

Assessing Consumer Confidence in Halal Authorities: A Comparative Study between Malaysia and Brunei

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Abstract: The rapid growth of the halal market, driven by increasing Muslim consumer demand, has led to the establishment of halal certification bodies such as Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) and Brunei's Halal Food Control Division (HFCD) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) to ensure compliance with Islamic dietary laws. However, recent halal integrity issues, including product contamination and certification fraud, have raised concerns about the effectiveness and trustworthiness of these authorities. This study aims to examine Muslim consumer trust in JAKIM and HFCD, exploring the factors influencing their confidence in halal certification processes. This study used a quantitative approach to collect primary data from 300 Muslim individuals in both countries using online surveys. The analysis is conducted using descriptive and factor analysis methods using SPSS V.2. The study revealed that despite high awareness of recent halal issues, Muslim consumers in Malaysia and Brunei maintain significant trust in their respective halal authorities, JAKIM and HFCD. Multiple linear regression analysis confirmed that halal knowledge ($\beta = 0.362$), attitude ($\beta = 0.292$), and awareness coupled with willingness ($\beta = 0.158$) were significant factors influencing consumer trust, while environmental factors were not statistically significant. The high educational background of respondents contributed to a strong understanding of halal integrity, reinforcing confidence in the authorities. Furthermore, media influence and prior exposure to halal food fraud shaped consumer perceptions, leading to increased inspection of halal certification. These findings highlight the critical role of transparency, constricted regulatory enforcement, and continuous engagement in sustaining consumer confidence in halal certification bodies.

Keywords: consumer confidence, halal authority, halal integrity, halal trust

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1. Introduction

Due to the growth of the Muslim population around the world, which contributes to global market demand, many Muslim countries have taken the opportunity to grow their halal market. Consumer markets in the Middle East and Asia, predominantly shaped by the Muslim demographic, have emerged as pivotal players in the global economic landscape, as highlighted by reputable sources such as (Thomson Reuters & Dinar Standards, 2017). Southeast Asia has a substantial demographic of over 260 million Muslim consumers, with Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia emerging as pioneers in halal certification. These nations play a pivotal role in influencing the region's adherence to such standards. At the same time, other countries, including Thailand and the Philippines, actively recognize and adopt their established certification processes, thereby contributing to the cohesive promotion of halal practices throughout the diverse Southeast Asian market (Riaz & Chaudry, 2003). Given the substantial influence of these markets, it is not surprising that major proprietors of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) actively seek a strong foothold in these regions to tap into the significant consumer base they represent (Tieman, 2020).

The concept of halal, rooted in Islamic law, denotes what is permitted or lawful, while haram refers to what is forbidden (Butt, 2020). Initially, everything was considered halal unless proven otherwise, but modern practices have inverted this principle, requiring certification for halal status (Yakin et al., 2021). Engaging in business within Muslim markets involves addressing basic considerations such as food and product safety, as well as navigating the intricacies of meeting halal requirements. These requirements pertaining to both food and various consumer goods typically necessitate obtaining halal certification for the product and its manufacturing facility. This certification process involves thorough audits and validation by a designated halal authority or halal certification body (HCB) (Tieman, 2020). A halal certificate certified by the halal authority acts as a marketing and convincing tool for halal products and the service market. The significance of companies certified as halal and having their products labeled with the logo is known without much doubt. Globally, approximately 500 halal certification bodies (HCBs) exist, each maintaining a list of recognized entities for certifying meat slaughtering, raw materials, and flavors/perfumes. In Malaysia, the regulatory landscape is shaped by agencies such as the Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), which oversees the entire halal certification process—from logo creation and supply chain monitoring to enforcement of strict halal guidelines (Matulidi et al., 2016; Sahari et al., 2024). In Brunei, a parallel structure exists under the Halal Food Control Division (HFCDD) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), which ensures that both local and imported products meet national halal standards and legal requirements (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021; Kifli, 2023).

