



## “No Pork, No Lard” or “Muslim-Friendly”: Understanding Consumer Perceptions and Preferences.

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### Abstract

The growth of food and beverage outlets such as restaurants and fast-food chains is growing progressively. Promotion and marketing for the food outlets with the help of influencers are carried out to gain widespread popularity on social media, also known as viral food trends. Generation Z, aged 13 to 29, is the perfect demographic group because this generation is effectively engaged with the digital trend. However, what is worrying is the use of "No Pork, No Lard" or "Muslim-Friendly" labels that can be confusing for Muslims. This study explores the perspectives and preferences of Generation Z related to the concept of halal food and beverages. The scope of the study includes religious belief, exposure, certification logo, and health toward this demographic. It is hoped that this study can increase the positive attitude of Muslim consumers, relevant bodies, and media to increase the promotion and publicity of halal certification issued by JAKIM to increase awareness among young Muslim consumers in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** No Pork No lard, Muslim Friendly, Halal, viral food

### 1. Introduction

The word "halal" originates in Arabic and means "allowable" and refers to specific cuisines and eating routines (Mashudi & Barowi, 2025). Its interpretation extends beyond the Qur'anic words, "This day are all good things made lawful for you." This is related to the existence of the teachings of the Qur'an in Surah Al Maidah verse 88, which states: "And eat of the clean and lawful things that Allah has given you and fear have piety toward Allah in whom you believe."

In the context of religion, Islam means submitting to the will of God and to His Law, which means that all daily actions carried out by Muslims are acts of worship (Vizano et al., 2021). In Malaysia, where most of the population is Muslim, halal cuisine is intricately connected to everyday life. It is not difficult to obtain halal food sources in Malaysia. Most halal food establishments are operated by Muslims, who are easily identifiable. However, with time, the food and beverage industry has also rapidly expanded in line with the growing demand from consumers. Among them is the emergence of international food chain franchises that have successfully entered the local market and received positive feedback from consumers. For Muslims, abstaining from pork and lard is not merely a question of preference but an essential aspect of their religious observances. The fast-food industry is rapidly growing, especially in urban areas, as its taste, processes, and ingredients are adapted to local culture, making it more popular among Malaysian consumers (Habib et al., 2011). As Muslims, we are obligated to seek or consume things from halal sources. Some non-halal-certified restaurants and cafes in Malaysia often create images or signals that Muslim consumers associate with halal. The most appropriate demographic for the subject is Generation Z, whose viewpoints and preferences are examined in this study. Additionally, it emphasizes health, exposure, religious beliefs, and the certification logo. The primary goal of this study is to inform both Muslims and non-Muslims about halal products and the use of "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly Labels.

### 2. Literature review

#### The Importance Of Halal Certification In Consumer Trust

Malaysian Muslim consumers prioritise Halal certification. Halal certification assures that food and services comply with Islamic law, which bans pork and lard. JAKIM (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia), the Malaysian government agency certifying halal food, has strict ingredient sourcing and processing regulations. Muslim consumers are assured that food is Islamic by certification. Yong et al. (2020) found that people more adapted to the local culture are more likely to have a positive attitude towards Halal food, which increases their chances of buying and eating it. Without certification, however, the "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly labels may be perceived as an incomplete



substitute for genuine halal food, as it does not confirm the full adherence to halal standards, particularly in food preparation and cross-contamination prevention.

