable, even in the absence of formal Halal certification. This digital engagement reinforces the popularity of pork-free establishments as culturally and religiously aligned choices.

Moreover, broader youth-related challenges in Malaysia, as highlighted by Ul-Hassan Shah and Bakri (2024), intersect with identity and lifestyle decisions. Faced with the pressures of globalisation, urbanisation, and moral transitions, young people often turn to religious and cultural norms as anchors of stability and belonging. Dining at pork-free establishments thus serves not only a dietary function but also a symbolic one signalling commitment to faith, community values, and cultural expectations.

In conclusion, Malaysian youths' inclination toward pork-free dining is driven by a confluence of factors, including social media influence, cultural identity, religious observance, and societal expectations. These elements collectively cultivate a consumption environment where pork-free restaurants are favoured as representations of modern yet faithful living. This behaviour underscores the importance of understanding youth not just as consumers, but as individuals navigating complex cultural landscapes through everyday choices.

2.4 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was initially an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) that incorporated the role of customers' intentions, considering motivational factors that could influence a given behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). Since then, TPB has been one of the most popular theories in exploring individuals' behaviour (Zhang et al., 2018). According to the theory, three factors are involved in constructing the framework: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude refers to the individual's favourable or unfavourable evaluations of the behaviour, while subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures that influence an individual's behavioural intention, and perceived behavioural control refers to the perception of ease or difficulty in performing the behaviour of interest (Ajzen, 1991).

In the context of consumer food choices, the TPB has been one of the most widely accepted theories for explaining behavioural patterns. The three main components of the theory, which are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control have been consistently validated in multiple studies examining food choices including in dietary preferences, Halal consumption, intention to dine at green restaurants, and intention for organic food (Ali et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019; Li & Shan, 2025). This paper, on the other hand, applies the TPB framework to pork-free dining among Malaysian youth.

2.4.1 Intention

In the TPB, intention is defined as a person's motivation or readiness to perform a behaviour, and it is considered the most immediate predictor of actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, this study strategically focuses on intention as the central dependent variable, as mere awareness or knowledge of dietary guidelines does not guarantee a behavioural outcome. Intention reflects how much effort an individual is willing to exert to carry out a specific action. In halal-related contexts, intention often refers to the consumer's willingness or plan to purchase or consume halal-certified or pork-free products. Based on the TPB, three main factors are hypothesised to affect intention: attitude, subjective norm, and, lastly, perceived behavioural control. This study proposes two additional important variables believed to affect Malaysian youth's intention to patronise pork-free restaurants: trust and knowledge. All five variables will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

2.4.2 Attitude

Attitude refers to an individual's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude is an individual's overall evaluation of a behaviour; it reflects whether the individual views it as beneficial or harmful, enjoyable or unpleasant.

Previous studies have recognised attitude as one of the factors influencing food choices. In the context of dining at green restaurants, the findings showed that attitude significantly influenced intention ($p < .001$) (Chen et al., 2017). From the perspective of food choice, the result indicated that attitude is the strongest predictor of intention (Nardi et al., 2019). This study showed that individuals' beliefs about health and sustainability play a vital role in shaping their attitudes, which, in turn, affect their intentions regarding food choices. In the context of intention to purchase Halal meat, the study revealed that attitude significantly influences this intention in China and Germany (Ali et al., 2020). Thus, based on the results from past literature, this paper proposes that:

H₁: Attitude has a positive relationship with the intention towards pork-free restaurants.

2.4.3 Subjective Norm

Subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressures that influence an individual's behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). A clear example to understand this variable is that individuals' social circles, such as families, friends, relatives, peers, or religious leaders, will influence the individuals' intentions towards an action, such as to eat or not to eat at the pork-free restaurants.

Previous studies have consistently shown that the subjective norm influences human intentions. A recent study on green-packaged organic foods indicated that subjective norm significantly and positively influenced consumers' intentions (Li & Shan, 2025). The role of close social circles was revealed in the study through the agreement with the statement "My family/friends support purchasing green-packaged organic food" as one of the measurement items for subjective norm. In the context of dietary behaviour, subjective norm was found to be significantly associated with

intention, which, in turn, directly predicted actual behaviour (Li et al., 2019). In Halal food purchasing research, a study discovered that subjective norm was a significant predictor of Halal meat purchasing intention, especially among less materialistic consumers (Ali et al., 2020).

