

Understanding consumer purchase intention for halal street food in South Korea: A case study of Malaysian Muslim travellers

Aida Syazwina Azman¹, Nurul Atikah Mohd Sufian² Ahmad Redhuan Abu Bakar^{3*}, Halipah Hamzah⁴

^{1,2,3}*Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang, 13500 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia*

⁴*Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang, 13500 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia*

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ABSTRACT

The recent global increase in the Muslim population, coupled with a rising demand for halal food products, has contributed to the significant expansion of the global halal food market. This trend reflects a growing consumer interest in halal -certified products. South Korea has emerged as a popular travel destination among Muslim tourists, particularly those from Malaysia. However, challenges have surfaced concerning the misuse of halal signage by street food vendors who, in some instances, offer non-Halal items. This situation has raised concerns among Malaysian Muslim travelers regarding the authenticity and reliability of halal street food in the country. This study aims to investigate the purchase intentions of Malaysian Muslim travelers toward halal street food in South Korea by employing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the guiding theoretical framework. The variables assessed in the study include attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and consumer awareness. A total of 142 valid survey responses were collected and quantitatively analysed. The overall reliability and validity test of Cronbach's Alpha score is 0.911, indicating excellent internal consistency. Spearman correlation analysis revealed weak yet positive correlations between the independent variables and purchase intention: attitude (0.142), subjective norms (0.137), perceived behavioral control (0.029), and consumer awareness (0.179). These findings suggest that although the correlations are modest, there is a meaningful association between the examined variables and the purchase intentions of Malaysian Muslim travelers with regard to halal street food in South Korea. The results underscore the need for a structured and reliable halal support system in South Korea. Enhancing the halal food ecosystem would assist regulatory authorities and tourism agencies in implementing effective strategies to address these concerns. Such measures would not only improve the availability and authenticity of halal street food but also foster greater confidence among Muslim travelers when making food-related decisions.

^{1*} Corresponding author. E-mail address: redhuanab@uitm.edu.my

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent demand for halal food products, highlighted by Zouiten (2023), is projected to increase substantially due to the global Muslim population, with expected 32% hike in global population for the coming decades. The Muslim population is projected to surge by 70%, from 1.8 billion in 2015 to nearly 3 billion in 2060. This growth underscores the escalating demand for the Halal food market, which was valued at approximately 1.4 trillion U.S. dollars in 2017, and it is projected to reach 2.6 trillion U.S. dollars by 2023 (Shahbandeh, 2018). This study focuses on South Korea as a preferred tourism destination for Muslim tourist, particularly Malaysians. Despite the majority of the South Korean population being non-Muslim with a predominantly Christian and Confucian society, there is a Muslim minority estimated to range between 150,000 and 200,000, with 35,000 being Korean Muslims (Se, 2023). Despite growth and the rising demand for halal food, South Korea is still lacking in terms of halal infrastructure and poses wide challenges for Muslim travellers. It is understandable that the concepts surrounding Halal food can be difficult to grasp among nations with a majority of non-Muslim populations.

1.1 Problem statement

South Koreans refer Halal food primarily based on halal businesses or official tourism websites that promote Halal (Yasar, 2021). Additionally, it reflects that South Korean understanding of halal are not fully established. This issue is particularly evident with street food vendors misusing halal signage while selling non-Halal products. This is causing concerns among Malaysian Muslim tourists about the authenticity of halal street food in Korea (Esmail, 2019). Others related halal issues such as the prosecution of individuals involved in counterfeit halal schemes (Salama, 2015) and the misuse of halal certification logos by some restaurants and markets. Previous studies have explored pertaining halal food and halal restaurants in South Korea in the perspective of Muslim consumers (Yasar, 2021; Handani & Kim, 2023; Mansor et al., 2017). However, little is known about consumer purchase intentions towards halal street food in South Korea among Malaysian Muslim travellers. Thus, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining Malaysian Muslim travellers purchase intention on halal street food in South Korea through the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The study will examine how attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and consumer awareness will influence consumer purchase intentions adapted from Jannat & Islam (2019).