### **Gen Z Halal Food Trends Go Viral: Halal, Hype, And Hashtags**

The first generation to have grown up with the internet and technological devices is known as Generation Z. This generation is said to be "globally focused" due to their heavy reliance on social media (McCrindle, 2014) and frequently lose interest in electronic media such as radio and television since they are generally more interested in social media (Bibi et al., 2019). Bibi et al. (2023) also mention that media acts as a platform to share various types of information, including religious content. Social media has evolved to include video streaming and broadcasting, including Facebook Live and YouTube Live, where vloggers, YouTubers, and content creators interact with audiences to share opinions and experiences (Spilker and Colbjørnsen, 2020; Bibi et al., 2023; Rybaczewska et al., 2020). Since influencers share food experiences, challenges, and reviews, these platforms help food sector trends go viral. The influencer's mention of halal food on social media which spreads quickly through online (Zulfita et al., 2024), such as halal boba, halal ramen, or any other halal dish, generates enthusiasm, attention, or much conversation, which starts this viral trend and also known as making hype in the online communities. Using Hashtags in social media like #Halalfood, #MuslimFoodies helps spread trends more effectively (Nurbaiti, 2023) in the communities.

### **Navigating Halal Ambiguity: 'No Pork, No Lard' and Muslim-Friendly Labels**

The use of "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly labels is widespread in the Malaysian food industry. "No Pork, No Lard" indicates that there is no pork meat or any pork-based ingredients and no pig fat used in cooking as an ingredient. Tourist and hospitality sectors that cater to the demands of Muslim customers are the main users of the term "Muslim-Friendly."

Restaurants and cafes that have not obtained halal certification often use these labels to signal their food is suitable for Muslim consumers. It cannot be denied that there are some Muslims who visit these restaurants, assuming that it is not an issue because the premises have stated that no pork-based dishes are served. The understanding of most non-Muslims regarding halal food according to Islam is often limited to the absence of pork-based ingredients. According to a report by Augustine (2021), outlets that use "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly signage without having obtained halal certification may risk confusing Muslim consumers. Without official halal certification, consumers may question whether the food meets all standards, as the label lacks the assurance of certified sourcing and preparation practices. The lack of awareness about the true meaning of halal has led to some restaurant operators taking the requirement for halal certification lightly (Fatimah et al. 2021). Thus, it sometimes raises doubts among consumers on the halal compliance applied by the non-Muslim workers in the company as the halal food consumers nowadays have a higher level of awareness and information about the products they purchase daily. The study by Ismail et al. (2023), found that Muslim consumers are increasingly concerned with the authenticity of halal claims, particularly when it comes to non-certified outlets. While the "No Pork, No Lard" label may indicate that a business is trying to appeal to Muslim customers, it doesn't prove that the cuisine is halal. Some food manufacturers have a piece of limited knowledge on the importance of halal certification (Talib et al., 2015), non-compliance of halal might arise in the premise caused by the failure to meet the halal requirements due to lack of knowledge and understanding on the concept of halal compliance among workers in the production area (Majid et al., 2015). The food operators might not understand the concept of halal practices, not be clear on the requirements that need to be complied with, and even be confused about the reason behind the obligation of complying with the halal requirements (Shahwahid et al., 2015).

Through the author's experience, there are newly opened restaurants that use the "No Pork, No Lard" and "Muslim-Friendly" labels. When asked about the halal certificate, they stated that they do not have a halal certificate or are still in the process of applying. The restaurant has closed as a consequence of the label's use. The majority of viral food trends come from abroad, such as sushi, beef noodles, ramen, Thai food, and especially bakery which their target consumers basically from Generation Z. Muslims are attracted to go to the restaurant or cafes because of the female staff wearing a hijab and the labels showing that the food served can be consumed by Muslims (Fatimah Yusro Hashim, 2021). This issue was highlighted by (Shahid, S. et al., 2023), who argued that businesses using informal labels may find it difficult to convey the level of trust that comes with an official halal certification. Although the designation "No Pork, No Lard" or Muslim-friendly represents progress, it inadequately resolves consumer apprehensions about the integrity and authenticity of halal operations. Therefore, before consuming the food, Muslims or Generation Z should be cautious while dining at places that employ "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly labels until the JAKIM has certified them. Aspects of lifestyle, culture, religion, nutrition, and health concerns are often reflected in the foods chosen. Muslims follow stringent dietary guidelines outlined in the Qur'an, hence, their only



consideration when selecting food is food safety and quality that is offered in halal food products (Haque, 2025). Therefore, strict and efficient laws and regulations are needed to guarantee that all food products are sold following Islamic principles and fulfilling halal criteria (Rahim, H. et al., 2022).