In the case of consumer intention towards pork-free restaurants among Malaysian youth, the subjective norm may be especially salient, as religious and cultural expectations shape food selection preferences in multicultural societies such as Malaysia. Muslim consumers, for example, may experience strong pressure from their family, friends, peers, and religious group to avoid pork-free restaurants. Thus, based on the definition given, past literature, and the context of the research, this study proposes:

H₂: Subjective norm has a positive relationship with the intention towards pork-free restaurants.

2.4.4 Perceived Behavioural Control

Perceived behavioural control refers to the perception of ease or difficulty in performing the behaviour of interest (Ajzen, 1991). For instance, an individual's intention to perform a behaviour, such as consuming healthy foods, depends on the individual's available resources, including financial capacity and time availability.

Previous studies have shown that perceived behavioural control is a key predictor of consumer behaviour. A study on Halal food purchasing found that consumers with high materialism relied more on perceived behavioural control, whereas those with low materialism relied less on it (Ali et al., 2020). In the context of seeking information about food labels, past studies have shown that perceived behavioural control positively influences mothers' intention to seek such information to safeguard the quality of their children's diet (Capasso et al., 2023). Lastly, recent research on green-packaged organic food found that people who are more health-conscious tend to have greater perceived behavioural control over purchasing green products (Li & Shan, 2025).

In the case of consumer intention towards pork-free restaurants among Malaysian youth, perceived behavioural control reflects the extent to which individuals feel capable of making such dining choices, despite possible uneasiness. Factors such as affordability, accessibility, and convenience may shape Malaysian youth's decisions about dining at pork-free restaurants. Hence, based on findings from past studies and the context of this research, this paper argues:

H₃: Perceived behavioural control has a positive relationship with the intention towards pork-free restaurants.

2.4.5 Trust

Trust is an important element in marketing and consumer behaviour; it is a psychological state involving confidence in a brand or product's reliability, integrity, and competence (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust in the context of food choices refers to consumers' confidence in the credibility, reliability, and integrity of food-related information and practices (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Tao et al., 2023).

Multiple studies have previously investigated the relationship between trust and intentions regarding food choices. A recent study on Halal-certified food conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia, emphasised the importance of trust in Halal food choices among Muslims in greater Jakarta (Usman et al., 2024). In China, trust as a mediating factor shows that factors such as credibility, certification, nutrition, and cleanliness contribute to trust and, in turn, affect the intention to purchase Halal food (Tao et al., 2023). In Malaysia, it was shown that trust in Halal food knowledge and production processes directly impacted Muslim consumers' purchase behaviour (Rahman et al., 2021).

In the case of consumer intention towards pork-free restaurants among Malaysian youth, trust may be a critical determinant, especially in contexts where food authenticity and religious compliance are paramount. Hence, based on the definition given, past literature, and the context of the research, this study proposes:

H₄: Trust has a positive relationship with the intention towards pork-free restaurants.

2.4.6 Knowledge

In the context of consumer behaviour, knowledge refers to consumers' understanding and awareness of products, services, and related information, which may influence purchasing decisions. In food-related contexts, this also includes consumers' ability to distinguish between Halal and non-Halal products based on their understanding of Halal principles (Khan et al., 2020).

In the context of Halal food options while travelling, a study found that knowledge led to stronger attitudes, which directly influenced behavioural intentions among Muslim tourists to consume Halal food in Indonesia (Rachmiatie et al., 2022). A study of young Muslim university students in Malaysia also found that knowledge significantly influenced intention and behaviour towards Halal food products (Azlan et al., 2022).

In the case of consumer intention towards pork-free restaurants among Malaysian youth, knowledge, which encompasses consumer awareness, is treated strictly as an independent variable rather than the ultimate outcome. While knowledge reflects the extent to which individuals understand the concept of pork-free dining, including its religious, ethical, and health-related implications, this study aims to investigate whether this awareness actually translates into the motivation and readiness to patronise such establishments. Hence, based on the definition given, past literature, and the context of the research, this study proposes:

H₅: Knowledge has a positive relationship with the intention towards pork-free restaurants.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework developed to guide this study and to test the proposed hypotheses. To be precise, the framework encompasses five independent variables (attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, trust, and knowledge) and examines their specific influence on the central dependent variable, which is the intention to patronise pork-free restaurants. The model was constructed based on theoretical insights and empirical findings discussed in the literature review.

