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The Attitudinal Bridge: How Consumption Values Translate into Purchase Intentions for Viral Halal Food

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, viral halal food trends driven by social media have gained increasing popularity among consumers. This study examines the multidimensional factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions toward viral halal food. Drawing on the Theory of Consumption Values, the research investigates the effects of emotional value, epistemic value, and health concerns on purchase intention, with attitude serving as a mediating variable. A quantitative research design was employed using data collected from 241 respondents across diverse demographic groups in Malaysia. Data were analysed using SmartPLS through measurement and structural model assessment, including bootstrapping procedures. The findings indicate that emotional value and health concerns significantly influence both consumer attitude and purchase intention toward viral halal food. Attitude also significantly mediates the relationship between health concerns and purchase intention, suggesting that health-related values need to be internalised into favourable attitudes before driving behavioural intention. In contrast, emotional and epistemic values exhibit direct effects on intention without substantial mediation through attitude. These findings offer strategic implications for Malaysian MSMEs, food marketers, and public health advocates by highlighting that while virality may attract initial consumer interest, sustained participation depends on positive consumer evaluations of value, health, and trust. The study also supports United Nations SDG 12 Target 12.8 by promoting informed consumer choices and sustainable consumption behaviour.

Keywords: Viral Halal Food, Consumption Values, Malaysia, Social Media Marketing, MSMEs
JEL Classifications: M31, D12, L66

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the proliferation of social media platforms has significantly transformed how consumers discover, evaluate, and engage with food trends, giving rise to the phenomenon of viral halal foods (Musa et al., 2022; Mohammad et al., 2025). These trends, which are contributed from the appealing content, influencer reviews and rapid digital sharing, have influenced the consumer behaviour, among young and digital literate populations like Generation Z (Fauzi et al., 2026; Hakim and Supriyanto, 2024; Selamat et al., 2023). According to Rahim et al. (2021), the Malaysian way of lifestyle, which emphasises religious obligations and lifestyle, has made the emergence of viral halal foods that symbolise an emergence of faith-based consumption and modern digital culture.

As time passes, Halal food is now perceived in broader values such as health, quality and emotional satisfaction compared to previous

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years, wherein in associated with the compliance with Shariah requirements (Fadhlina and Nor, 2024; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Nowadays, consumers are more particular about the emotional feel, more health concerns and its novelty rather than only searching for the halal integrity assurances (Veronica and Kusdibyo, 2021; Yasera and Hati, 2025). These multi-dimensional consumption values play a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions, particularly in the context of viral food trends where rapid decision-making is driven by electronic word-of-mouth (Shahnia et al., 2024). Further, the preference for international cultural foods among young adults is contributed by the appealing visual appearance and peer pressures on social medias, as theaesthetic quality of the food often triggers the initial curiosity-driven (epistemic) value (Ahmad et al., 2024; Yasera and Hati, 2025).

Instead of the popularity of the viral halal foods recently, the missing information that we had is about the psychological and value-based factors that affect people's desire to follow these trends (Raza et al., 2023). Moreover, the function of attitude as a mediating factor between these values and purchase intention has not been adequately examined in current literature (Shahnia et al., 2024). As the consumers were exposed to viral content, they will only perform actual purchasing behaviour, with their internal assessments and attitudes (Rahim et al., 2021). Hence it is important to delve into the role of attitude in bridging the gap between the consumption values and the customer's intention to purchase the Halal viral foods.

Based on the Theory of Consumption Value (TCV), this study aims to analyze the impact of emotional value, epistemic value, and health concerns on consumer intentions to purchase viral halal foods, while also exploring the mediating role of attitude (Raza et al., 2023; Veronica and Kusdibyo, 2021). This research seeks to elucidate the complex relationship between digital virality and halal consumption values within the Malaysian context (Fadhlina and Nor, 2024). The results are anticipated to provide significant insights for micro, small, and medium enterprises, marketers, and policymakers in formulating strategies that engage consumer attention and promote sustainable, health-conscious halal consumption behaviors (Ahmad et al., 2024; Musa et al., 2022). This study is concentrating on three key dimensions: emotional value, health concerns, and epistemic value, particularly in the context of viral halal food, which is predominantly influenced by social media engagement.

These constructs are deemed important to capture affective responses, health concerns aligns with principle of *halalan tayyiban* and curiosity-driven behaviours linked to viral food trends.

