

Explaining Halal Chocolate Purchase Intention Among Muslim Young Adults in Malaysia

Menjelaskan Niat Membeli Coklat Halal di Kalangan Golongan Muda Islam di Malaysia

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Abstract: Chocolate, a timeless household staple, remains a popular guilty pleasure enjoyed by people of all cultures and ages, enduring both good and bad times, and remains a timeless and appealing choice. While everyone loves chocolate, Muslims are only allowed to consume Halal chocolate due to religious obligations. Halal chocolate is becoming increasingly popular as consumers develop a greater awareness of Halal foods and the benefits associated with them. Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this study examines the intention to purchase Halal chocolate among Muslim young adults in Malaysia. A total of 204 Muslims aged 18 to 34 participated in an online survey distributed through various social media platforms using Google Forms. Multiple regression analysis was performed to analyse the data. The results show that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control significantly influence the intention to purchase Halal chocolate among Muslim young adults in Malaysia. Theoretically, this study adds to the limited existing literature on Muslim consumers' Halal chocolate purchasing intentions and the robustness of the TPB in explaining purchase intention. Practically, this study assists the Halal chocolate producers, manufacturers, importers, and exporters to engage with their Muslim consumers to promote the consumption of Halal chocolate in the country.

Keywords: Halal Chocolate, Young Adult, Muslim, Theory of Planned Behaviour;

Abstrak: Coklat, kudapan seisi rumah, kekal sebagai kudapan yang menyeronokkan tetapi tidak menyihatkan yang popular untuk dinikmati oleh semua lapisan masyarakat dari pelbagai budaya dan peringkat umur. Coklat kekal menjadi pilihan di saat gembira dan sedih. Walaupun coklat digemari oleh semua, tetapi orang Islam hanya dibenarkan mengambil coklat yang Halal disebabkan oleh kewajipan agama. Coklat Halal menjadi semakin popular apabila pengguna meningkatkan kesedaran tentang makanan Halal dan faedah yang berkaitan dengan makanan Halal. Dengan menggunakan Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang (TPB), kajian ini mengkaji hasrat untuk membeli coklat Halal dalam kalangan golongan muda Islam di Malaysia. Seramai 204 orang Islam berumur 18 hingga 34 tahun menyertai tinjauan dalam talian yang diedarkan menerusi pelbagai platform media

sosial iaitu Borang Google. Analisis regresi berganda digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa sikap, norma subjektif, dan kawalan tingkah laku berpengaruh signifikan terhadap niat untuk membeli coklat Halal dalam kalangan golongan muda Islam di Malaysia. Secara teorinya, kajian ini menambah kepada literatur sedia ada yang terhad mengenai niat membeli coklat Halal di kalangan pengguna Muslim dan keteguhan teori TPB dalam menjelaskan niat pembelian. Secara praktikal, kajian ini membantu pengeluar, pengilang, pengimport, dan pengeksport coklat Halal untuk lebih memahami pengguna Muslim dalam mempromosikan pengambilan coklat Halal di negara ini.

Kata kunci: Coklat Halal, Golongan Muda, Muslim, Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang;

Introduction

Hardly anyone can resist chocolate, which is one of the most popular food types and flavours in the world, until it gets its own day, World Chocolate Day, celebrated worldwide on 7 July. Chocolate is a common household staple that never goes out of style or loses its allure, not only in good times but also in bad. Thus, it is not altogether surprising to discover that chocolate consumption has surged and intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic (De Nucci et al., 2022), as it provided people with a moment of comfort that helped them cope.

Chocolate is without a doubt one of the most popular guilty pleasures enjoyed by people of all cultures and ages. Aside from its ability to aggravate happiness and alleviate sadness in people, chocolate has numerous documented health benefits. For example, Katz et al. (2011) reported that the antioxidant properties of cocoa have a direct effect on insulin resistance and may reduce the risk of diabetes. According to another medical study, chocolate has antioxidant, anti-cancer, and anti-inflammatory properties (Cinar et al. 2021). The consistently well-documented health benefits of chocolate are one of the reasons for its rapid global growth. In 2022, the global chocolate confectionery market was worth USD111,570 million and is expected to reach USD128,510 million by 2029 (Industry Research Business, 2023).