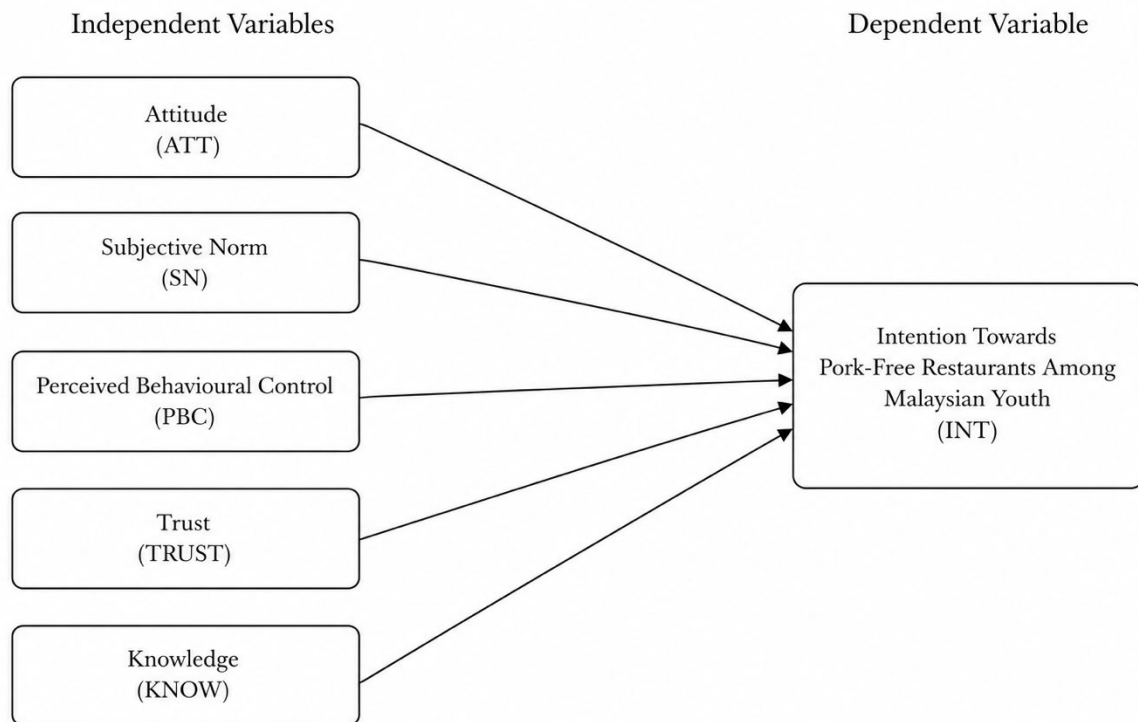


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Label

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examines Muslim Malaysian youth's intention to patronise pork-free restaurants. Since this research focuses heavily on religious aspects and halal considerations, the target population was specifically limited to Muslim consumers. Data collection was conducted through an online survey distributed by an enumerator via social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp and Facebook. The online format was chosen for its efficiency, speed, and cost savings, while enabling access to a broad range of Muslim respondents. To improve data quality, validation features were embedded in the survey to ensure that responses were both complete and accurate, thereby reducing the risk of missing information.

A non-probability convenience sampling method was applied to recruit participants. This approach is frequently adopted in marketing and consumer-related studies due to its ease of use and practicality (Homburg et al., 2022). It provides advantages such as lower cost, reduced time requirements, and straightforward implementation (Jager et al., 2017). Furthermore, it allows researchers to approach individuals who are readily accessible, willing to participate, and available (Dörnyei, 2007). Nonetheless, the method has notable limitations, including potential sampling bias (Fricker, 2008) and reduced external validity (Andrade, 2021), which may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalised. These factors should therefore be taken into account when interpreting the outcomes.

The determination of sample size followed Roscoe's (1975) well-cited guidelines for behavioural research, which suggest that an appropriate sample typically falls between 30 and 500 respondents. Staying within this range reduces the likelihood of Type II errors when testing hypotheses at the .05 significance level. Sekaran (2000) further cautions that overly large samples may yield statistically significant results even for weak relationships, potentially distorting the population's true representation.

