

**THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF VIRAL FOOD TRENDS ON SOCIAL
MEDIA TOWARDS HALAL AWARENESS AMONG MUSLIM GEN
Z IN UNIVERSITY SETTING**

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Z IN UNIVERSITY SETTING**

by

NADIA AFIFA BINTI AHMAD NAZIF

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of
Health Sciences (Honours) (Nutrition)**

JANUARY 2026

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF VIRAL FOOD TRENDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA TOWARDS HALAL AWARENESS AMONG MUSLIM GEN Z IN UNIVERSITY SETTING” is the bona fide record of research work done by Ms. “NADIA AFIFA BINTI AHMAD NAZIF” during the period from March 2025 to January 2026 under my supervision. I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation to be submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Bachelor of Health Science (Honours) (Nutrition).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated and duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at Universiti Sains Malaysia or other institutions. I grant Universiti Sains Malaysia the right to use the dissertation for teaching, research and promotional purposes.

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(Nadia Afifa binti Ahmad Nazif)

Date:

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

α	Cronbach's Alpha
ρ	Spearman's Rho
p	Probability Value
n	Sample Size
SD	Standard Deviation
%	Percentage
t	t-statistic
R^2	Proportion of the variation
β	Regression coefficient

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia
IPTA	Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam
IPTS	Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Swasta
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
FOMO	Fear of Missing Out
WOM	Word-Of-Mouth
Gen Z	Generation Z

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PERANAN PERSEPSI TREN MAKANAN TULAR DI MEDIA SOSIAL TERHADAP KESEDARAN HALAL DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR GEN Z MUSLIM DI UNIVERSITI

ABSTRAK

Media sosial telah berkembang pesat menjadi platform yang berfungsi untuk mencipta, berkongsi dan berinteraksi dengan pelbagai bentuk maklumat digital, dan membolehkan sambungan, kreativiti dan ekspresi. Gen Z merupakan kumpulan paling aktif di media sosial, kerana mereka dilahirkan dan dibesarkan dengan web sosial. Mereka adalah generasi digital-centric, dan teknologi merupakan identiti mereka. Itulah sebabnya mereka responsif terhadap trend di media sosial, termasuk kandungan makanan yang viral. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan hubungan antara persepsi peranan trend makanan viral di media sosial dan kesedaran halal dalam kalangan pelajar universiti Muslim dari golongan Generasi Z di Malaysia. Dari September hingga November 2025, pendekatan penyelidikan keratan rentas telah digunakan, dengan peserta menerima soal selidik dalam talian melalui platform dalam talian seperti WhatsApp dan Instagram. Untuk kajian ini, saiz sampel 393 pelajar universiti yang berumur 18 hingga 28 tahun diperlukan. Bagi menilai data, SPSS versi 30.0 telah digunakan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan ($p < 0.001$) antara persepsi peranan trend makanan viral di media sosial dan kesedaran halal. Penyelidikan masa depan diperlukan untuk memasukkan faktor tambahan seperti keagamaan, pengaruh rakan sebaya, dan Ketakutan Terlepas (FOMO) untuk memberikan lebih pemahaman tentang pembuatan keputusan makanan halal di kalangan Gen Z Muslim.

THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF VIRAL FOOD TRENDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA TOWARDS HALAL AWARENESS AMONG MUSLIM GEN Z IN UNIVERSITY SETTING

ABSTRACT

Social media has rapidly evolved into a powerful platform to create, share, and interact with content, enabling connection, creativity, and expression. Gen Z are the most active group on social media, as they were born and raised with the social web. They are the generation of digital-centric, and their identity is technology. That is why they are responsive to trends on social media, including viral food content. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the perceived role of viral food trends on social media and halal awareness among Muslim Generation Z university students in Malaysia. From September to November 2025, a cross-sectional research approach was used, with participants receiving the online questionnaire through online platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram. For this study, a sample size of 393 aged 18 to 28 years old from university students was required. In order to evaluate the data, SPSS version 30.0 has been used. The findings indicate that there is a significant relationship ($p < 0.001$) between the perceived role of viral food trends on social media and halal awareness. Future research is needed to include additional factors such as religiosity, peer influence, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) to provide more understanding of halal food decision-making among Muslim Gen Z.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of study

Many changes have occurred in the past 10 years due to the advancement of technology and communication. Undoubtedly, social media is one of the significant components of computer and internet technologies (Elkatmış, 2024). Social media has rapidly evolved into a powerful platform where users create, share, and interact with content at an extraordinary pace, enabling connection, creativity, and expression (Asur & Huberman, 2010; Thu et al., 2025).