For Muslim-dominated country, the demand for Halal chocolate is high as Muslims are only allowed to consume Halal chocolate. Halal is an Arabic term that refers to what is permissible and legal under the Islamic law as prescribed in the Quran. The inverse of Halal is Haram, and these two rulings have become two important ethical considerations for Muslims in their daily lives, including food guidelines and restrictions. Although some specific teachings vary, the consensus is that Halal foods must be free of pork, alcohol, poisons,

harmful ingredients, or unhygienic elements, and animals must be slaughtered according to the prescribed methods. In Malaysia, for foods, including chocolate, to be declared halal, they must not contain any human and animal parts or substances, must not be impure, must not intoxicate, and must not be dangerous or destructive to health (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), 2015). In addition, Halal food must adhere to a strict process that includes manufacturing, production, processing, and storage using machinery and/or utensils that have been purified in accordance with Islamic law (JAKIM, 2015). Therefore, any chocolate produced and sold in Malaysia that is free from the abovementioned components and that has been prepared and handled according to Islamic legal principles is considered Halal.

Malaysians are said to consume the most chocolate in Southeast Asia, averaging 0.5 kilogramme per person per year (Durai, 2022), which reflects the country's high chocolate consumption. The country's cocoa production is insufficient to meet demand, causing it to rely on cocoa imports for domestic consumption (Grow Further, 2022). The increasing reliance on imported cocoa has led to a significant increase in both volume and value of cocoa from 28,951 tons equivalent to RM634,510 in 2021 to 35,524 tons corresponding to RM881,047 in 2022 (The Malaysian Reserve, 2023). The rise in chocolate imports has exposed Malaysian Muslims to various types of imported chocolates that are uncertain about their Halal status.

According to Ramlan et al. (2022), consumers continue to have concerns about the quality, sanitation, and Halal status of imported chocolate products due to the inability to understand the languages on packaging and labels. Thus, halal certification through label, logo, brand, and any certification identification are crucial. Halal certification is a process that ensures that products are permissible for consumption by Muslims. The certification process involves a thorough inspection of the product's ingredients, manufacturing process, and storage facilities to ensure they comply with Islamic

dietary laws, conducted by a halal-accredited body. As for Malaysia, halal certification process is overseen by JAKIM and follows the Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification (MPPHM).

Malaysians Muslims are strongly influenced by Islamic principles, valuing the Halal status of their food. They are discerning, as their food becomes their flesh and blood, shaping their personality and becoming their flesh and blood forever. Thus, the question of what factors influence Malaysian consumers' intention to purchase chocolate, Halal chocolate in the context of this study, arises.

Despite the fact that people of all backgrounds enjoy chocolate, this study is primarily interested in investigating the purchase intention of Halal chocolate among Malaysian Muslim young adults aged between 18 and 34 years old. This population is chosen because it is the largest, accounting for 28.3% of the total population, or approximately 9.3 million people (Kemp, 2022). In addition, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022), Muslims make up 63.5% of the population, or approximately 21.5 million people. This population group, i.e., Muslim young adults, is an intriguing segment for research due to its large population and significant purchasing power. Furthermore, they are among Malaysia's most profitable consumer group for the current and future Halal industry.

Having said that, the purpose of this study is to investigate Malaysian Muslim young adults' purchase intentions of Halal chocolate using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). TPB was chosen as the underpinning theory due to its popular model for determining consumer intention. This study specifically looks at how the three core components of TPB, namely attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, influence purchase intention for Halal chocolate among Muslim young adults in Malaysia.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. After this introduction, the literature review is discussed. This is followed by the methodology employed in this study. Then the findings of the study are presented and discussed. Finally, the study concludes with the conclusion.

Literature Review

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a social psychological theory, has been routinely used and is still the theory of choice for researchers studying consumer intention. The TPB was founded by Ajzen (1985), which builds on Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned

Action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to the TPB, three core cognitive components shaped intention: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. These three key components do not always predict intentions in the same way. Attitudes can sometimes determine a person's intentions more strongly than subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. At times, an individual's intentions are largely determined by subjective norms, while attitudes and perceived behavioural control have little or no influence. The reason for this is that it varies depending on the situation and the context of research.

TPB was widely used in research dealing with intention to consume and purchase Halal foods (Ali et al., 2020; Aslan, 2023; Khalek & Ismail, 2015; Khan et al., 2021; Nursalwani & Zulariff, 2017; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011; Syukur & Nimsai, 2018). However, within the TPB framework, research findings have remained mixed (Fachrurrozie et al., 2023). This rings true because they differ in terms of research predictors, measurement instruments, sampling, and analysis, yielding disparate results. In view of the contradictory empirical research results, the current study employs a TPB-based model to investigate Halal chocolate purchase intention among Malaysian Muslim young adults.