In line with these recommendations, this study obtained responses from 329 participants, a number that falls comfortably within Roscoe’s suggested range. The sample size is also sufficient for conducting multivariate analysis through partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). According to the ‘10 times rule’ proposed by Hair et al. (2011), the minimum sample size should exceed 10 times the maximum number of indicators assigned to any latent variable in the model; in this study, the maximum was 10 indicators, making the sample adequate for analysis.

To assess the proposed relationships among the constructs, this study applied variance-based PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis was carried out in two stages: first, the measurement model was assessed, followed by the structural model. PLS-SEM was considered appropriate given its strength in supporting theory-driven frameworks such as the TPB. It is also well-suited for analysing complex models and addressing challenges such as multicollinearity (Cassel et al., 1999) and non-normal data distributions.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Respondents’ Profile

The study involved 329 respondents, whose demographic characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondents’ Profile

Demographic		Sample	
		Frequency (N=329)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	149	45.3
	Female	180	54.7
Age	18-24	142	43.2
	25-31	117	35.6
	32-38	48	14.6
	39-45	22	6.7
Income	Less than RM2,000	133	40.4
	RM2,001 – RM5,000	116	35.3
	RM5,001 – RM8,000	47	14.3
	Above RM8,001	33	10.0
State	Kedah	23	7.0
	Perlis	28	8.5
	Pulau Pinang	31	9.4
	Perak	41	12.5
	Kelantan	27	8.2
	Terengganu	21	6.4
	Pahang	32	9.7
	Selangor	36	10.9
	Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur	21	6.4
	Melaka	26	7.9
Negeri Sembilan	27	8.2	
Johor	16	4.9	

Crucially, all 329 respondents were confirmed to be practicing Muslims, aligning with the study’s objective to examine religious considerations and halal dining choices. The sample reflects a diverse group of Muslim Malaysian youth across gender, age, income levels, and geographic distribution. Out of the total respondents, 54.7% (n=180) were female, and 45.3% were male (n=149). The largest segment of participants fell within the 18-24 age group, accounting for 43.2% of the sample. This was followed by those aged 25-31, 32-38 (14.6%), and 39-45 (6.7%). These figures align with the Malaysian government’s definition of youth (ages 15-40) and indicate

that younger youth are more active and responsive in survey participation, possibly reflecting their greater engagement with dining trends and Halal awareness. In terms of income distribution, a substantial portion of respondents earned less than RM2,000 per month (40.4%), followed by those earning between RM2,001 and RM5,000 (35.3%). A smaller percentage earned RM5,001-RM8,000 (14.3%) and above RM8,001 (10.0%). This indicates that the majority of the respondents fall within the lower to middle-income bracket, which may influence their choice of dining establishments based on affordability and perceived Halal compliance. Respondents were drawn from various states across Malaysia. The highest representation came from Perak (12.5%), followed by Selangor (10.9%), Pahang (9.7%), and Pulau Pinang (9.4%). Other states, including Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor, and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, were also represented, albeit in smaller proportions. This wide geographical spread enhances the generalisability of the findings, capturing the perceptions of youth from both urban and semi-urban areas.

4.2 Measurement Model

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs used in this study, the measurement model was assessed through several criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2011; 2019). These include examining individual item reliability, internal consistency, content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Table 2 presents the results for indicator loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha. All item loadings exceeded the minimum recommended threshold of .70 (Hair et al., 2017), except for Int3 (.500) and Trust3 (.689), which were excluded from the final model due to low reliability. Their removal improved the measurement model's overall quality and consistency.

Cronbach's Alpha, the most commonly used measure of internal consistency, ranged from .731 to .841 in this study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), values above .70 are acceptable, while values above .80 indicate good reliability. The results suggest that all constructs meet or exceed acceptable reliability standards. Composite Reliability (CR), which accounts for differences in item loadings, further confirmed the internal consistency of the constructs. All CR values were above the .80 threshold, indicating strong construct reliability.

Convergent validity was assessed using AVE, in accordance with Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Chin (2010). The AVE values ranged from .554 to .635, exceeding the minimum threshold of .50, indicating that more than half of the variance in the indicators was captured by their respective constructs. Overall, the results confirm that the measurement model demonstrates adequate reliability and convergent validity, supporting its suitability for further structural model analysis.