Other value dimensions, such as social and functional value, may influence consumer behavior; however, they are not explicitly incorporated in the current model to preserve conceptual clarity and prevent model over-specification. This methodology aligns with previous research that supports the context-specific adaptation of TCV constructs (Jamaludin et al., 2025; Rohman and Ulinnuha, 2022). Other value dimensions, such as social and functional value, may influence consumer behavior; however, they are not explicitly incorporated into the current model to preserve conceptual clarity and prevent model over-specification. This approach aligns with previous research advocating for the contextual adaptation of TCV constructs (Jamaludin et al., 2025; Rohman and Ulinnuha, 2022).

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we examine the previous literature and construct a conceptual framework based on the Theory of Consumption Value, integrating modern consumer behavior theories with the Islamic notion of *halalan tayyiban* within the framework of viral halal food trends. Second, the study describes on research design, sample, and its measurement model. Third, the study outlines the quantitative approach where SmartPLS were being used to analyze the relationships among emotional value, health concerns, and epistemic value, with attitude serving as a mediating variable that affects consumers' intention to engage with halal viral food. Last, the paper concludes with a general discussion, outlining theoretical and practical implications for halal food entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and policymakers, especially in connecting emotional engagement to promote health-conscious consumption in accordance with *halalan tayyiban*. The study's limitations are identified, and suggestions for future research are presented, including the investigation of additional consumption values constructs and a wider consumer demographic and context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theory of Consumption Value

The Theory of Consumption Value has been used as a robust marketing framework that entails a comprehensive motivations driving consumer behaviour across multidisciplinary industries (Sharma and Kushwah, 2025; Tanrikulu, 2021). Recent meta-analytic research indicates that an individual's final choice is fundamentally a function of five distinct values: functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional (Mason et al., 2023).

These values act as independent predictors of behavioral outcomes, such as brand love and purchase intentions, by integrating both cognitive assessments and affective responses (Tan et al., 2022). By analyzing these spending drivers, researchers can accurately forecast shifts in demand and the impact of socio-economic development on final consumption structures, moving beyond limited utility-based models to a more holistic value-oriented philosophy (Mason et al., 2023).

In the modern digital age, the convergence of TCV and viral financial trends, exemplified by Buy Now, Pay Later schemes, presents distinct psychological challenges for the younger demographic (Gunsangal et al., 2026). These platforms serve the social and epistemic values of Generation Z through seamless digital interfaces, yet they frequently conflict with maqāṣid sharia principles concerning usury (riba) and financial transparency (Firdaus et al., 2024; Sutikno and Aji, 2024). Research indicates that perceived riba risk may deter adoption among ethical consumers, whereas the separation of purchasing from immediate payment can incite impulse buying behaviors resulting in unsustainable debt (Sutikno and Aji, 2024). To build

a sustainable halal digital culture, we need to ensure that these modern convenience values align with responsible Islamic finance. This will stop wasteful consumerism and sustain the economy of the nation (Firdaus et al., 2024).

The application of TCV in the halal industry is reflected on how the religious obligations and ethical considerations reform the standard consumption model for the global Muslim market (Respati et al., 2024). Consumers are preferred towards halal-certified products, which induced by a heightened awareness of ingredient awareness, safety, and quality-controlled processes certified by regulatory bodies (Nurkhin et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2020). This distinguished with conventional consumption, where it often limited to the satisfaction level or utility. Halal consumption is grounded in Islamic norms that encourage tayyiban (comprehensive) living and moral practices (Respati et al., 2024). Consequently, the halal ecosystem represents a comprehensive principle of life where consumption is not merely an act of fulfilling physical needs but a spiritual engagement with cleanliness and ethical production standards.

The rapid spread of social media has resulted a big impact on the rise of viral food trends in Malaysia. People had changed in terms of their search, ratings and perceptions about food products with the social medias (Ahmad et al., 2024; Salleh et al., 2021). Viral food is typically characterised by high visual appeal, novelty, and widespread digital sharing through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, often amplified by influencers and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Abdullah et al., 2025; Jafni et al., 2023). In the Malaysian context, this phenomenon is particularly observed by younger consumers, who highly engage to online trends and rely on social validation when making food-related decisions (Zulkifali et al., 2025).

From a behavioral point of view, individual don't just eat viral foods because they see them; it's because of the value they see in the product (Alexandra and Choirisa, 2024; Arroyo, 2023). The Theory of Consumption Value offers a comprehensive framework to explain such behavior, asserting that consumer decisions are shaped by various value dimensions, encompassing emotional, epistemic, functional, and social values (Liu et al., 2021). However, the importance of these values are depending on the situation, especially in digital environments where new ways of presenting and sensory marketing had transformed the consumer experiences (Chang et al., 2025).