Despite these robust frameworks, both countries face significant governance challenges. In Malaysia, the decentralized approach—with multiple agencies involved in halal certification and enforcement—has led to legal and operational deficiencies. There are calls for a unified Halal Act that consolidates the fragmented regulatory framework and enhances enforcement powers (Tohe et al., 2021; Zain et al., 2015). Brunei, meanwhile, struggles with operational inefficiencies in its certification process, where limited workforce and procedural delays can impede timely approvals and undermine consumer confidence (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021). Recent high-profile halal crises involving prominent brands have eroded public trust in the capability of HCB and brand owners to guarantee the halal integrity of certified products. The HFCDD, in collaboration with the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) and the Royal Custom Excise Department (RCED), has discovered instances of meat and meat-based products smuggling into Brunei since the onset of COVID-19. Additionally, the team has exposed the illicit sale of questionable meat cuts and the operation of unauthorized slaughterhouses (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2022). In late 2020, Malaysia was stunned by the apprehension of a 1,500-ton illegal meat cartel involved in smuggling activities in China, Ukraine, Brazil, and Argentina. The syndicate's exposure has brought attention to longstanding criminal operations in Malaysia, prompting heightened awareness among various stakeholders (Md Ariffin et al., 2021).

Risk, frequently conceptualized within scenarios that may result in adverse outcomes, encompasses six distinct dimensions of halal integrity risk as delineated in the study: (i) production risk, (ii) raw material risk, (iii) food security risk, (iv) outsourcing practices risk, (v) service risk, and (vi) logistics risk (Ali et al., 2013). When these risks materialize, they transform into issues—actual challenges or problems that need to be addressed to prevent or mitigate negative impacts on the organization. Aligned with Heugens et al.'s (2004) and Tieman's (2020) conceptualization, a halal issue is characterized by a gap between a stakeholder's expectations and the perceived halal executions of the halal authority. It can manifest in various dimensions, with the foremost concern being contamination

(Tieman, 2020). Muslim consumers grapple with uncertainty regarding potential contamination with haram (forbidden) ingredients in their acquired food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, or other halal products. This uncertainty raises questions about the continued trustworthiness of the product and the halal authority in terms of maintaining halal integrity.

Following an inclusive perspective on corporate reputation management as described by (Fombrun & van Riel, 1997) and corporate halal reputation (Tieman, 2020), the suggested definition for a halal authority reputation is as follows: it is a combined portrayal of the authority's previous actions and halal performance, along with the authority's future capability to fulfill halal standards. Addressing and mitigating integrity risks to uphold the halal integrity of products poses considerable challenges. However, neglecting to handle these associated issues appropriately and failing to mitigate risks may result in a substantial adverse impact on the reputation of the halal authority, notably its trust, Islamic values, and network (Tieman, 2017). Mayer et al. (1995) define trust as the "willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party," indicating that trust involves a trustor's readiness to accept vulnerability to the trustee's actions with the belief that the trustee will fulfill their promises (Suhartanto et al., 2023). The reliance on the perceived halal integrity of a product or service emerges as a crucial determinant that profoundly shapes the purchasing behavior of Muslim consumers (Rahman et al., 2022). In this study, halal trust in a halal authority refers to customers' confidence that the product and service provided by the halal authority are in accordance with Islamic values.

The issue of trust in the integrity of the certification body is pivotal to promoting the halal concept's global recognition and development, supporting protection for consumers, and allowing a halal economic system to thrive for the benefit of all stakeholders and humanity as a whole. Confidence through integrity can be achieved because of high transparency and public-private engagement, sustainable governance, and substantial investments. A reliable and sustainable halal food supply chain is crucial for fulfilling the growing global demand for halal products (Sulaiman et al., 2021). It requires collaborative efforts from key stakeholders, including the government, halal agencies, manufacturers, and consumers. Md Nawati et al. (2023) highlight the importance of knowledge, government involvement, and the commitment of firms to halal practices as key factors in building consumer trust and ensuring halal compliance in the food sector. These elements are crucial in enhancing Muslim consumers' confidence in the halal certification process and the safety of halal products. This study focuses on scrutinizing the trustworthiness of the halal authority from the perspective of Muslim consumers, particularly those in Islamic countries such as Malaysia and Brunei. Despite the extensive body of research on halal trust, there remains a notable gap in cross-country comparative analyses. This study addresses this gap by offering new insights into Muslim perspectives on halal authorities in Malaysia and Brunei. By examining these perceptions in the aftermath of significant halal-related scandals in both countries, this research provides a deeper understanding of trust dynamics and regulatory credibility within the halal ecosystem.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Source of Data