Influencers take advantage of platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube to promote various products and engage with a wide audience. An influencer is a group of people who influence the thoughts and decisions of target customers and are famous, with knowledge and expertise (Bunlue, 2025). They use their ability to reach and engage a large audience by promoting the products by using strategies to build consumer enthusiasm into an experience in consuming products. It is communication through the concept of third parties, which is Electronic-Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) marketing. It has become a popular and vital source of information for consumers (Chen & Yuan, 2020). The consumers communicate and discuss the products and services they purchase (Herindar & Haidar, 2024). That is why consumers' trust in a product is often influenced by others' reviews. The more positive feedback a product receives from people reviewing it, the more likely a consumer to gain trust and lead to purchase decisions.

With the widespread use of social media, viral content on the internet has become part of our everyday lives (Silver & Rumsey, 2022). This includes rapid spread of food-related content. Viral food trend on social media with short videos and eye-catching visuals in recent years shaped the way consumer discover and consume food. Food

content creators tend to promote food products through their own social media account. The engagement typically higher if the products promoted are viral. As a result, viral posts can shape how consumers view the products. According to Ziyada & Shamo (2024), they discovered that viewer reactions post-publication significantly influences video popularity accuracies than initial video features alone.

Referring to viral food, sometimes the halal status is questionable. As a Muslim, halal must be considered before consuming a product. 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). So, to be a good Muslim, all daily actions must be in accordance with God's rules. It includes eating and drinking. Food or drinks that are said to be halal come not only from the raw material but also from the processing, the way to get it, the packaging, the cleanliness, and the distribution (Imtihanah, 2022). In Malaysia, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, or Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) is a federal government agency. It is responsible for ensuring that all products comply with Islamic law and are safe for Muslim consumption. It has provided a list of recognised foreign halal certification bodies and authorities as a guideline for Malaysian Muslims before consuming any products (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2024).

However, not all Muslims are aware of the halal logo and always assume that a product is safe if another Muslim has consumed it before. That is why halal awareness among Muslims is very important to ensure they consume food and products that comply with Islamic principles. However, along this modern lifestyle, people often overlook the importance of verifying the product is halal. This may reflect how some individuals perceive viral food trends on social media as more influential than religious guidelines in making food choices. Halal awareness generally refers to a Muslim's

understanding and consciousness regarding halal practices, which includes being informed about halal products and processes such as proper slaughter and food consumption based on Islamic principles (Ambali & Bakar, 2014; Usman et al., 2021).

Gen Z are born and raised with the social web, they are digital-centric and technology is their identity (Dangmei & Singh, 2016). According to Pew Research, as cited in (Mas'Amah et al., 2025), the definition of Generation Z (Gen Z) is people born between 1997 and 2009 or who are currently aged 16 to 28 years. Gen Z are the first to have Internet technology so readily available, and they have been exposed to an unprecedented amount of technology in their upbringing, courtesy the web revolution that occurred throughout the 1990s (Yadav & Rai, 2017). Gen Z are ideal for this study due to their active engagement with social media and being very responsive to following the trends. They are highly responsive to trends on social media, including viral food content.

1.1 Problem statement

In recent years, viral food trends on social media have shaped the way young people (especially Gen Z) discover and consume food. Some of the viral foods often do not have clear halal status yet still are promoted by the food content creator and influencers through social media. Viral foods on social media like Gummy Eyeballs are among the products that carry questionable halal status.

Nowadays, the confusion among the younger generation is that food labelled as "No Pork", "No Lard", or "No Alcohol" is automatically halal. These labels are used as a substitute for an official halal logo. The display of this label often appears convincing to consumers, as it suggests the absence of haram (forbidden) ingredients in Islam—specifically pork. However, according to Fitri Haris (2020), restaurants that use signs such as “no pork” or “pork free” are likely not certified with a clear halal status. This is

because there is a possibility of cross-contamination or the presence of non-halal ingredients in the products being sold (Izham et al., 2022).

The halal issue that hit our country is getting worse, and it should be taken care of by all parties, especially consumers (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017). The consumer awareness of halal food products affects their information-seeking behaviour. This will increase the issue of consuming food that is not halal among Muslim consumers. Moreover, the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a potent tool utilised by influencers to create a sense of urgency and desirability around products, driving impulse purchases among Gen Z (Mohd Radhi et al., 2024).

Although there is much research related to halal studies, few studies have focused on how social media-driven food trends perceived to influence the halal awareness of Muslim youth in Malaysia. Despite that, there is a lack of research about Muslim Gen Z, even though they are the largest group who engage with viral food trends on social media. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the perceived role of viral food trends on social media influence halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z.