In Malaysia, the intersection of viral food trends and halal consumption introduces an additional layer of complexity, where religious compliance coexists with modern consumption motives (Ahmad et al., 2024; Mohamed et al., 2024). Prior studies indicate that halal food consumption is increasingly influenced by broader experimental and lifestyle-oriented values beyond mere compliance, including emotional satisfaction, perceived quality, and health considerations (Al-Farisi et al., 2021; Che Mat Safiee et al., 2025; Mohamed et al., 2024). In viral contexts, these values are strengthened as consumers are exposed to highly curated, emotionally engaging content that stimulates immediate interest and behavioural responses.

Emotional value plays an important role in viral food consumption compared to other consumption values (Saad et al., 2021). Emotional value refers to the affective responses a product elicits, such as enjoyment, excitement, and pleasure (Al-Farisi et al., 2021). This aligns with the findings that social media-driven food trends influence the customer's emotional engagement and hedonic consumption motives rather than functional utility (Alexandra and Choirisa, 2024).

Further, health concerns have become an emerging factor that influences halal food consumption in Malaysia (Che Mat Safiee et al., 2025). Consumers nowadays are attentive and concerns on the food's wholesomeness, safety, and nutritional value, aligning with the Islamic concept of halalan tayyiban (Mohamed et al., 2024). As a result, consumers are now keen to evaluate viral food trends from a health perspective, balancing indulgence with well-being contemplations. This suggests that while viral appeal may attract initial attention, sustained consumption behaviour is contingent upon perceived health benefits and nutrient integrity (Liu et al., 2021).

Epistemic value, which relates to curiosity, novelty, and the desire for new experiences, is particularly relevant in the context of viral food (Arroyo, 2023; Mohamed et al., 2024). Abdullah et al. (2025) and Zulkifali et al. (2025) stated that younger Malaysian consumers are often motivated to try viral foods due to their uniqueness, ground-breaking presentation or cultural fusion. Social media platforms facilitate this exploratory behaviour by continuously introducing new and trending food concepts, thereby stimulating consumers' desire for experiential consumption and "discovery" (Chang et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2021).

This study adopts investigation on the consumption values guided by TCV, but focusing on emotional value, health concerns, and epistemic value as the most relevant predictors of viral halal food consumption (Alexandra and Choirisa, 2024; Liu et al., 2021). The chosen value constructs is associated with the core features of viral food trends, which are emotional engagement, health awareness and novelty-seeking behaviour (Chang et al., 2025). It is undeniable that social and functional value also play a vital role; however, for this context, it is considered secondary and therefore not included in the research model to maintain the clarity of the concept (Arroyo, 2023).

2.2. Hypothesis Development

2.2.1. Health concerns and the concept of halalan tayyiban

Health concerns refer to the degree to which consumers are attentive to the impact of food consumption on their physical well-being, including aspects such as nutritional content, food safety, hygiene, and long-term health implications (Mazuki et al., 2025; Omar et al., 2023). In the context of halal consumption, this notion is closely aligned with the Islamic principle of halalan tayyiban, which extends beyond permissibility (halal) to involve wholesomeness, cleanliness, and quality (Mohamed et al., 2024; Sari and Games, 2024). This principle emphasizes that food must be "good for the health or body," ensuring that production processes prevent the inclusion of harmful substances and prioritize nutrient integrity (Che Mat Safiee et al., 2025). This dual

emphasis positions halal food not only as religiously compliant but also as a healthier and more ethical consumption choice, thereby strengthening its appeal among increasingly health-conscious consumers, including the non-Muslim community in Malaysia (Mohamed et al., 2024; Saleh and Rajandran, 2025).

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness among Malaysian consumers regarding healthy eating practices, driven by rising concerns over lifestyle-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension (Omar et al., 2023). This shift is reflected in a growing inclination among consumers to invest in health-oriented products and dietary supplements as a proactive measure for disease prevention (Shafi et al., 2024). As a result, consumers are more inclined to evaluate food products based on their perceived health benefits and safety standards (Mazuki et al., 2025; Omar et al., 2023). In the case of viral halal food, while initial attraction may be driven by visual appeal and trendiness, consumers are likely to develop a favorable attitude only if the product is perceived to align with their health expectations and "halal consumption congruence" (Putit et al., 2024; Said et al., 2025). This indicates that health concerns contribute significantly to shaping consumers' evaluative judgments in the modern digital marketplace (Omar et al., 2023; Said et al., 2025).

Health concerns involve a more deliberate and cognitive evaluation process rather than emotional value (Sari and Games, 2024). Consumers often perceive the consumption of viral food aligns with their personal health goals, such as weight management or nutritional balance, before having an attitude (Che Mat Safiee et al., 2025; Omar et al., 2023). Consequently, attitude acts as a crucial mechanism through which health concerns are internalised and translated into behavioural intention (Said et al., 2025). Strong health concerns may also directly influence purchase intention, particularly among consumers who prioritise long-term well-being and ethical sourcing over following the digital trends (Omar et al., 2023).