This study adopted a quantitative approach to meet its research objectives. The primary data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire and distributed online. Structured questionnaires refer to the technique by which responses are regulated and guided in some way. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: 1) demographic information, 2) respondents' level of awareness of current halal issues involving halal authority, 3) respondents' level of reliance and trust in halal authority, 4) underlying key factors affecting consumer trust, and 5) respondents' level of trust in halal authority affected by the key factors investigated. The survey questions were developed based on recent halal issues in Malaysia and Brunei, as well as the halal legal framework, to assess consumers' level of awareness of recent halal issues, their trust level, halal authority, and the underlying factors that influence their trust. The states were chosen because of their high Muslim population percentages of 61.3% and 78.8%, respectively (US Department of State, 2021b, 2021a). Adult buyers of diverse ethnicities may have a greater level of control over making purchase decisions regarding religiously endorsed products (Khan et al., 2017). The questionnaire was designed in the form of a Likert scale, with 1 representing no confidence and 5 representing complete confidence. Figure 1 illustrates that customer trust is the dependent variable, and halal knowledge, attitude, environmental factors, and awareness and willingness are the independent variables in this research.

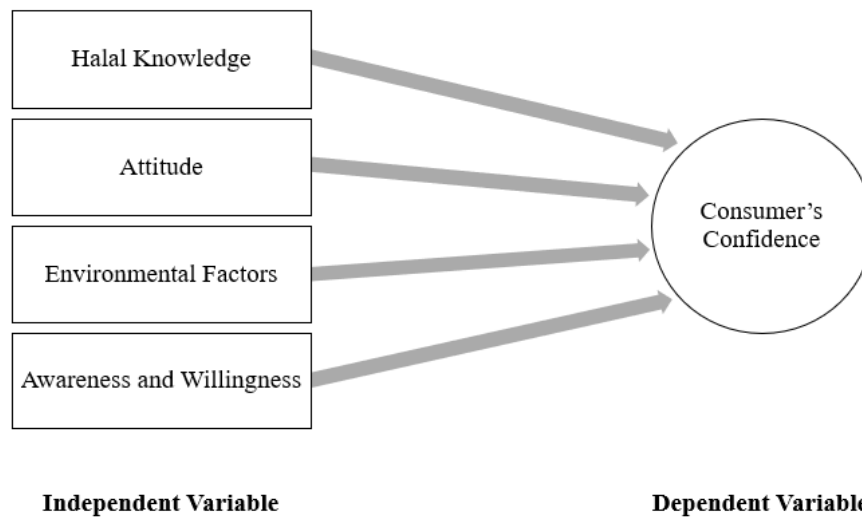


Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study

2.2. Data Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive and regression analysis techniques. Descriptive analysis was employed to examine the level of consumer awareness regarding the halal issue and to evaluate the trust levels of Malaysian and Bruneian consumers in terms of the credibility of their respective halal authorities. Regression analysis is a statistical method used to determine the underlying factors that can potentially impact consumer trust in halal authority. Multiple linear regression requires specific assumptions to be met to determine whether halal knowledge, attitude, environmental factors, awareness, and willingness affect customer trust levels. These assumptions are the linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, normality of the error terms, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, and the presence of outliers. Equation 1 is the multiple linear regression formula used in this study.

$$\gamma_i = \beta_o + \beta_1 \chi_1 + \beta_2 \chi_2 + \beta_3 \chi_3 + \beta_4 \chi_4 + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