Table 2 Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loadings >.70	AVE >.50	Composite Reliability >.80	Cronbach's Alpha >.7
Attitude			.612	.863	.788
	Att1	.796			
	Att2	.799			
	Att3	.774			
	Att4	.759			
Subjective Norm			.612	.887	.841
	SN1	.819			
	SN2	.751			
	SN3	.744			
	SN4	.825			
	SN5	.770			
Perceived Behavioural Control			.556	.862	.800

Constructs	Items	Loadings >.70	AVE >.50	Composite Reliability >.80	Cronbach's Alpha >.7
	PBC1	.700			
	PBC2	.756			
	PBC3	.743			
	PBC4	.744			
	PBC5	.782			
Trust			.635	.874	.808
	Trust1	.840			
	Trust2	.737			
	Trust4	.797			
	Trust5	.811			
Knowledge			.564	.838	.742
	Knowledge1	.752			
	Knowledge2	.703			
	Knowledge3	.760			
	Knowledge4	.786			
Intention			.554	.832	.731
	INT1	.729			
	INT2	.775			
	INT4	.709			
	INT5	.764			

The model's discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, a more rigorous approach than the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). According to established guidelines, HTMT values should be below .90 to confirm discriminant validity, particularly in behavioural sciences (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009). In this study, the HTMT values ranged from .792 to 1.136, with several exceeding the .90 threshold, suggesting potential issues with discriminant validity. To further evaluate this, a bootstrapping procedure was conducted to generate 95% confidence intervals for the HTMT values. The results revealed that none of the upper bounds of the intervals included 1.00, suggesting that the constructs are empirically distinct and that discriminant validity is acceptable. Although several HTMT values exceeded the recommended threshold of .90, the bootstrapped confidence intervals did not include 1.00, suggesting that discriminant validity remained acceptable. Nevertheless, the results should be interpreted with caution due to the relatively high HTMT values observed between several constructs. The HTMT results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 HTMT Results

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Attitude						
2. Intention	1.136					
3. Knowledge	.868	.846				
4. Perceived Behavioural Control	.990	.981	.969			
5. Subjective Norm	1.065	1.063	.880	.964		
6. Trust	.921	.991	.792	.857	.902	.860

4.3 Structural Model

The structural model was assessed by evaluating the significance of the path coefficients through a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples and a sample size of 329, as recommended by

Hair et al. (2017). Figure 2 presents the full structural model, while Table 4 summarises the hypothesis testing results, including the standardised beta coefficients (β), standard errors, t-values, p-values, and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals.

Table 4 Direct Relationships for Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Std Beta	Std Error	t-values	p-values	5% (LLCI)	95% (ULCI)	Decision
H ₁ Attitude → Intention	.455	.076	6.019	.000	.330	.578	Supported
H ₂ Subjective Norm → Intention	.241	.081	3.019	.001	.115	.382	Supported
H ₃ Perceived Behavioural Control → Intention	.093	.062	1.415	.079	-.018	.187	Not Supported
H ₄ Trust → Intention	.208	.056	3.725	.000	.118	.303	Supported
H ₅ Knowledge → Intention	-.037	.052	.762	.223	-.123	.048	Not Supported

Based on the results in Table 4, three of the five hypotheses were supported, as their respective t-values exceeded the critical value of 1.645 and their p-values were below .05, indicating statistically significant relationships. Specifically, H₁ was supported, showing a significant positive effect of attitude on intention ($\beta = .455$, $t = 6.019$, $p < .001$). Similarly, subjective norm was found to have a significant positive effect on intention (H₂: $\beta = .241$, $t = 3.019$, $p = .001$). H₄ was also supported, with trust positively influencing intention ($\beta = .208$, $t = 3.725$, $p < .001$).

In contrast, two hypotheses were not supported. H₃, which posited a positive effect of perceived behavioural control on intention, was not significant ($\beta = .093$, $t = 1.415$, $p = .079$), as the lower bound of the 95% confidence interval included zero. Likewise, knowledge about halal (H₅) did not significantly influence intention ($\beta = -.037$, $t = .762$, $p = .223$). These findings suggest that while attitude, subjective norm, and trust are important predictors of intention, perceived control and knowledge may not play a decisive role in this context.