- H_1: Health concerns have a significant positive effect on consumers' intention to purchase viral halal food.

2.2.2. Emotional value in viral halal food consumption

Emotional value refers to the affective responses generated through consumption, such as enjoyment, excitement, pleasure, and entertainment (Aziz et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). Within the context of viral halal food, emotional value becomes particularly prominent due to the highly visual and interactive nature of social media platforms, where food content is curated to induce strong sensory and emotional reactions (Shu et al., 2025). Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram intensify this effect by offering short, engaging, and aesthetically appealing food experiences that trigger immediate emotional responses among viewers (Abdullah et al., 2025).

Research utilising sentiment and emotion analysis of social media content highlights that a significant proportion of digital food interaction is driven by positive emotional arousal, which acts as a primary stimulus for engagement (García-León and Teichert, 2024; Molenaar et al., 2024). These emotional stimuli often translate into heightened interest, impulsive desire, and a willingness to engage with the product, even before any rational evaluation takes place (Bunjamin et al., 2024; Mahasuweerachai and Suttikun, 2025).

From a theoretical standpoint, emotional value operates as a key driver within the Theory of Consumption Value, particularly in hedonic consumption contexts where pleasure-seeking behavior dominates decision-making (Kristia et al., 2024). In the context of viral halal food, consumers are more drawn by the excitement and enjoyment of participating in the trending experiences, rather than looking at the price and nutritional value (Al-Farisi et al., 2021; Shakani et al., 2024). Young consumers, who tend to exhibit behavioural dynamics, for instance "identity performance" through digital consumption and susceptible to becoming emotional and sensory-rich content (Mizielska and Strzelecki, 2026). As a result, they are inclined to seek experiential and social shareable moments that offer comfort, simulation and belongings sense (Alexandra and Choirisa, 2024; Mahsdzar et al., 2025).

In the context of viral halal food, emotionally appealing content, such as visually rich food presentations, satisfying eating experiences, and influencer endorsement, can prompt consumers not only to try the product but also to share it within their social networks, thereby reinforcing the cycle of virality (Bunjamin et al., 2024; Kristia et al., 2024). Consequently, emotional value serves as a critical mechanism through which viral food trends capture attention, shape perceptions, and drive consumption behavior while aligning with the broader ethical framework of Islamic consumption (Shakani et al., 2024).

- H_2: Emotional value has a significant positive effect on consumers' intention to purchase viral halal food.

2.2.3. Epistemic value and consumer novelty-seeking

Epistemic value refers to the utility derived from a consumer's desire for novelty, curiosity, and the acquisition of new knowledge or experiences (Pennanen et al., 2024). Within the Theory of Consumption Value, epistemic value plays a crucial role in motivating exploratory behaviour, particularly in consumption contexts characterised by innovation and change (Günden et al., 2024). In the case of viral halal food, epistemic value is highly relevant as consumers are frequently exposed to new, unique, and unconventional food offerings through social media platforms (Chen and Zuo, 2024). These may include fusion cuisines, creative food presentations, or limited-time viral trends that stimulate curiosity and encourage trial behaviour (Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné, 2023; Sutia and Fahlevi, 2024).

In the Malaysian context, where food culture is diverse and continuously evolving, consumers especially younger segments are increasingly motivated to seek out novel dining experiences that differentiate them from routine consumption (Ismail et al., 2024). Social media further amplifies this effect by constantly introducing trending halal food products, thereby reinforcing consumers' desire to explore what is new or "viral" (Lin, 2024; Sutia and Fahlevi, 2024). This curiosity-driven motivation can contribute to the formation of a favourable attitude, as consumers may perceive such experiences as exciting, trendy, and socially relevant (Chen et al., 2024; Huynh, 2025).

However, unlike emotional value, which generates immediate affective responses, or health concerns, which are grounded in more stable cognitive evaluations, epistemic value tends to be more situational and short-lived (Günden et al., 2024; Huynh, 2025). Consumers may initially express interest in trying viral halal food due to curiosity, but this interest does not always translate into sustained positive attitudes or strong purchase intentions (Günden et al., 2024; Kechri et al., 2025). The novelty factor may diminish quickly once the experience is no longer perceived as new or unique, limiting its long-term influence on behaviour (Huynh, 2025).

Nevertheless, epistemic value remains an important driver of initial engagement, as it encourages consumers to explore and experiment with viral halal food offerings (Chen et al., 2024). Its influence on attitude and purchase intention is therefore contingent upon whether the novel experience delivers sufficient satisfaction or aligns with other value dimensions, such as emotional enjoyment or health considerations (Halicka et al., 2025; Huynh, 2025).