γ_i = consumer's trust

χ_1 = halal knowledge

χ_2 = attitude

χ_3 = environmental factors

χ_4 = awareness and willingness

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents comprehensive descriptive statistics outlining the demographic profiles of the 339 respondents. The gender distribution exhibited a balanced representation, with 56.34% (n = 191) female and 43.66% (n = 148) male respondents, ensuring a diverse sample for the analysis, thus reducing the potential bias from the uneven gender distribution. The age distribution shows that most respondents (68.73%; n = 233) are aged 18–25, indicating a strong representation of younger consumers, who may be more engaged with halal-related issues or more responsive to online surveys. A smaller segment (11.21%; n = 38) falls within the 26–35 age range, reflecting working-age individuals who may have different purchasing behaviors. Meanwhile, 20.06% (n = 68) are 35 and above, offering perspectives shaped by experience and established consumption patterns. A higher proportion of younger participants in our study highlights how halal literacy early on builds awareness and confidence. The religious education system in Brunei includes primary, secondary, and tertiary levels that offer Islamic studies. In addition, the recently established Institute of Halal Research and Management (IHRAM) provides continuous certification training to enhance practical expertise. In Malaysia, internationally recognized for its halal industry leadership, universities such as the International Islamic University Malaysia and Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia deliver undergraduate, postgraduate, and diploma programs in halal

science and management. Additionally, the Halal Development Corporation collaborates with local institutions to provide executive diplomas and specialized training courses, ensuring students acquire up-to-date industry knowledge (Idris, 2025). The diverse age representation ensures a balanced analysis of consumer trust and awareness, capturing insights from both younger and older demographics.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Profile

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total	339	
Gender		
Male	148	43.66
Female	191	56.34
Age		
> 35 years	68	20.06
18 – 25 years	233	68.73
26 – 35 years	38	11.21
Country of Origin		
Brunei	48	14.16
Malaysia	291	85.84
Academic Qualification		
Foundation	1	0.29
Bachelor's Degree	252	74.34
Diploma	43	12.68
PhD	2	0.54
Master's Degree	20	5.90
SPM	20	5.90
STPM	1	0.29
Employment		
Government	52	15.34
Others	19	5.60
Private	54	15.93
Self-employment	15	4.42
Student	199	58.70

The demographic profile of respondents highlights a well-educated sample, with 74.34% (n = 252) holding a bachelor's degree, followed by diploma holders (12.68%; n = 43), and a smaller proportion with master's degrees (5.09%; n = 20) or secondary education (5.09%; n = 20). The high representation of degree holders suggests an informed respondent base, potentially influencing perspectives on halal-related issues. In terms of occupation, students made up the largest group (58.70%; n = 199), while 15.93% (n = 54) and 15.34% (n = 52) were employed in the private and public sectors, respectively. This distribution indicates a mix of young adults still in higher education and working professionals, contributing to diverse viewpoints. The substantial student representation could imply heightened awareness of halal concerns due to academic exposure, while working professionals may bring practical insights from industry experience.

From a demographic perspective, the variation in respondent numbers between Brunei and Malaysia can be better understood by examining the population sizes of both countries. As of 2024, Brunei's population is estimated at approximately 458,949, whereas Malaysia has a significantly larger population of around 35,126,298 (World Bank, 2025). It indicates that Malaysia's population is nearly 77 times greater than Brunei's. Such a substantial difference in demographic scale naturally influences the respondent distribution, resulting in a higher number of participants from Malaysia. Consequently, the inclusion of 48 respondents from Brunei and 291 from Malaysia in this study is proportionally consistent with the population distribution of both nations.

3.2. Awareness of Halal Issue

The awareness of halal issues among Muslim consumers is critical in maintaining the integrity of halal products and promoting informed purchasing decisions. This study found a high level of awareness among Muslim consumers in Malaysia and Brunei regarding the recent halal issues, as illustrated in Figure 2. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Ruslan et al. (2018), who highlighted that respondents in their study were aware of and exposed to instances of halal food fraud. A key factor