Intention

Intention was originally developed in the context of TRA and TPB. Ajzen (1985) defines intention as attempting to perform a specific behaviour rather than performing it. It is the desire to do something in order to own, dispose of, or use goods or services. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) state that the intention to enact a specific behaviour can predict that behaviour. According to TPB, the intention to enact behaviour is first influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. When these three factors are favourable, the intention is more likely to occur. In this study, intention refers to a consumer's willingness or inclination to consume Halal chocolate in the future.

Attitude

Attitude is broadly defined as the psychological tendency to evaluate a specific behaviour either favourable or unfavourable (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). Someone's attitude toward a particular behaviour may be positive, negative, or neutral, which influences their intention. As a person's attitude improves, so does their intention to engage in a specific behaviour. In the context of this study, evaluation can be interpreted as a

question of whether purchasing Halal chocolate will have a favourable or unfavourable impact on the individual. A slew of Halal food research studies has examined the relationship between attitude and intention, concluding that attitude is a factor in determining purchase behaviour (Ali et al., 2020; Fuadi et al., 2022; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011). Following the majority of studies that discovered a significant relationship, this study assumes that a finding can be generalised to the intention to purchase Halal chocolate. As such, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H1: Attitude has a positive relationship with the intention purchase Halal chocolate.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms, also known as social norms, refer to the social pressure placed on individuals to commit to or refrain from performing a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). In other words, it is the degree to which a person believes that others want him or her to engage in the behaviour. Subjective norms are strongly influenced by social agents such as parents, family, and friends, as well as social groups such as cultural and religious groups. As a person's subjective norms increase, so does their intention to behave. Several studies have found that subjective norms have an impact on customer purchase intent (Aslan, 2023; Khan et al., 2021; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011). Hence, this study predicts that subjective norms would have a significant relationship with the intention to purchase Halal chocolate. This argument is reinstated in the following hypothesis:

H2: Subjective norms have a positive relationship with the intention purchase Halal chocolate.

Perceived Behavioural Control

Ajzen (1991) defines perceived behavioural control as a person's perception of how to carry out an intended behaviour as well as his or her belief that he or she has control over the behaviour. It explains two important aspects of behaviour: how much control a person has over his or her behaviour and how confident a person is in performing or not performing the behaviour. When a person believes the relevant behaviour is controllable, perceived behavioural control increases, and vice versa. Past studies have suggested that perceived behavioural control is one of the predictors of the intention to purchase Halal food (Dमित et al., 2019; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011; Suleman et al., 2021). The current study therefore posits that perceived behavioural

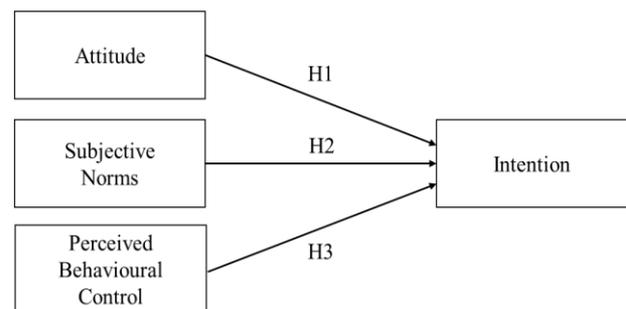
control influences the intention to purchase Halal chocolate. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Perceived behavioural control has a positive relationship with the intention purchase Halal chocolate.

Research Model

Figure 1 describes the research model that was used to achieve the study's goal and the hypotheses that were developed. This model and its hypotheses arose from the discussions in the literature review section.

Figure 1. Research Model



Methodology

This was an exploratory, quantitative, cross-sectional study of Muslim young adults aged 18 to 34 in Malaysia. The study made use of an online questionnaire survey distributed through Google Forms and shared via various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn. This study included 204 Malaysian Muslim young adults who were recruited through convenience sampling. Because the population of consumers of halal chocolate is unknown and this study is exploratory, making the convenience sampling technique ideal for this study (Sekaran, 2006). The convenience sample allows respondents to be easily assessed, available at a specific time, and ready to participate. Researchers offer varying recommendations regarding the sample size for regression and correlation analyses. Hair et al. (2018) recommend a sample size of 50 participants for simple regression analyses and 100 for most research situations. While Chuan (2006) and Cohen (1992) set a sample size of 116 for multiple regression and 85 for correlation analysis. Therefore, the sample size of 204 is deemed sufficient for the regression analysis sought in this study (Cohen, 1992; Hair et al., 2018).