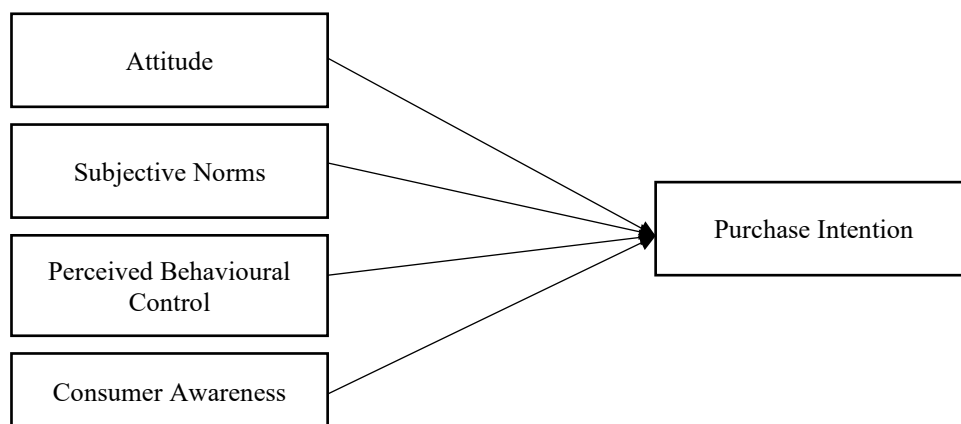


Fig. 1. Portray adapted research framework from Jannat & Islam (2019) consisting element of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the study will examine how attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and consumer awareness towards consumer purchase intention.

Source: Jannat & Islam (2019)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Purchase intention towards halal food

Earlier studies highlight that the intention to purchase is closely linked to one's attitude and preference for the brand or product (Consuegra et al., 2018). Additionally, purchase intention represents a form of planned behaviour that has the potential to manifest as an actual purchase in the future. Purchase Intention (PI) is rooted in consumer psychology and reflects the subjective probability that consumers are willing to take a specific purchase behaviour (Li et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2023). Purchase Intention is characterized as a conscious decision by an individual to purchase a specific brand, coupled with a premeditated plan to acquire particular products or services (Goyal, 2014). Purchase intention stands out as a pivotal element in consumer behaviour, steering the procurement of products and services. It entails purposeful decisions and strategies, notably evident in the selection of Halal food, impacting consumer behaviour. Mirabi et al. (2015) examined the purchase intention of halal foods, focusing on five factors: awareness, perception, halal certification, halal marketing, and religious belief. Azam (2016) study explored into the Purchase Intention of Halal packaged foods, highlighting two factors: Halal awareness and ingredients related to Islamic brand products. Primarily, consciousness and understanding of the products play a crucial role in the purchasing decision, as these factors determine the initial appeal of the merchandise. Without achieving a minimum level of awareness and understanding of a product, the attitude towards it cannot be formulated and assessed (Mutum et al., 2016).

2.2 Theory of planned behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) consists of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control that influence purchase intention whereby these behaviours can be directly predicted. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, purchase intention is primarily determined by these three factors (Ajzen, 1991). Purchasing attitude refers to one's attitude toward engaging in the behaviour, subjective norm refers to the degree of social pressure perceived by the person regarding the behaviour, and perceived behavioural control refers to the level of control on how individuals perceive he or she has over conducted the behaviour. Attitude and subjective norm represent the perceived desirability of executing the action, while perceived behavioural control represents the perception whether the behaviour is personally manageable and vice versa (Chen, 2007). Purchase intention is frequently used to measure the occurrence of actual behaviour and marketers believe that purchase intention is the most precise forecaster that contributes to consumers' buying behaviour.