Through the author's observation, especially in Kuching, Sarawak, "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly labels used by the food and beverage business owner, they did not get the Halal certificate because they also served alcohol in one section in the premise. Some restaurant and cafe owners can't answer the question. Even though they follow the rules stated by the JAKIM, such as chicken or meat slaughtered according to Islam, kitchen utensils clean (only for halal) and no pork in the premises, there is something that cannot be claimed as Halal (Fitri, 2020). Owners of food and beverage businesses must realise that Muslims have serious concerns about the "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly label usages. Apart from not serving pork (meat), halal cuisine includes all raw ingredients, alcohol, improper slaughtering methods, and equipment that must be devoid of everything that is forbidden (haram). Lard in food can be in a multitude of forms such as emulsifiers and other food contents such as gelatine, enzymes, lecithin and glycerine, additives such as stabilizers, flavourings, colourings, breadcrumbs etc (Majid et al., 2015) that majority in the sweet treats including cakes, pastries, chocolates-based, desserts and other confections.

These prohibitions are a Muslim rule and are explicitly referenced in the Qur'an (Abidin et al., 2023).

*As stated in the Qur'an surah al-Maidah, Allah says: "Forbidden to you is anything that dies by itself, and blood and pork, as well as whatever has been consecrated to something besides Allah, and whatever has been strangled, beaten to death, trapped in a pit, gorged, and what some beast of prey has begun to eat unless you give it the final blow; and what has been slaughtered before some idol, or what you divide up in a raffle; (all) that is immoral!"*  
(Al-Ma'dah, 5:3)

In a Muslim-majority community, non-Muslim Malaysian consumers know halal food regulations, food safety, and environmental friendliness (Rezai et al., 2012). Today, people from various religions, including Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists, use the term "halal" along with Muslims for security, religious purposes (Elgharbawy & Azmi, 2022) and hygiene (Abd-Latif et al. (2014); Aziz & Chok (2013); Haque et al. (2015). According to articles by Ab-Talib and Johan (2012), Memon (2015), and Rahim et al. (2016), because halal food products are safer, cleaner, healthier, and tastier, non-Muslims have also come to like, prefer, and purchase them. Customers' views about Halal in non-Muslim areas are positively accepted, and they intend to buy and consider the legitimacy of the Halal logo (Haque et al. 2015; Mutmainah 2018; Loussaief & Haque 2018, Hamdan et al. 2013). Similarly to this, Walkins et al. (2019) investigate how non-Muslim customers are impacted by animal welfare, religion, and ethnic identification due to the possibility that they may have been provided halal cuisine without their knowledge. There are complex controversies surrounding halal animal slaughter, including religious freedom, animal welfare, ethical considerations, and scientific opinions. Halal slaughtering methods have strict procedures and techniques, and as a result, "Humane Halal knives" have been introduced into the halal industry (Mukherjee 2014). According to Schulze (1978), Halal techniques, as opposed to amazing, cause the animal to die painlessly six seconds after being sliced. Additionally, Schulze (1978) pointed out that during the first three seconds, neither the EEG nor the ECG (electrocardiography scan) readings showed any change in the animal's state, but during the next three seconds, the animal was in a deep sleep-like state of unconsciousness.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach through survey research to investigate Generation Z consumers' perceptions and preferences regarding "No Pork, No Lard" or "Muslim-Friendly" when choosing their food and beverages. Quantitative methodology was selected as it enables systematic collection and analysis of data to identify patterns in consumer behaviour, which is particularly relevant when studying food labeling preferences (Prasasti et al., 2024). The study recruited 55 Generation Z participants. This demographic was specifically targeted, as research indicates that this group of participants spends more time eating in restaurants and cafes instead of consuming homemade food, with this tendency being higher than in previous generations (Prasasti et al., 2024). Furthermore, studies have shown that Generation Z individuals often have less awareness of halal labels on food products and restaurants, making their perceptions particularly relevant to this research (Prahesti & Putri, 2018, as cited in Prasasti et al., 2024).