driving this awareness is the extensive role of media, including social and mass media platforms. According to Adiani (2024), social media serves as a key catalyst for increasing awareness of halal issues, though it also has the potential to disseminate false or misleading information. In addition, consumer education regarding halal issues tends to improve as access to information is widespread. Zain et al. (2017) states that the fundamental understanding of halal has undeniably helped the Muslim consumers take halal into greater awareness. This heightened awareness has also been linked to more scrutinizing attitudes toward halal certifications and the overall reliability of halal claims. A study by Maifiah et al. (2022) found that the meat cartel scandal in Malaysia significantly affected Muslim consumers' perceptions, leading to increased scrutiny of halal meat products. Similarly, research by Johari et al. (2025) in Brunei revealed that working women possess substantial knowledge and awareness regarding halal frozen food products, influencing their purchasing decisions. In many cases, Muslim consumers' awareness acts as a safeguard against potential fraud, as they are increasingly equipped to identify and report misleading practices. Thus, the awareness of halal issues, fuelled by media exposure and consumer education, remains a vital element in sustaining halal integrity in the food industry.

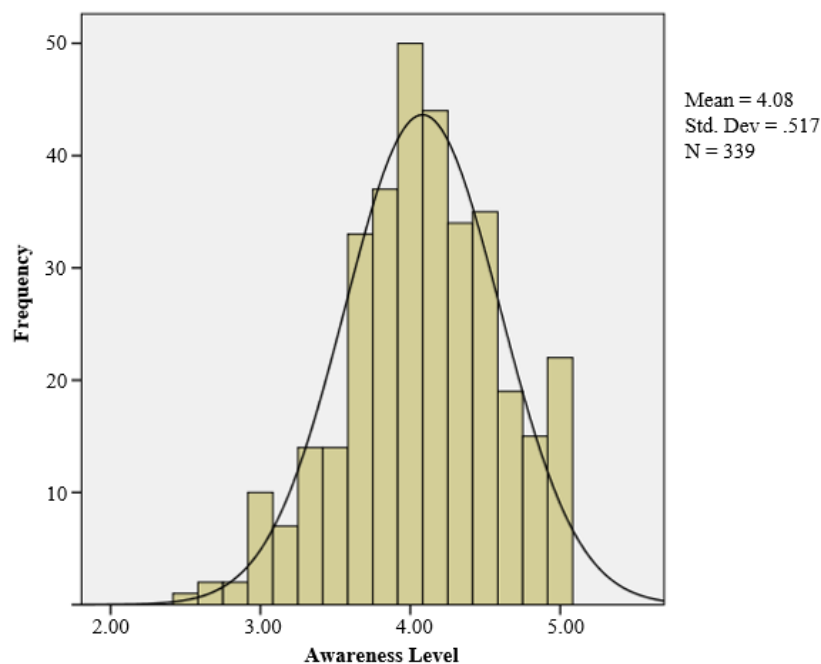


Figure 2. Awareness Level on Halal Issue

3.3. The Consumer Trust in the Halal Authority

The findings of this study indicate that as public awareness of halal issues grows in both Malaysia and Brunei, consumer trust in their respective authorities has likewise increased, as illustrated in Figure 3. In Malaysia, JAKIM is the primary authority responsible for halal certification. Studies have shown that consumers' trust in JAKIM is influenced by the organization's integrity, benevolence, and competence. These factors play a vital role in reassuring the confidence of approximately 17.1 million Muslim consumers in the country Ismail & Hussein (2019). Similarly, in Brunei, the HFCD under the MoRA oversees halal certification. The enforcement of the Halal Certificate and Halal Logo (Amendment) Order of 2017 has had significant effects on local food and beverage businesses, notably Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This regulatory framework aims to ensure compliance with halal standards and maintain consumer trust in halal-certified products in Brunei (Kifli, 2019).

However, challenges such as the misuse of halal logos and questionable halal statuses of certain products have been reported, which can undermine consumer trust (Kamisah et al., 2018). In Malaysia, for example, past incidents such as the meat cartel scandal have influenced consumer trust in imported meat products, yet confidence in JAKIM's domestic certification remained strong (Maifiah et al., 2022). Similarly, in Brunei, despite occasional violations, such as the use of expired halal certificates and unauthorized halal logos by some establishments (Othman, 2022), HFCD continues to be regarded as a trusted authority, ensuring that halal regulations are consistently enforced.