2.3 Attitude

Attitudes are acquired and formed over a specific duration and are typically resistant to change but can be impacted by fulfilling psychological motivations (Lien & Cao, 2014). Specifically, attitude evolves as individuals acquire new insights about the idea or object under evaluation (Shaouf et al., 2016). Attitude defined as expressing one's emotions that mirror personal preferences or aversions towards an object (Dewi & Ardani, 2016). Attitudes form gradually and often resist change, yet they can be influenced by meeting psychological needs. It transforms as individuals acquire fresh perspectives on the concepts or objects they assess. Attitude serves as an emotional expression, indicating personal preferences or aversions towards a specific object. Studies by Mutum et al. (2016) indicate a significant and positive impact of mindset on the intention to purchase halal meals. According to Khalek and Ismail (2015), the consumption of Halal cuisine encompasses a blend of beliefs concerning cleanliness, safety, healthfulness, and confidence in consuming Halal food. The article by Abd Rahman et al. (2015) demonstrates that attitudes positively influence the intention to use Halal products.

2.4 Subjective norms

Subjective Norm represents the social pressure an individual experiences to conform to or deviate from certain behaviors (Ajzen, 2014). Subjective norm plays a crucial role in the selection and purchase of halal products, as indicated by Afendi et al. (2014). Subjective norm frequently serves as a precursor in decision-making (Sandve & Øgaard, 2014). Subjective norms encapsulate the societal influence on an individual's inclination to adhere to or diverge from specific behaviors. Suki et al. (2014) demonstrated that various factors, including colleagues' expectations, family approval, the behavior of other Muslim consumers, and social pressure, among others, collectively exerted a positive influence on purchase intention. Often acting as a precursor in decision-making, subjective norm indicates that individuals are more prone to taking action if they perceive approval from their role models. Khalek and Ismail (2015) outlined various elements to gauge subjective norm, including people's influence, family members' preferences, the tradition of consuming halal food within the family, and friends' considerations about food choices. Findings by Bashir et al. (2018) and Afendi et al. (2014) affirmed that subjective norm impacts the purchasing interest in halal products.

2.5 Perceived behavioural control

Ajzen (2020) defined Perceived Behavioural Control pertains to the extent to which an individual feels capable of engaging in a specific behaviour. It is linked to how individuals perceive their time and resources which influences their confidence in executing a particular behaviour. Perceived Behavioural Control is the extent to which one has confidence and believes that he or she is in control of the outcome of an event (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived Behavioural Control is further defined as the individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific behaviour and is shaped by the individual's perceptions about the influence of two factors, which are internal and external (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived Behavioural Control plays an important part in influencing an individual's confidence and belief in performing specific behaviours, with significant implications for their intentions and actions, particularly in the context of purchasing halal products. Perceived Behavioural Control is explained by an individual's belief about the easiness of behaviour directed towards a specific goal, influenced by past experiences and self-evaluation (Hosseini et al., 2019). Greater perceived behavioural control can be seen when a stronger person's intention is to perform a particular behavioural (Derahman et al., 2017; Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Similar outcome was proven by Hosseini et al. (2019) that it exhibits a positive correlation to purchasing Halal food products.

2.6 Consumer awareness

Hasan (2016) explained that awareness can be defined as the evaluative process aimed at heightening levels of consciousness regarding what is permissible for Muslims to drink, eat, and use. Various sources contribute to people's awareness of halal foods. Awan et al. (2015) previously said that people who have Halal awareness are usually willing to buy food products or ingredients that are halal because the consumer already has the awareness. Research by (Yunus et al., 2013; Ekoyudho, 2021) indicated that product ingredients and Halal awareness correlated with purchase intention towards Halal food.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

McCombes (2019) referred to research design as a research strategy that, constitutes a plan devised to address a specific set of questions, serving as a framework that encompasses methods and procedures for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It represents a systematic method for analysing data and gathering measurements relevant to research questions. In the context of this study, a quantitative analysis will be employed, with the final results discussed based on statistical evidence. Categorically, this research

falls under the umbrella of causal research, as it aims to analyse the cause-and-effect relationship (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The research design employs a quantitative approach. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire distributed to Malaysian Muslim travellers who have previously purchased halal street food in South Korea. The survey was conducted on online platforms, utilizing various social media platforms such as Instagram, Telegram and WhatsApp. Data analysis utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.2 Population and sample