- H_3: Epistemic value has a significant positive effect on consumers' intention to purchase viral halal food.

2.2.4. The mediating role of attitude in viral halal food consumption

Attitude represents an individual's overall evaluative judgment of a behaviour, reflecting the degree to which performing that behaviour is perceived as favourable or unfavourable (Veronica and Kusdibyo, 2021; Xue et al., 2021). In consumer behaviour research, attitude is widely established as a central determinant of behavioural intention, acting as a psychological mechanism through which underlying beliefs and value perceptions are translated into actual decision-making (Pant et al., 2024). Within the framework of the Theory of Consumption Value, consumers are influenced by multiple value dimensions; however, these values do not always exert a direct effect on behavioural intention (Veronica and Kusdibyo, 2021). Instead, they often shape consumers' internal evaluations, which are subsequently reflected in their attitudes and intended actions (Schäufele and Janssen, 2021; Veronica and Kusdibyo, 2021).

In the context of viral halal food, consumers are exposed to various value stimuli, including emotional value, health concerns, and epistemic value (Wang, 2025). Emotional value, characterised by feelings of enjoyment and excitement, can lead to an immediate positive attitude by enhancing the overall consumption experience and perceived satisfaction (Pontes et al., 2024; Wang, 2025). Health concerns, on the other hand, involve more cognitive and deliberate evaluations related to well-being and the principles of halalan tayyiban, requiring consumers to internalise these considerations before forming a favourable or unfavourable attitude (Tuu and Khoi, 2024). Similarly, epistemic value, driven by curiosity and novelty-seeking behaviour, contributes to attitude formation by shaping consumers' perceptions of the uniqueness and experiential appeal of viral halal food (Pontes et al., 2024).

Attitude, therefore, serves as a critical mediating variable that integrates both affective and cognitive evaluations derived from these consumption values (Schäufele and Janssen, 2021; Xue et al., 2021). It acts as an "attitudinal bridge" that connects value perceptions with behavioural intention in digitally-mediated environments (Jabbour Al Maalouf et al., 2025). While certain values, such as emotional value, may exert a more direct influence on intention, others, particularly health concern are more likely to influence behaviour indirectly through attitude (Schäufele and Janssen, 2021; Tuu and Khoi, 2024). This highlights the pivotal role of attitude in determining whether exposure to viral halal food ultimately translates into actual purchase intention.

- H_4: Attitude mediates the relationship between Health concerns and consumers' intention to purchase viral halal food.
- H_5: Attitude mediates the relationship between Emotional values and consumers' intention to purchase viral halal food.
- H_6: Attitude mediates the relationship between Epistemic value and consumers' intention to purchase viral halal food

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey was distributed to the respondents, using a five-point Likert scale were 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree. The data were collected by an online survey using the Google Form platform. The items generated were adapted from an extensive literature review. The survey is divided into two sections: the demographic is the first section, followed by the items showing the latent construct for the remaining section.

The target population for this study were individuals who resided in various states in Malaysia who had purchased any viral Halal foods. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the sample. Purposive sampling was employed as it gives precise and consistent results for the study (Denzin et al., 2024). Recent research has used power analysis for determining sample size (Hair et al., 2019). Power analysis ensures the study is sufficiently powered to produce reliable results, as it calculates the sample requirements based on the model's most complex predictive path. This study used GPower 3.1.9 as it was the most preferred statistical program to perform power analysis in the field of social sciences research (Hair et al., 2017; Hair Jr et al., 2014). There were four latent constructs in the research model, and a minimum effect size (f) of 0.05 at a statistical power of 80% was set as a criterion for sample determination, as suggested by Hair et al. (2022). Following the protocols by Faul et al. (2009); Faul et al. (2007), a minimum of 43 respondents is adequate as a minimum sample. Hence, 241 valid respondents are deemed to meet the minimum sample criteria. Data collection started by posting the survey links to all social media and emails. Out of the 300 responded online survey, only 241 responses were found to be valid and proceeded for the data analysis using Smart-PLS software.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The demographic of the respondents was reported in Table 1.

Out of the 241 respondents, 68.5% were male, and 31.5% were female. The respondents mainly consisted of Malay, which is 55.2%, followed by 22.8% and 22% for Chinese and Indians. As

for the age group, those aged 15-25 years old accounted for the largest portion of the respondents, which is 25.7%, while 25.3%, 24.5% and 22.4% were coming from 26-35, 46-55 and 36-45 years old. About 44.8% of the respondents had earn monthly income of RM3001 to RM4500, whereas 25.3% to the income group of below RM1, 500. Remaining 24.1% and 5.8% earned between RM1501 and RM3000 and more than RM4500.