The high level of trust among consumers in Malaysia and Brunei in halal authorities may be influenced by their confidence in the halal certification process, particularly when they perceive it as

supported by stringent regulatory measures and transparent governance. This study aligns with previous research, which suggests that Muslim consumers generally rely on official halal certification as an assurance of product authenticity, even when concerns about compliance arise (Maifiah et al., 2022). Awareness of halal principles, perceived product safety, and the credibility of halal certifications significantly influence purchasing behavior, as consumers are more likely to choose products they believe adhere to halal standards (Wiyono et al., 2022).

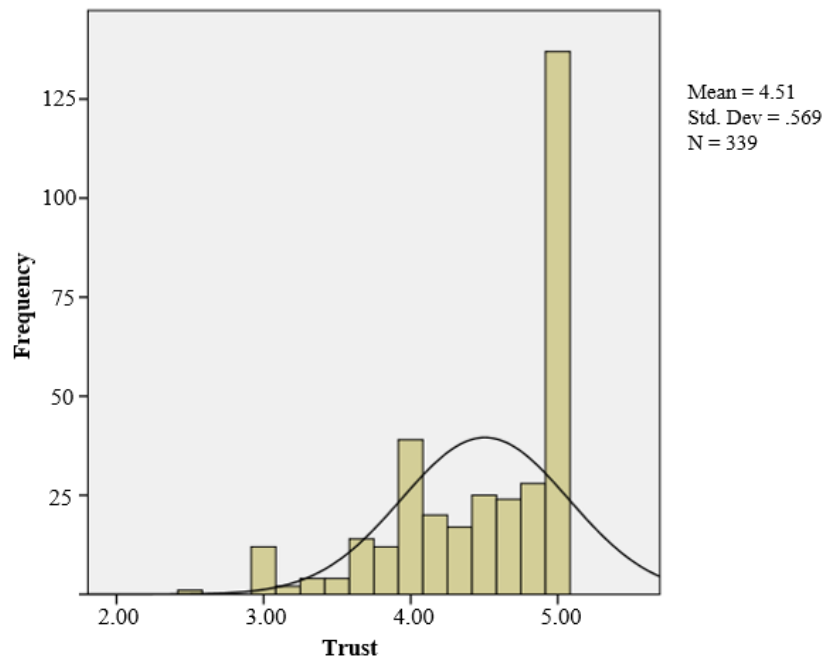


Figure 3. Trust Level in Halal Authority

Nonetheless, trust should not be assumed to be constant. Maintaining consumer confidence requires ongoing efforts, including stricter enforcement, periodic audits, and transparent communication regarding halal certification processes. These measures are crucial to maintaining the integrity of halal certification processes and fostering increased consumer trust. The role of media exposure is also significant. Digital transformation can also align with Islamic principles to enhance visibility into certification and transactions across the supply chain, thereby meeting consumer demands for greater transparency (Zulkifli & Yusuf, 2023). As the halal industry grows globally, regulatory bodies must continuously improve their systems to meet consumer expectations and uphold the credibility of halal certification.

3.4. Factors Affecting the Consumers' Trust Level

All assumptions of Multiple Linear Regression were fulfilled in this study. Therefore, this model is suitable for analyzing the factors affecting consumers' confidence levels. Table 2 shows a strong positive linear relationship between consumers' confidence levels and the independent variables.

Table 2 Linear Relationship				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.795 ^a	.632	.628	.34733

Table 3 shows that the model of multiple linear regression for this study is significant since the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 3 Model Significant						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	69.225	4	17.306	143.458	.000 ^b
	Residual	40.293	334	.121		
Total		109.518	338			

3.4.1. Halal Knowledge

Table 4 indicates that the only environmental factor is not statistically significant, whereas halal

knowledge, attitude, awareness, and willingness are significant independent variables, as their p-value was less than 0.05. Among these factors, halal knowledge had a substantial impact, as indicated by the significant regression coefficient of 0.362. It suggests that individuals with greater halal knowledge are more likely to trust regulatory bodies such as JAKIM in Malaysia and HFCD in Brunei. This finding aligns with the demographic composition of the study, where over 80% of respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree, reflecting a well-educated consumer. Wibowo et al. (2022) support this observation, reporting that individuals with higher educational levels tend to have a deeper understanding of halal-related issues. Correlation between educational background and enhanced understanding of halal issues, shaping consumer perspectives and decision-making processes. Zain et al. (2015) propose that knowledge gained from information searches ultimately leads to purchasing decisions. This study confirms that consumers' trust in halal authority could be influenced by their knowledge of halal.