This research utilizes an online platform for the data collection, and non-probability sampling techniques were implemented. The implementation of purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, was used as a screening mechanism in selecting Malaysian Muslim travellers who have purchased halal street food products. The researcher will establish specific criteria for identification, seeking participants who can provide experiential information (Bernard, 2017). The study sample size was determined using the G-Power application. G-Power is chosen for its efficiency, broad applicability, and convenience (Erdfelder et al., 1996). The required sample size calculated using G-Power software is 138 respondents. This is the minimum sample size required for the data analysis. Collins (2021) explained on "research instrument" encompasses any tool employed by a scientist for obtaining, measuring, and analysing data sourced from subjects involved in the research experiment, focused on the particular topic. The instrumentation for this study is adapted from Jannat and Islam (2019). Self-administered questionnaires will be utilized by employing a five-point Likert Scale to minimized confusion and misinterpretation. The questionnaire consists of straightforward questions for respondents to easily comprehend and answer.

3.3 Data analysis

All obtained data will be processed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 software. Descriptive statistics will be employed, commencing with an exploration of the respondents' demographic details. Reliability and validity analysis will be applied to assess the dependability of all instruments. A normality test was assessed to identify if a set of sample data is derived from a population with a normal distribution. A normality test is typically conducted to ascertain whether the data under examination, as part of the research, adheres to a normal distribution pattern. Feldman (2018) addressed that normality pertains to a particular statistical distribution known as a normal distribution, occasionally referred to as the Gaussian distribution or bell-shaped curve. Additionally, the normality test result will determine the selection between Pearson and Spearman correlation analysis.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Cronbach's alpha result

Cronbach's alpha analysis was used to assess the validity and reliability of questionnaires. The greater the alpha, the stronger the correlation between the survey items. On the other hand, a lower alpha could point to fewer questions or items, indicating that the alpha score could be raised by including more pertinent topics. The variable of purchase intention (PI), shows the highest Cronbach's alpha value at 0.943, followed by perceived behavioral control (PBC) at 0.932. The remaining variables - attitude, subjective norm similarly exhibit good reliability, with attitude scoring 0.887, followed by subjective norms at 0.862. Consumer awareness portrays acceptable reliability by 0.779. Overall reliability results are demonstrated in Tables 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Result

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.943	5
Attitude (ATT)	0.887	5
Subjective Norm (SN)	0.862	4
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	0.932	6
Consumer Awareness (CA)	0.779	5
Overall Reliability	0.911	25

4.2 Demographic profile

Table 2. Participant's Demographic Result

Characteristics	N=142	Percent (%)
1. Gender		
Male	74	52.1
Female	68	47.9
2. Age Group		
18 - 25	12	8.5
26 - 35	100	70.4
36 - 45	27	19.0
46 and above	3	2.1
3. Occupation		
Government Job	26	18.3
Private Sector Job	45	31.7
Student	33	23.2
Businessman	29	20.4
Housewife	9	6.3
Unemployed	-	-
4. Monthly Income		
No Personal Income	18	12.7
Below RM1,500	7	4.9
RM1,600 - RM3,500	94	66.2
RM3,600 - RM5,500	2	1.4
Above RM5,600	21	14.8
5. Level of Education		
Secondary School Certificate	2	1.4
High Secondary Certificate	42	29.6
Bachelor	66	46.5
Masters	31	21.8
Higher Study	1	0.7
6. Residential Area		
Rural	54	38.0
Urban	88	62.0
7. Marital Status		
Single	103	72.5
Married	39	27.5

142 respondents revealed a gender distribution where males constituted a large number, comprising 74 respondents (52.1%), while females accounted for 68 respondents (47.9%). In terms of age, the largest age group falls within the 26-35 age range, encompassing 100 respondents (70.4%). The next largest group comprised individuals aged 36-45, with 27 respondents (19.0%), followed by those aged 18-25, comprising 12 respondents (8.5%). Respondents aged 46 years and older constituted as the smallest group, comprising

only 3 individuals (2.1%). Occupational distribution: the majority of respondents were employed in the private sector, totalling 45 individuals (31.7%), while housewives constituted the smallest segment with 9 respondents (6.3%). Monthly income, the largest proportion of respondents reported earnings of RM1,600 - RM3,500, comprising 94 respondents (66.2%), while the smallest group earned RM3,600 - RM4,500 with only 2 respondents (1.4%). Education level, the largest percentage of respondents held a bachelor's degree totalling 66 respondents (46.5%). Respondents with higher education levels constituted the smallest proportion of 1 respondent (0.7%). In terms of residential area, the majority of respondents lived in urban areas, a total of 88 individuals (62.0%), and the remaining 54 respondents (38.0%) resided in rural areas. Lastly, respondent's marital status reflects majority of respondents were single, a total of 103 individuals (72.5%), whereas married respondents constituted 39 participants (27.5%).