The survey questionnaire was divided into three parts to capture respondents' views comprehensively:

#### **Part 1: Perceptions and Awareness of "No Pork, No Lard" and "Muslim-Friendly" Labels**



This section investigated respondents’ perspectives on the “No Pork, No Lard” and “Muslim-Friendly” labels. The questions assessed their awareness, understanding, and attitudes toward these labels. This approach aligns with recent research, which indicates that halal labelling on food products influences purchase interest, as it assures consumers that the food is permissible for consumption (Marmaya et al., 2019, as cited in Prasasti et al., 2023).

**Part 2: Religious Inclination and Label Preferences**

The second part examined respondents’ religious inclination concerning the labels that affect their decisions in choosing their food and beverages. This section was developed based on research showing that the level of religiosity makes consumers more selective in choosing products (Arifin et al., 2023, as cited in Prasasti et al., 2023). This section is used to highlight how consumers' religious commitment affects their trust in these labels, as religious belief is essential in increasing halal awareness (Febriandika et al., 2023).

**Part 3: Recommendations for Halal Assurance**

The final section gathered respondents’ recommendations for strengthening halal assurance for consumers. This part focused on participants’ suggestions to improve labeling practices, certification processes, and communication strategies to enhance consumer confidence in halal products.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The survey was distributed online to reach Generation Z respondents efficiently. Data analysis employed statistical techniques to examine relationships between halal awareness, religious commitment, and purchasing intentions. This analytical approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how Generation Z consumers perceive and respond to “No Pork, No Lard” and “Muslim-Friendly” labels. The study also considered advancements in halal verification processes. Thus, by examining the participants’ recommendations, this research aims to contribute to developing more effective halal assurance systems that meet the needs of younger consumers.

**4. Findings**

This section presents the findings from the survey by demonstrating the demographic characteristics of respondents and their perspectives on halal-related terminologies, religious inclinations, and recommendations. 43.6% (n=24) of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 21, while 41.8% (n=23) fall within the 18 to 19 age group. Additionally, 9.1% (n=5) are aged 24 to 25, 3.6% (n=2) are between 22 and 23 years old, and 1.8% (n=1) falls within the 28 to 29 age range. It shows a higher representation of female respondents, constituting 72.7% (n=40), whereas male respondents account for 27.3% (n=15). All participants are from Sabah and Sarawak which offer valuable regional insights into consumer perceptions of halal-related labels and certifications.

**4.1 Respondents’ Perspectives and Preferences**

Table 1 reflects the respondents’ responses on their perspectives and preferences on "No Pork, No Lard" and "Muslim-Friendly" Labels.

Table 1: Responses to Statements on "No Pork, No Lard" and "Muslim-Friendly" Labels

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	“No Pork, No Lard” or “Muslim Friendly” is sufficient to ensure food is halal.	36.36	32.73	18.18	10.91	1.82
2.	I prefer food outlets with clear halal certification logos.	78.18	16.36	3.64	0	1.82
3.	The term “No Pork, No Lard” or “Muslim-Friendly” makes me confident about the food's halal status.	32.73	27.27	20.00	18.18	1.82
4.	I feel confused about the differences between “No Pork, No Lard” and halal-certified outlets.	10.91	32.73	30.91	23.64	1.82
5.	Marketing with halal certification influences my dining choices.	49.09	41.82	5.45	3.64	0