Moreover, there is a growing concern among Muslim consumers about the possible contamination of processed foods with non-halal substances at various stages of the supply chain (Hendayani & Fernando, 2018). The influence of digital media has further enhanced knowledge dissemination, allowing consumers to stay updated on halal issues (Adiani, 2024). Consumers with higher halal literacy are more likely to scrutinize food labels, certification logos, and ingredient sources before making purchasing decisions. Studies have shown that any false information may result in the loss of their confidence level, and it would also affect their intended purchasing decisions (Mohamed et al., 2013). This concern extends to the possibility of hidden ingredients from questionable sources when producers neglect to disclose non-halal components to reduce production costs and maximize profits. Besides, ensuring that Muslim consumers can accurately recognize an authentic Halal logo may help reduce the possibility of purchasing fraudulent products (Voak, 2021).

A well-informed public is essential in ensuring compliance with halal regulations. Fauzi et al. (2024) highlight that enhancing consumers' knowledge and awareness of halal-certified food products is crucial. Johari et al. (2025) suggest that Brunei Halal frozen food brand could enhance its communication strategies to improve consumer confidence and product usage by providing clearer product information and targeted educational initiatives. The halal knowledge will cultivate trust, as consumers can independently verify the legitimacy of halal claims. By enhancing consumer halal education, JAKIM and HFCD can strengthen consumer confidence, promote responsible consumption, and ensure greater compliance with halal standards. Educational initiatives through media campaigns, training programs, and collaboration with industry stakeholders can help consumers make more informed choices, ultimately reinforcing the integrity of halal certification in Malaysia and Brunei.

Table 4 Coefficient of Variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.605	.169		3.580	.000
Halal Knowledge	.362	.052	.370	6.995	.000
Attitude	.292	.052	.295	5.604	.000
Environmental Factors	.087	.047	.095	1.860	.064
Awareness and Willingness	.158	.050	.147	3.154	.002

The multiple linear regression model for this study is shown in Equation 2.

$$\text{Consumers' Trust} = 0.605 + 0.362 \text{ Halal Knowledge} + 0.292 \text{ Attitude} + 0.158 \text{ Awareness and Willingness} \quad (2)$$

3.4.2. Attitude

When Muslims choose to consume halal products, their decision is significantly influenced by their attitudes (Pratama et al., 2023). In this study, the second influential factor affecting consumers' trust in halal authority was attitude, as indicated by a significant regression coefficient value of 0.292. The high levels of positive attitude observed among Muslims in Malaysia and Brunei in this study reflect their strong understanding of halal principles. These attitudes are shaped by the belief that the product complies with halal requirements. According to Ruslan et al. (2018), informed consumers exhibit a shift in their preferences, placing greater emphasis on the presence of a halal logo in product packaging rather than relying solely on the taste of the food.

This finding aligns with a global trend in which communities worldwide are adjusting their attitudes in response to an increased understanding of the significance of halal food requirements for

Muslims, both domestically and internationally (Rahman et al., 2022). The dynamic evolution of individual attitudes serves as a fundamental factor in shaping their perceptions, influencing how they interpret and respond to various experiences and information. As awareness of halal food fraud increases, consumers are becoming more discerning and carefully scrutinizing product ingredients before making purchasing decisions. Understanding these evolving consumer perceptions and attitudes is crucial for developing effective fraud prevention strategies and maintaining consumer confidence in the food industry (Kendall et al., 2019). Research by Khalek (2014) suggests that to enhance the positive attitude of Muslim consumers, relevant authorities and media should strengthen the promotion and visibility of halal certification issued by the halal authority. The efforts of JAKIM and HFCD to ensure regulatory compliance and public engagement significantly influence Muslim perceptions and interactions with halal products, thereby reinforcing confidence in the integrity and reliability of the halal certification system.