4.1. Measurement Model

Figure 1 depicts the measurement model of the study. There are three latent constructs in the model: health concern, emotional and epistemic value, and attitude toward Halal Viral Foods Intention. In the first step of data analysis, the reliability and validity of the exogenous variables are assessed using SmartPLS4.0. A composite reliability (CR) value of 0.7 is an indicator of good reliability, while an average variance extracted (AVE) value of 0.5 and above denotes a satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). Instead of AVE, Cronbach's Alpha value can also be used to depict the reliability of a construct, where an alpha coefficient of more than 0.6 is acceptable in exploratory research (Ramayah et al., 2018). Measurement model assessment results were depicted in Table 2, showing good CR and convergent validity in the model. CR, Cronbach's alpha and rho_A values of all constructs fell above the threshold values. From the Table 3, most of the outer loadings are above the threshold of 0.70, which should be retained. Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability of all the five constructs as reported in Table 3 ranged between 0.70 and 0.90 and are considered as satisfactory.

Besides assessing the CR and convergent validity of the construct, discriminant validity is assessed for the measurement model.

Table 1: Respondents' profile

Demographic profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	165	68.5
	Female	76	31.5
Age	15-25 years old	62	25.7
	26-35 years old	59	24.5
	36-45 years old	54	22.4
	46-55 years old	61	25.3
	56-65 years old	5	2.1
Race	Malay	133	55.2
	Chinese	55	22.8
	India	53	22
Monthly income	Below RM1,500	61	25.3
	RM1501-RM3000	58	24.1
	RM3001-RM4500	108	44.8
	Above RM4500	14	5.8

Discriminant validity was analyzed via two criterion, first suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and second by using HTMT criterion by Henseler et al. (2015). However, HTMT criterion is better than Fornell-Larcker criterion as it more accurately distinguishes between constructs by providing better sensitivity and specificity rate (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019). The result reported in Table 4 shows good discriminant validity as the HTMT value of all constructs is <0.9, which denotes a satisfactory discriminant validity.

Figure 1 shows an overview of the full data PLS algorithm diagram in the SmartPLS measurement tool. The outer loadings and its description are shown in Table 3.

4.2. Structural Model

For structural model assessment, multicollinearity was assessed. Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006) stated that multicollinearity issues exist when there is a high correlation amongst variables. For the assessment of multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) is a common yardstick. Based on Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006), VIF values <3.33 indicate no multicollinearity issues in the model. However, Hair Jr et al. (2021) suggested that a VIF value <5 is acceptable to show the absence of multicollinearity issues in the model. Table 5 shows VIF values of all constructs are in the acceptable range, which is <5, indicating that there are no multicollinearity issues in the model.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is the next step of the structural model assessment. Figure 2 indicates the structural model of this research, which was tested using SmartPLS and the bootstrapping technique. The bootstrapping process was run with a subsample size of 10,000 (Becker et al., 2023), at a 0.05 significance level, two-tailed test. As per the hypotheses of the study, health concern is related to both attitude and the intention to consume halal local foods. It is also hypothesised that attitude has an impact on viral halal foods intention. As per the research model, health concerns influenced viral halal local foods intention via attitude, hence attitude as a mediating variable in health concerns and viral halal local foods intention is also assessed. Table 6 indicates that health concerns and epistemic value have a positive, significant relationship with viral halal local foods. Health concerns influence both attitude and intention to consume local halal foods, hence supporting H_1 and H_4.

Further, the coefficient of determination, R^2 and adjusted R^2 values of viral halal local foods are 0.557 and 0.549. respectively. This shows

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted test

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Viral halal foods intention	0.886	0.899	0.815
Attitude	0.910	0.938	0.916
Health concern	0.767	0.890	0.802
Emotional value	0.655	0.851	0.741
Epistemic value	0.884	0.928	0.811