6.	Food influencers should clarify the halal status of the food they promote.	74.55	23.64	1.82	0	0
7.	My friends' preferences influence my choices on halal dining.	25.45	30.91	38.18	3.64	1.82
8.	Restaurants should provide clear information on their halal status.	72.73	25.45	1.82	0	0
9.	I prefer dining at JAKIM-certified halal restaurants.	74.55	18.18	7.27	0	0
10.	"No Pork, No Lard" is as reliable as halal-certified food.	18.18	30.91	29.09	20.00	1.82

Table 1 highlights a polarised perception among consumers regarding the credibility of "No Pork, No Lard" and "Muslim-Friendly" labels as indicators of halal compliance. While 69.09% of the respondents believed that such labels were enough to confirm the halal status of food, a significant 29.09% of them remained skeptical. The uncertainty was reinforced by 43.64% of respondents who expressed confusion between these labels and actual JAKIM halal-certified establishments. This confusion likely arised due to inconsistent industry practices where some restaurants used "No Pork, No Lard" as a marketing tool without undergoing proper halal certification. According to Lee and Iesham (2019), such labels can mislead consumers into assuming food was fully halal-compliant even though factors such as cross-contamination, alcohol usage, and ingredient sources remained unchecked. Furthermore, the preference for clear halal certification logos was overwhelmingly high with 94.54% of the respondents' support. It aligned with findings from Amin, Zakaria and Rahim (2020) who stated that halal certification served as a benchmark for hygiene, safety, and religious compliance. It acted as a key factor in consumer trust and decision-making. The significance of halal branding extended beyond certification as 90.91% of the respondents indicated that halal marketing influenced their dining choices. It suggested that well-communicated halal branding, combined with official certification, fostered stronger consumer loyalty. Businesses that failed to clearly display halal credentials risked alienating a substantial portion of Muslim consumers who prioritised religious adherence in their food choices.

**4.2 Respondents' Religious Inclination**

Table 2 presents the responses to statements regarding religious inclinations concerning the "No Pork, No Lard" and "Muslim-Friendly" labels.

Table 2: Responses to Statements on Religious Inclinations

No	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	My dining choices are influenced by my religious values.	52.73	40.00	7.27	0	0
2.	I prioritize consuming halal food as part of my religious practice.	61.82	30.91	7.27	0	0
3.	My religious inclination motivates me to avoid ambiguous food labels.	50.91	34.55	14.55	0	0
4.	I seek guidance from religious teachings when choosing where to eat.	49.09	40.00	10.91	0	0
5.	My understanding of halal aligns with my religion.	54.55	36.36	9.09	0	0
6.	I feel morally obligated to follow Islamic dietary laws.	54.55	38.18	7.27	0	0
7.	My family encourages me to prioritize halal-certified food.	58.18	32.73	9.09	0	0
8.	Religious education has shaped my awareness of halal food.	60.00	32.73	7.27	0	0
9.	I avoid outlets that lack clear halal certification, even if labelled "No Pork, No Lard."	30.91	36.36	30.91	0	0
10.	Consuming halal food strengthens my religious faith.	58.18	29.09	12.73	0	0



Religious values were deeply embedded in the halal food consumption patterns of Muslim consumers. The findings indicated that 92.73% of respondents acknowledged that their dining choices were shaped by their religious beliefs. Marom (2024) highlighted that religiosity was a major determinant of halal food consumption. A strong religious inclination fostered a preference for halal-certified products as consumers perceived them to be more trustworthy and compliant with Islamic teachings. Furthermore, over 92% of the respondents emphasised that consuming halal food was a religious obligation. It reinforced the idea that halal was not just a dietary choice but a core spiritual practice for many Muslims (Basarud-Din, Saad, & Aminullah, 2022). The inherent connection between faith and dietary practices explained the tendency of numerous consumers to actively seek halal-certified options and exercise caution toward ambiguous labels such as “No Pork, No Lard.”