3.4.3. Awareness and Willingness

Awareness and willingness were the third factors, with a regression coefficient value of 0.158. The growing awareness of halal food fraud has led consumers to place greater importance on products certified by the JAKIM halal logo. This shift in behavior reflects a heightened demand for assurance and authenticity in halal food consumption. As a result, consumer decision-making is increasingly influenced by halal certification, often taking priority over personal preferences such as taste. This trend highlights the evolving nature of consumer trust and the critical role of certification in maintaining confidence in halal products. This result is consistent with previous research by Zakaria et al. (2017), which found that consumers' willingness to spend on halal products has a significant impact on their trust in these products, with a confidence level of 99%. The more consumers are willing to invest in halal products, the higher their level of trust in them.

By actively addressing consumer trust concerns and strengthening the credibility of halal certification, authorities can enhance consumer confidence and encourage greater acceptance of halal-certified products. JAKIM in Malaysia and HFCD in Brunei play a crucial role in this process by ensuring transparency in the halal certification process. Their proactive efforts in responding to halal-related issues help to mitigate doubts and reinforce consumer trust.

3.4.4. Environmental Factors

The minimal impact of environmental factors on halal trust can be attributed to the strong halal authorities in Malaysia and Brunei. It is evident from the high level of trust placed in these authorities, as reflected in the study's findings. The halal certification process in both countries is highly regulated by government-backed religious bodies, namely JAKIM in Malaysia and HFCD in Brunei. Furthermore, in societies where Islam is deeply integrated into daily life and governance, halal compliance is a religious obligation. Muslim consumers in these contexts tend to prioritize religious trust over environmental concerns, viewing halal certification as the ultimate indicator of product integrity. The findings align with the previous study by Yener (2022), which concluded that halal-certified products and Muslim country product origin led to a higher level of consumer purchase intention and trust and lower levels of perceived risk. This cultural reliance on religious authority diminishes the influence of environmental factors on halal trust.

4. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of awareness, trust, and knowledge in shaping Muslim consumers' confidence in halal-certified products in Malaysia and Brunei. Media exposure and consumer education have increased awareness, making consumers more discerning about halal certification. Despite concerns over fraudulent practices, trust in halal certification authorities, such as JAKIM in Malaysia and HFCD in Brunei, remains strong due to their perceived integrity and regulatory frameworks. However, occasional compliance issues emphasize the need for improved enforcement, transparency, and consumer engagement. The multiple linear regression analysis confirmed that halal knowledge, attitude, awareness, and willingness significantly influence consumer confidence, with halal knowledge emerging as the most critical factor. A well-informed consumer base not only strengthens trust but also helps prevent fraud. Digital transformation plays a key role in disseminating halal knowledge and enhancing transparency across the supply chain. While awareness and willingness contribute to trust, environmental concerns have minimal impact, suggesting that consumers prioritize religious and

regulatory authority over external influences. Given the complexities of the global halal market, regulatory bodies must strengthen enforcement, enhance transparency, and utilize digital platforms for consumer engagement. A proactive approach will uphold the integrity of halal certification and reinforce consumer confidence in Malaysia, Brunei, and beyond.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The research focused exclusively on consumers in Malaysia and Brunei, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Additionally, due to time constraints, data collection was conducted solely through online surveys, which may not fully capture the depth of consumer trust dynamics. Future research should incorporate qualitative approaches, such as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer trust in halal certification. Furthermore, the minimal impact of environmental factors observed in this study suggests the need for further research in diverse socio-cultural and economic contexts, where such variables may play a more significant role. Expanding the geographical scope of future studies could offer deeper insights into the universal and context-specific factors influencing halal consumer perceptions.)

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Nadiah Ramlan: Conceptualization, Supervision, Project Administration, Writing – Original Draft. **Noorul Huda Sahari:** Validation, Writing – Review & Editing. **Nur Amalina Shafie:** Methodology, Formal Analysis. **Nur Izyan Syazwanie Usop:** Investigation, Writing – Review & Editing. **Shahirah Said:** Writing – Review & Editing. **Siti Sarah Izham:** Writing – Review & Editing.

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