Figure 2 shows the results of the structural model analysis using PLS-SEM. The model illustrates the relationships between attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, trust, knowledge, and intention towards pork-free restaurants among Malaysian youth. Based on the findings, attitude exerted the strongest influence on intention, followed by subjective norm and trust, both of which showed significant positive relationships. On the other hand, perceived behavioural control and knowledge did not show significant effects on intention. Overall, the results indicate that Malaysian youths' intention to patronise pork-free restaurants is more strongly influenced by personal evaluation, social influence, and trust rather than by perceived control or level of knowledge.

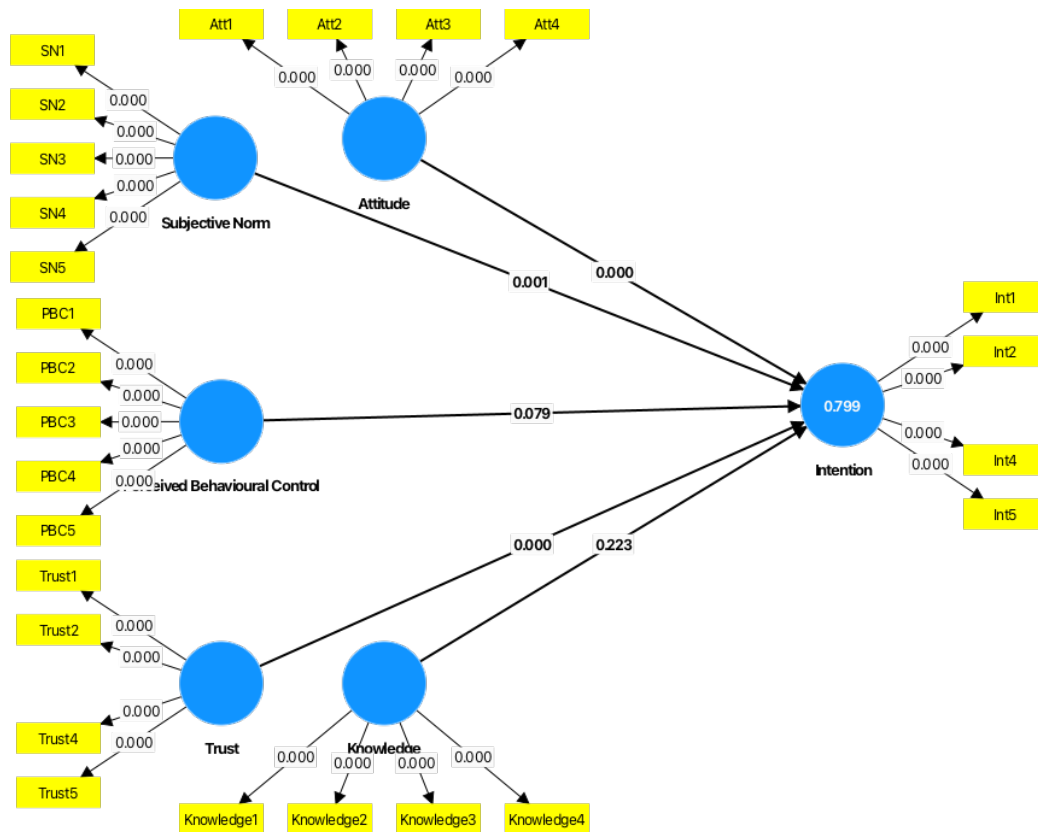


Figure 2. Results of the Structural Model

The explanatory power of the structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2), which indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous latent variable explained by its predictor variables (Hair et al., 2011, 2018; Henseler et al., 2015). According to Hair et al. (2018), the acceptable threshold for R^2 depends on the research context, although general guidelines suggest that R^2 values of .75, .50, and .25 are substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Hair et al., 2017). R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater explanatory power. In the present study, the R^2 value for purchase intention was 0.799, indicating that attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, trust, and halal knowledge together explain approximately 79.9% of the variance in purchase intention. This reflects a substantial level of explanatory power in the model.