The sense of moral obligation to follow Islamic dietary laws was further reflected in 92.73% of respondents who felt duty-bound to ensure their food was halal. The commitment was significantly influenced by family values as 90.91% of them stated that their families encouraged them to prioritise halal-certified food. Family played a crucial role in shaping halal consumption behaviors as parental influence and early religious teachings helped instill a strong awareness of halal food regulations. Additionally, 60.00% of respondents strongly agreed that religious education had shaped their awareness of halal food and reinforced the importance of Islamic teachings in consumer decision-making. It suggested that a well-informed and religiously guided upbringing significantly impacted halal purchasing behaviors.

### 4.3 Respondents' Recommendations

Table 3 illustrates the responses to statements regarding recommendations for strengthening halal assurance.

Table 3: Responses to Recommendations for Enhancing Halal Assurance

No	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	Restaurants should display halal logos more prominently.	80.00	14.55	5.45	0.00	0.00
2.	Food influencers should emphasize halal status in promotions.	78.18	20.00	1.82	0.00	0.00
3.	Awareness campaigns should target Gen Z via social media.	61.82	30.91	7.27	0.00	0.00
4.	The government should regulate "No Pork, No Lard" labelling.	49.09	34.55	12.73	0.00	0.00
5.	Schools should educate students about halal certification.	70.91	27.27	1.82	0.00	0.00
6.	Media should highlight halal certification over "No Pork, No Lard."	56.36	36.36	7.27	0.00	0.00
7.	Stricter penalties are needed for misleading halal claims.	61.82	27.27	10.91	0.00	0.00
8.	JAKIM should collaborate with influencers to promote halal awareness.	60.00	25.45	14.55	0.00	0.00
9.	Restaurants using "No Pork, No Lard" labels should undergo halal certification.	47.27	34.55	12.73	0.00	0.00
10.	Certification bodies should simplify the halal certification process.	47.27	30.91	18.18	0.00	0.00

The prominence of halal certification logos in restaurants was a significant concern among respondents as 80.00% strongly agreed that such logos should be displayed more prominently. It reflected the necessity for clear indicators of halal status to assure consumers of the food's compliance with Islamic dietary laws. They tended to trust products labeled with Malaysia's JAKIM certification or those imported from Muslim-majority countries. Conversely, there was less trust in certifications issued by other countries which highlighted the importance of recognisable and authoritative halal logos in influencing consumer trust and purchase intentions. The role of food influencers was also highlighted with 78.18% strongly agreeing that influencers should emphasise halal status in their promotions to indicate the power of social media in shaping consumer perceptions. Awareness campaigns targeting Generation Z via social media were supported by 61.82% of respondents who recognised the effectiveness of digital platforms in reaching younger audiences. Additionally, 49.09% strongly agreed that the government should regulate "No Pork, No Lard" labeling to



address concerns over potential misuse and the need for standardised labeling practices. The sentiment was echoed in other studies (Rafiki, Hidayat, & Nasution, 2023; Suleman, Sibghatullah & Azam, 2021) to emphasise the necessity for official non-halal labels to prevent consumer confusion and ensure transparency.

## 5. Conclusion

To raise awareness, particularly among Malaysian Muslim consumers in Generation Z, additional work has to be done to promote and publicise the halal certification granted by JAKIM. It is intended that this study would improve the favourable attitudes of Muslim customers, relevant bodies, and the media. Muslims are obligated by their faith to abstain from eating prohibited foods in their daily lives. The Quran and Sunnah have established the broad guidelines for what is permitted and what is not. Clearer rules on the usage of "No Pork, No Lard" and Muslim-Friendly labels have been pushed for by halal regulatory agencies. Requiring food establishments to acquire a halal certificate and enforcing penalties for label usage. To guarantee adherence to halal food preparation standards, JAKIM offers stringent halal certification rules that thoroughly inspect ingredients, production procedures, and handling techniques to confirm adherence to Islamic principles. Ultimately, a standardised and strictly regulated halal labelling system will benefit Muslim customers and companies alike by guaranteeing moral food marketing techniques and preserving consumer trust in halal food selections.

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