4.3 Normality test

Normality tests ascertain whether sample data derived from a population conforms to a normal distribution. Evaluating the normality of data is crucial for most statistical tests, as normality is a fundamental assumption in parametric testing. Two commonly utilized methods for assessing normality are the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The Shapiro-Wilk test is particularly suitable for smaller sample sizes, typically with at least 50 samples, but it can also be applied to datasets as large as 2000 samples. In this study the Shapiro-Wilk test employed as our statistical approach to evaluate data distribution. According to Mishra et al. (2019) data is considered normally distributed if the p-value (Shapiro-Wilk Test Sig.) exceeds 0.05; conversely, it is deemed non-normal and statistically significant if the p-value is less than 0.05. Given the non-normality of the data, a non-parametric test was conducted, and Spearman's correlation was used to analyse the data.

Table 3. Normality Test Result

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PI	.387	142	<.001	.440	142	<.001
ATT	.493	142	<.001	.410	142	<.001
SN	.506	142	<.001	.410	142	<.001
PBC	.469	142	<.001	.413	142	<.001
CA	.410	142	<.001	.550	142	<.001

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

4.4 Spearman correlation result

Table 4. Spearman Correlation Result

Correlations							
Spearman's rho	PI	Correlation Coefficient	PI	ATT	SN	PBC	CA
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.142**	.137**	.029**	.179*
		N	142	142	142	142	142
	ATT	Correlation Coefficient	.142**	1.000	.669**	.628**	.519*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001	<.001	<.001
		N	142	142	142	142	142

SN	Correlation Coefficient	.137**	.669**	1.000	.630**	.559*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	<.001
PBC	N	142	142	142	142	142
	Correlation Coefficient	.029**	.628**	.630**	1.000	.652*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	.	<.001
CA	N	142	142	142	142	142
	Correlation Coefficient	.179**	.519**	.559**	.652**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.
	N	142	142	142	142	142

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 demonstrates Spearman correlation results for all respective variables and their relationships with Malaysian Muslim travellers' purchase intention for halal food products in South Korea. Attitude as a critical factor influencing the intention to purchase Halal food products by Abd Rahman et al. (2015). However, the correlation value is weak (0.142). This explains that Malaysian Muslim traveller's motivation to purchase halal street food in South Korea is low. This scenario might be contributed to by recent Halal cases related to halal street food vendors. Bashir et al. (2018) and Afendi et al. (2014) addressed that subjective norms (SN) which are perceived social pressures to engage in a behaviour significantly impacted the interest in purchasing halal products. However, the result shows that the subjective norm (0.137) correlation is weak towards consumer purchase intention. It explained that social influence does have minimal impact on Malaysian Muslim travellers purchasing halal street food. Moreover, perceived behavioural control (PBC), with a correlation result of (0.029) portrayed the weakest correlation value which explained that Malaysian Muslim consumers perceived towards halal street food is low due to their concern about halal authenticity. The consumer awareness (0.179) correlation result shows that low halal awareness among Malaysian Muslim travellers significantly impacted purchasing intention towards halal street food in South Korea. This result signifies that Malaysian Muslim travellers are lacking Halal information pertaining to Korean halal street food.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study emphasises the understanding of the Theory of Planned Behaviour correlation with purchase intentions of Malaysian Muslim travellers on halal street food in South Korea through the application of quantitative analysis. All variables portray weak correlation results but significantly contribute positive associations towards consumer purchase intention. These indicate their connection with Malaysian Muslim travellers' purchase intentions towards halal street food in South Korea are significant but low in term of correlation strength. Malaysian Muslim travellers clearly reflect that they are less motivated to purchase halal street food in South Korea. Consumer awareness with the highest correlation result portrays that recent Halal Street food issues and misused of halal logo among South Korean Street food vendors have decreased their confidence towards Korean Halal Street food authenticity. Although Halal food options are minimal during their visit, halal street food is less likely as their final choices. Halal issues related to halal street food and halal infrastructure further lower consumer purchase intention. Consumers feel less confident in their decision to purchase halal street food in South Korea. Additionally, Malaysian Muslim travellers often prefer to prioritize on their individual needs compared to halal street food. In conclusion, the correlation results support the research hypothesis that all variables do have a significant relation towards consumer purchase intention. This research outcome indicates an independent and distinctive result compared to the other similar TPB research. The statistical results help to reflect on the significant research model that will shape marketing decisions and Halal policy related to this research context.

6. LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research acknowledges several limitations that provide valuable opportunities for future research. The first limitation lies in the demographic scope, where the study exclusively focused on Malaysian Muslim tourists visiting South Korea. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to the broader population of Malaysian Muslim users or other Muslim travellers from different national backgrounds. Future studies could expand the demographic scope to include diverse Muslim users to increase the generalizability and cultural insights of the findings. Second, this study used a limited set of variables in the research framework. Important factors such as price sensitivity, product quality perception, religious assurance, and consumer perception were not included. Future research should consider integrating these additional variables to build a more holistic framework that captures the multifaceted nature of halal street food consumption. Additionally, this study used a quantitative approach, which, while useful for identifying general trends, may not fully capture the depth and nuance of consumer behaviour. Future research could use a qualitative or mixed-methods approach to gain a richer picture of the underlying motivations, emotional responses, and cultural influences that shape purchase intentions among Muslim travellers. In-depth interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic methods could reveal unique behavioural patterns and personal narratives that are not easily captured through survey data alone. Finally, geographical limitations can also be noted, as the study focused only on the South Korean context. Future research might explore comparative studies across non-Muslim majority countries that are emerging as halal tourism destinations. This could offer a broader understanding of how local food environments, cultural acceptance, and halal certification systems influence Muslim travellers' food choices. By addressing these limitations, future research could contribute to increasing knowledge about halal consumer behaviour in a global context and support the development of inclusive and culturally sensitive food tourism strategies.

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8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts, and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

9. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

In the collaborative contribution to the success of this research paper, **Aida Syazwina Azman** played a vital role in the empirical aspect of data collection and formal data analysis and the writing of the original draft. **Nurul Atikah Mohd Sufian** contributes to support the process in data collection and data analysis, and the writing of original draft. **Ahmad Redhuan Abu Bakar** involved in the establishment of the conceptual framework, research methodology, supervision, writing- review, editing and validation; **Halipah Hamzah** enriches the collaboration with guidance of fundamental theory, research design, supervision, writing, review and editing, and validation process.

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About the Authors

Aida Syazwina Azman is a final year student of Bachelor of Science in Culinary Arts Management at Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang. She actively engages with academic writing. With a growing interest in social sciences field, she has developed strong research and analytical skills. This research represents one of her first steps into scholarly paths.

Nurul Atikah Mohd Sufian is a final year student of Bachelor of Science in Culinary Arts Management at Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang. She actively engages with academic writing. With a growing interest in social sciences field, she has developed strong research and analytical skills. This research represents one of her first steps into scholarly paths.

Ahmad Redhuan Abu Bakar is a Lecturer in Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang since 2021. His research revolved around the subject of Gastronomy, Food Heritage, Halal and Consumerism. His scholarly contributions are evident in range of academic article publication, proceeding, book of chapters and bulletins.

Halipah Hamzah is an associate professor in the Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang since 2006. Prior to that, she had been working at Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam since 1994. Her research revolves around the subjects of Islamic Civilization, Islamic Thought, Human Development, Culture, Ethics, Halal Nutrition Concepts and others. Her scholarly writing has resulted in various publications of academic articles, books, proceedings, book chapters, bulletins and newspapers.