Table 5 Direct Relationships for Hypothesis Testing

Construct	f^2	Effect
Attitude -> Purchase Intention	.231	Medium
Subjective Norm -> Purchase Intention	.066	Small
Perceived Behavioural Control -> Purchase Intention	.017	Small
Trust -> Purchase Intention	.093	Small
Knowledge -> Purchase Intention	.009	Small

As indicated in Table 5, the effect size (f^2) was used to assess the relative contribution of each exogenous construct to the variance explained in purchase intention. Cohen's f^2 measures the impact of removing a predictor construct on the R^2 value of the dependent variable, indicating how strongly each exogenous variable contributes to the model (Cohen, 1988; Ramayah et al., 2018). According to Cohen's guidelines, f^2 values of .02, .15, and .35 are interpreted as small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. As presented in Table 5, the effect size of attitude on purchase intention is medium ($f^2 = .231$), while the effects of subjective norm ($f^2 =$

.066), perceived behavioural control ($f^2 = .017$), trust ($f^2 = .093$), and halal knowledge ($f^2 = .009$) are considered small. These results suggest that although several predictors have statistically significant paths, their individual contributions to the explained variance of purchase intention are modest, with attitude standing out as the most influential predictor.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study provide important insights into the determinants of Malaysian youths' intention to choose pork-free restaurants, particularly within the broader context of Halal dining options available in Malaysia. The structural model explains a substantial portion of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = .799$). The predictors, namely attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, trust, and knowledge, collectively account for more than 80 percent of the variance. This reflects the robustness of the research framework and highlights the central role of these constructs in shaping consumer behaviour.

Among the predictors, attitude emerged as the strongest determinant of intention ($\beta = .455$, $p < .001$). This suggests that positive evaluations of pork-free dining significantly enhance the likelihood of patronage. The result is consistent with the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), which states that favourable attitudes toward a behaviour increase the intention to perform it. For Malaysian youths, dining choices appear to be strongly guided by personal beliefs about the value, benefits, and importance of avoiding pork. Since Halal restaurants are already widely available in Malaysia, youths may view pork-free restaurants as an acceptable alternative, especially when Halal certification is not explicitly present, but the absence of pork provides reassurance.

Subjective norms also significantly influenced intention ($\beta = .241$, $p = .001$), indicating that peer and social expectations play a crucial role in encouraging pork-free dining practices. This finding reflects Malaysia's collectivist cultural orientation, where social approval and communal norms are highly influential in shaping consumer decisions. The close link between pork-free and Halal dining means that young consumers may feel socially compelled to comply with dietary expectations in order to maintain religious adherence, group harmony, and cultural values.

Trust also had a positive and significant effect on intention ($\beta = .208$, $p < .001$). This highlights the importance of confidence in the credibility of pork-free claims and restaurant practices, particularly when Halal certification is absent. While Halal-certified restaurants benefit from institutional verification, pork-free establishments rely heavily on consumer trust in transparency and authenticity. Trust reduces perceived risks and uncertainties, making it an essential factor in food-related decision-making.

On the other hand, perceived behavioural control and knowledge were not significant predictors of intention. The non-significance of perceived behavioural control ($\beta = .093$, $p = .079$) suggests that Malaysian youths do not perceive major barriers in accessing either pork-free or Halal dining, possibly because such options are increasingly available nationwide. Likewise, the lack of significance for knowledge ($\beta = -.037$, $p = .223$) strongly validates this study's primary focus on behavioural intention rather than mere awareness. This finding indicates that while general awareness of Halal and pork-free concepts exists among the youth, it does not directly translate into the intention to dine at these establishments. This could be due to the assumption that Halal compliance is the default in Malaysia, thereby reducing the importance of knowledge as a driver of behavioural intention, and further confirming that intention driven by attitudes, social norms, and trust, is the most critical measure of consumer readiness.

Effect size analysis reinforces these insights, showing that attitude exerts a medium effect, while subjective norm, trust, perceived behavioural control, and knowledge contribute only small effects. This emphasises the central role of attitudinal factors in shaping dining intentions, with social influence and trust playing supportive but less dominant roles.

6. CONCLUSION

Overall, these findings contribute to the growing literature on Halal and pork-free consumer behaviour by highlighting that for Malaysian youths, intention is primarily driven by personal attitudes, supported by social expectations and trust in restaurant credibility, rather than perceived control or knowledge. From a practical perspective, the results suggest that marketers and policymakers should focus on strengthening positive attitudes toward pork-free and Halal dining through awareness campaigns, reinforcing social norms through community engagement, and enhancing trust by ensuring transparency in both certification and restaurant practices.

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