The questionnaires used in this study were adapted and compiled from Ajzen (1991), with some wording

modified to fit the context of this study. All items were scored on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with “1” indicating strongly disagree and “5” indicating strongly agree. Prior to the actual survey, a pilot test was conducted to test the questionnaire's validity and reliability. Following the procedure of Devisakti and Ramayah (2019), a panel of academic experts and random sample respondents evaluated the clarity of a questionnaire, and based on their feedback, no significant changes were made. The updated questionnaire underwent a reliability test on 30 pilot samples, with each variable's Cronbach's alpha scoring above 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2010), confirming its reliability. Table 1 summarizes the variables, number of items for each variables, sources, and Cronbach's alpha. Following the successful of pilot test findings, the actual data collection began. Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses in this study.

Table 1. Constructs, Number of Items, Sources, and Cronbach's Alpha Scores

Variables	No. of Items	Sources	Cronbach's Alpha
Intention	4	Ajzen (1991)	.916
Attitude	4	Ajzen (1991)	.899
Subjective Norms	4	Ajzen (1991)	.920
Perceived Behavioural Control	3	Ajzen (1991)	.925

Findings

Respondents' Profile

Table 2 shows the profiles of the respondents. A total of 204 Malaysian Muslim young adults participated in this study. Female respondents (71.1%) outnumbered male respondents (28.9%). As intended, the respondents were the representative of those aged between 18 and 24 (75.5%) and 25 and 34 (24.5%). In terms of their classification of ethnicity and marital status, majority of the respondents were Malay (94.6%) and single (90.2%). More than half (75%) of the respondents' monthly earnings were less than RM1,000. Regarding the education level, the majority of them (64.2%) pursued or had accomplished a bachelor's degree.

Table 2. Respondents' Profile

Descriptions		Frequency	Percent age
Gender	Male	59	28.9
	Female	145	71.1
Age	18-24	154	75.5
	25-34	50	24.5
Ethnicity	Malay	193	94.6
	Non-Malay	11	5.4

Marital Status	Single	184	90.2
	Married	20	9.8
Monthly Income	Less than RM1,000	153	75.0
	RM1,001 - RM2,000	23	11.3
	RM2,001 - RM3,000	13	6.4
	RM3,001 - RM4,000	9	4.4
	RM4,001 - RM5,000	4	2.0
	RM5,001 - RM7,500	1	0.5
	RM7,501 - RM10,000	0	0.0
Highest Level of Education	More than RM10,001	1	0.5
	Primary/ Secondary/ O-Level/ IGCSE	3	1.5
	STPM/ A-Levels/ Certificate/ Foundation/ Matriculation/ Diploma	64	31.4
	Bachelor's degree	131	64.2
	Masters/ PhD	6	2.9

Reliability and Descriptive Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the items in this study. Nunnally (1978) suggests an alpha of at least 0.7 for basic research reliability. The Cronbach's alpha projected scale for each variable achieves a minimum alpha of 0.7 as shown in Table 3. Accordingly, the constructs' reliability was determined to be high and suitable for this study.

Table 3. Reliability and Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Intention	4.5131	.88801	.939
Attitude	4.2770	.89188	.896
Subjective Norms	4.3848	.89310	.929
Perceived Behavioural Control	4.2034	.90240	.922

Correlation Coefficients Analysis

Table 4 contains correlation results. Evans (1996) categorise correlation coefficients of 0.00-0.19 as very weak, 0.20-0.39 weak, 0.40-0.59 moderate, 0.60-0.79 strong, and 0.80-1.00 extremely strong. The results show that the values of the correlation coefficients in this study range from +0.6 to +0.8. Thus, they can be classified as strongly to extremely strong positive. The correlation results also show that all variables are related to each other. Aside from that, the correlation coefficients are below 0.9, indicating that there is no multicollinearity problem (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Intention	1.000			
2. Attitude	.687	1.000		
3. Subjective Norms	.812	.721	1.000	
4. Perceived Behavioural Control	.702	.658	.751	1.000

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses that included the direct effects of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on the intention to purchase Halal chocolate. As shown in Table 5, the analysis revealed that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control all had a significant impact on intention to purchase Halal chocolate, accounting for 68.7% of the variability. Given the nature of social science research, a variance of 68.7% is considered high (Ramayah et al., 2010). The results indicate that all three core components of TPB account for 68.7% of the variance in intention, with the remaining 31.3% influenced and explained by variables not included in the research model.

Table 5. Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	Std. Beta	t-value	Sig.
Attitude	.172	2.941	.004
Subjective Norms	.564	8.438	.000
Perceived Behavioural Control	.164	2.675	.008
R ²	.692		
Adjusted R ²	.687		
F-value	149.702		

Hypotheses Results

The effects of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on intention were investigated in this study. All three hypotheses were confirmed, and Table 6 summarises the hypotheses test results.