Figure 1: Full data results diagram

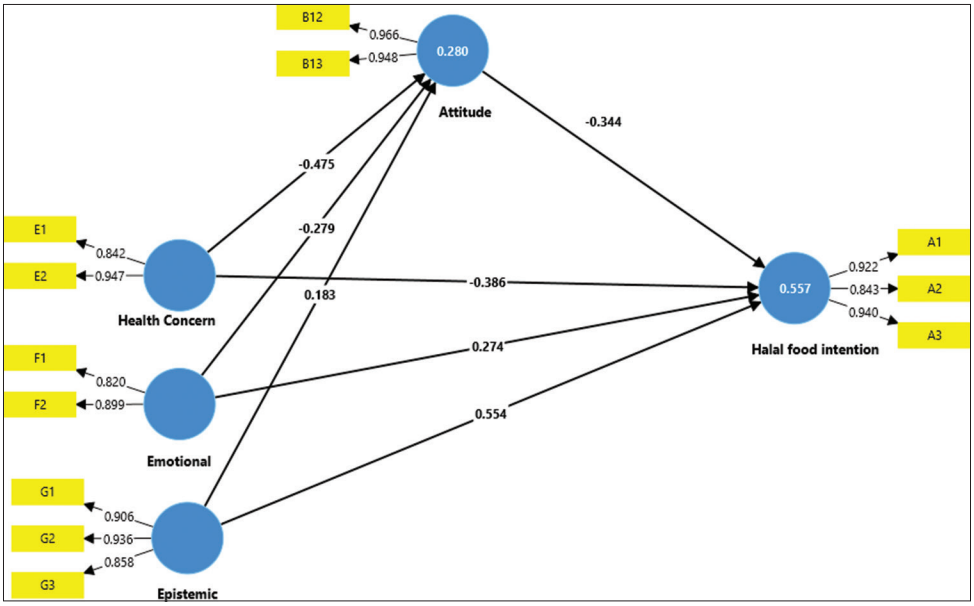

Table 3: Outer loadings results

Constructs	Items	Description	Loadings
Viral halal local foods intention	A1	I always buy halal local food that goes viral wherever I live.	0.922
	A2	I always buy halal local food that goes viral when I'm out of my area.	0.843
	A3	I always intend to buy halal local food that goes viral in the future.	0.940
Attitude	B12	I always look for the Halal label when buying halal food products.	0.966
	B13	I feel comfortable eating Halal food while traveling.	0.948
Health concern	E1	I think that viral halal local food is clean.	0.842
	E2	I think that local halal food that is viral is healthy and nutritious.	0.947
Emotional value	F1	I can finish work within my contracted hours (e.g. 8 h).	0.820
	F2	I have enough time for my family and friends.	0.899
Epistemic value	G1	I think that the viral halal local food gives me an opportunity to learn new food.	0.906
	G2	I think that the viral local halal food allows me to experience the real cuisine/locality.	0.936
	G3	I think that the viral halal local food made me want to try more types of cuisine/locals in other states.	0.858

Table 4: Discriminant validity assessment results (HTMT criterion)

Constructs	Attitude	Emotional value	Epistemic value	Halal viral local food intention	Health concern
Attitude					
Emotional value	0.376				
Epistemic value	0.193	0.726			
Viral halal foods intention	0.378	0.733	0.662		
Health concern	0.514	0.464	0.552	0.340	

Table 5: VIF values table

Items	VIF	Items	VIF
A1	3.357	E2	1.632
A2	1.957	F1	1.311
A3	3.756	F2	1.311
B12	3.29	G1	3.044
B13	3.29	G2	3.332
E1	1.632	G3	2.002

good predictive precision of the predictor variables in explaining viral halal local foods intention. The impact of health concerns and viral halal local foods through attitude is significant, as depicted in Table 6. This result supported the hypotheses H_1 and H_4. Hence, it implies that only attitude mediates the relationship between health concerns and halal viral local foods intention. This also shows that attitude plays a competitive mediator role in the relationship, as the direction of predictor biases and mediating variable is different towards halal viral local foods intention (Zhao et al., 2010).

Then, for the effect sizes (f^2) of the constructs, Table 6 indicates that Epistemic (f^2 = 0.428) have massive effect, while health concerns (f^2 = 0.215) have a moderate effect, and emotional value (f^2 = 0.115) has little effect. Attitude (f^2 = 0.115) has a moderate effect on the halal viral local foods intention.