Table 6. Summary of Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis	p-value	Decision
H1: Attitude has a positive relationship with the intention purchase Halal chocolate.	.004	Accepted
H2: Subjective norms have a positive relationship with the intention purchase Halal chocolate.	.000	Accepted
H3: Perceived behavioural control has a positive	.008	Accepted

	relationship with the intention purchase Halal chocolate.		
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Discussion

This study examines Malaysian Muslim young adults' intentions to purchase Halal chocolate. The TPB-based conceptual model was used to investigate the attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on the intention to purchase Halal chocolate in this study. The online questionnaires were distributed conveniently among Malaysian Muslim young adults aged 18 to 34 years old via various social media platforms, yielding 204 respondents for the analysis. The multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses that were developed for this study. The model significantly explained the relationships between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and intention, accounting for 68.7% of the variance in the intention to purchase Halal chocolate. The findings of this study demonstrate the TPB's robustness in explaining Halal chocolate purchasing intentions. Three hypotheses were tested in this study, and the results revealed positive significant links between constructs.

The study depicted that attitude has a direct and significant impact on the intention to purchase Halal chocolate, correlating with previous research by Ali et al. (2020), Fuadi et al. (2022), and Shah Alam and Mohamed Sayuti (2011). This study demonstrates that Malaysian Muslim young adults' intention to purchase Halal chocolate is directly determined by their attitude. Those with more positive and favourable attitudes appeared to be more likely to purchase Halal chocolate. The result is also consistent with the findings of Shah Alam and Mohamed Sayuti (2011), who concluded that in Malaysian cultures, social pressure may compensate for positive attitudes in developing intentions to purchase Halal food. Thus, cultivating a positive attitude toward Halal chocolate consumption among Muslim young adults is necessary to drive their proclivity to consume Halal chocolate.

In line with the findings of Aslan (2023), Khan et al. (2021), and Shah Alam and Mohamed Sayuti (2011), subjective norms were found to be positively and significantly related to intention in this study. This finding indicates that among Muslim young adults, the opinions of others have an impact on their intentions. This makes sense given that people in collectivistic cultures, such as Muslim culture, they see themselves as interdependent with their group and prefer to pursue in-group rather than personal goals (Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011). In order to promote and foster

Halal chocolate purchase, Halal chocolate producers and marketers may want to incorporate the element of social pressure into their campaigns and advertisements.

The study also confirmed that perceived behavioural control has a positive and significant impact on intention to purchase Halal chocolate. This finding is supported by other previous findings (Damit et al., 2019; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011; Suleman et al., 2021). The positive relationship results indicate that the more control one has over his behaviour, the more intention they develop. Muslim young adults in this study are more willing to go to great lengths to obtain Halal chocolate. Perhaps Halal chocolate producers and marketers could consistently emphasise on knowledge, quality, and price of Halal chocolate to encourage and promote Halal chocolate consumption among this group.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the TPB elements: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control successfully influence intention to purchase Halal chocolate among Muslim young adults in Malaysia.

Theoretically, this study redounds to the limited body of knowledge on consumer behaviour, Halal food, and TPB. This study leads to the following conclusions. First, this study brings about a comprehensive understanding of predictors of the intention to purchase Halal chocolate among Malaysian Muslim young adult consumers. Second, the TPB-based model accurately predicts the intention to purchase Halal chocolate. Third, a regression analysis empirically concluded that all assumed relationships were valid, further evidencing that the proposed model is effective for determining Halal chocolate consumers.

In practise, the study's findings are expected to provide Halal food producers, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, exporters, and importers with a better understanding of Halal chocolate consumers, allowing them to better serve their needs and wants. Also, as an input to strengthen and improve the current and existing marketing and operations strategy. The government, as policymaker, and related Halal bodies could also use these findings to develop policies, guidelines, or strategies. It is expected that Halal research on Halal chocolate and the industry will continue to expand in tandem with the country's Halal chocolate industry's growth.

Like all other studies, this study too has limitations. First, because of the convenience sampling method used, it is not possible to generalise the findings of this study. Hence, it is suggested that future studies use probability sampling to allow for generalisation. Second, this study

only includes Muslim young adults between the ages of 18 and 34. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies apply the same framework to a larger group of Muslims from different demographic backgrounds or non-Muslims, as consumer behaviour may differ due to cultural and value differences, in order to objectively refine the TPB's applicability. Third, the TPB model used in this study explains 68.7% of the variance in intention, with the remaining 31.3% explained by factors not included in this study. Thus, future studies could expand the model by including variables other than the three core components of TPB to better explain the factors that influence intention.

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