Figure 2: Structural model

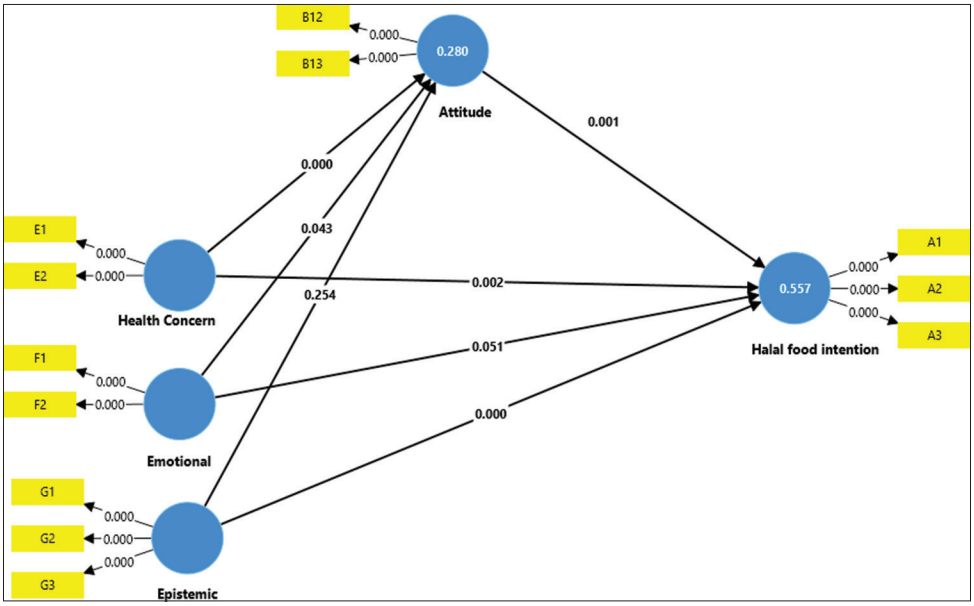

Table 6: Hypothesis testing results

Hyop	Relationship	Standard β	t-value	Confidence interval	Effect sizes (f^2)	Supported
H_1	Health concern→Viral halal local foods intention	−0.386	3.083	−0.688, −0.198	0.215	Supported
H_2	Emotional value→Viral halal local foods intention	0.274	1.954	−0.037, 0.485	0.115	Not supported
H_3	Epistemic value→Viral halal local foods intention	0.554	3.854	0.326, 0.864	0.428	Supported
H_4	Health concern→Attitude→Viral halal local foods intention	0.163	2.212	0.064, 0.307		Supported
H_5	Emotional value→Attitude→Viral halal local foods intention	0.096	1.162	0.007, 0.285		Not supported
H_6	Epistemic value→Attitude→Viral halal local foods intention	−0.063	0.785	−0.267, 0.018		Not supported

5. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

A significant contribution of this study is the delineation of unique structural pathways within the digital Halal ecosystem. The findings indicate that Attitude specifically mediates the relationship between Health Concerns and Intention, implying that health-related values do not inherently stimulate consumption; they must first be assimilated through a "cognitive filter" (Pan et al., 2025). For viral Halal foods to be sustainable, marketing must evolve from solely emphasising nutritional benefits to cultivating a favourable psychological perception that associates "health" with "trendiness" (Bunjamin et al., 2024).

Conversely, Emotional and Epistemic Values were identified as having a direct impact on intention, surpasses the attitudinal mediation. The direct effect of emotional value suggests that "virality" is mostly an emotional process, where immediate feelings of joy or excitement drive intention without going through a formal evaluation (Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné, 2023). The substantial direct path for Epistemic Value supports that novelty-seeking is a principal catalyst of the viral food era. But this path skips over forming attitudes, so these intentions are often short-lived and don't lead to long-term loyalty.

Lastly, the fact that Attitude doesn't affect the Epistemic-Intention path is a new idea in the Theory of Consumption Value. This shows a trend of "impulse participation" that is common on TikTok and Instagram. People want to try "the new thing" without thinking about it too much (Ammetller et al., 2025). Therefore, MSMEs may get a lot of attention quickly because they are new and exciting, but to stay in the Halal market for a long time, they need to change how they think about the product's real health benefits.

The findings of this study provide a strategic framework for Malaysian MSMEs to transition from temporary social media trends to sustainable market viability (SDG 8). The findings indicate that epistemic value (novelty) and emotional value (affective appeal) are the primary determinants that initially contribute to something becoming "viral." However, these direct factors do not imply that customers will repeatedly purchase the viral halal foods. Hence, the MSMEs need to ensure that their products are highlighted by the quality of the products first to enhance their engagement on social media. Further, MSMEs may use the direct effect of emotional value to ensure their strong brands jive with the expectations of Malaysian Halal consumers, such as emphasising happiness and social connection. In return, it gives them value added and an edge in the digital halal food industry.

This study's limitation is its cross-sectional design, which only limits the consumer intentions at a single point in time and may not sufficiently reflect the rapid evolution of social-media-driven Halal viral foods trends. The data from a self-reported survey of 241 respondents in Malaysia may contain social desirability bias, hence limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Future research should shift from a cross-sectional design to a longitudinal approach to ascertain whether intentions influenced by epistemic and emotional values result in sustained brand loyalty after the initial social media "virality" diminishes. Next, it is recommended to include Halal Literacy and Digital Literacy as moderating variables in the model, as they will affect the perceptions of health issues. Finally, it would be advisable to expand the context of the sample into other Halal hubs, such as Indonesia or the Middle East countries, to examine how different cultural factors will affect the respondents to purchase Halal viral foods in the global Halal ecosystem.

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