1.2 Research question

- i. What is the perceived role of viral food trends on social media among Muslim Gen Z?
- ii. What is the level of halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z in the context of viral food trends on social media?
- iii. How do Muslim Gen Z students perceive the impact of viral food trends on social media on their halal awareness?

1.3 Research objective

1.3.1 General objective

This study aims to explore how viral food trends on social media are perceived to influence halal awareness.

1.3.2 Specific objective

- i. To assess the perceived role of viral food trends on social media towards halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z.
- ii. To determine level of halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z in context of viral food trend on social media.
- iii. To examine the perception of Muslim Gen Z students on how viral food trends on social media impact their halal awareness.

1.4 Research hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

There is no significant relationship between the perceived impact of viral food trends on social media and halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z students.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_A):

There is a significant relationship between the perceived impact of viral food trends on social media and halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z students.

1.5 Significance of study

The findings of this study will enhance the understanding of how Muslim Gen Z in university setting perceive the role of viral food trends on social media towards their halal awareness. By understanding this topic, Gen Z may be more aware of the halal status of a product before consuming it. This aligns with the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, which promotes informed and ethical food choices. It encourages critical reflection on food consumption patterns influenced by social media, supporting sustainable and ethical halal food practices.

In addition, social media influencers may be more aware of their perceived role in shaping halal-related discussions online. They also will be more transparent about the halal status of a product before sharing through their post. For a halal certification body like JAKIM, the findings can guide them to make improvements in digital halal literacy. This may improve digital halal literacy and engagement among consumers, especially young adults like Gen Z.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature about how social media, particularly perceived role of viral food trends on halal awareness among Gen Z. By reviewing past studies, it will provide a comprehensive understanding about how Gen Z is aware of the halal status of a viral food based on social media.

2.2 Social media and viral food trend

In this digital era, social media has been part of information, entertainment, and social interaction for everyone. The development of an evolutionary system in this era led to knowledge turnover becoming higher and also out of the control of humans. The number of social media networks rapidly increased and changed the interaction of individuals, companies' businesses, marketing, education, films, and friendship, based on social networking (Castro et al., 2022). Due to the recent explosion of interest in these media, more people than ever before are publishing content on the internet. This makes a very large amount of information available and makes the problem of consuming this information intelligently a pressing one for many people (Bontcheva et al., 2013).

Social media not only facilitates public discourse but also plays a crucial role in shaping conversations around various sectors. Additionally, it serves as a valuable data source for AI-driven analytics that help identify and predict trends across industries, including the food and beverage sector (Kanwal Aalijah, 2025). Social media is also used as a marketing platform for food and beverage businesses. According to Zahra (2025), social media marketing is described as an activity carried out by companies to

shoot, communicate, and distribute marketing offers online through the use of social media platforms. According to Klopfer (2002, as cited in Zahra, 2025), the underlying concept of viral marketing is that people will interact with others and then spread information about a specific product or service. This will lead to Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) marketing, which the audience (readers, listeners, and viewers) to become a "promotion funnel" for a product or service. Therefore, it will influence the willingness of consumers to share viral content.

Viral food on social media is often driven by the social marketing of content creators or social media influencers. As an example, Mixue Ice Cream and Tea became viral on social media based on their effective use of this platform to promote their product through Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok (Alfarez et al., 2024). It is also viral based on the content created by netizens on social media. As social media becomes a dominant marketing channel, brands are seeking innovative ways to connect with consumers genuinely. That is why we tend to see many brands taking the opportunity of influencers on social media to promote their products. According to A C et al. (2024), influencers are using marketing strategies like storytelling to strengthen consumer connections, boost engagement metrics, and ultimately increase sales conversions. The method used by the influencers nowadays thus accelerates the virality of food trends on social media. As an example, Gummy Eyeballs is one viral food on social media that attracts consumers to purchase this product. These viral trends may not only reflect popularity, but also shape how Muslim Gen Z perceive the acceptability or permissibility of food products, regardless of their actual halal status.

2.3 Halal concept and awareness

As a Muslim, it is very important to consider that food is halal before consuming it. This is because Islam uses the Quran and hadith as the primary sources of guidance in all aspects of life, including matters related to food consumption. It is stated in the Quran in verse 2:168, “O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.” Food or drinks that are said to be halal come not only from the raw material but also from the processing, the way to get it, the packaging, the cleanliness, and the distribution (Imtihanah, 2022). In Malaysia we have the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia, or Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM). It is a federal government agency to ensure all products comply with Islamic law and are safe for Muslim consumption. JAKIM has listed the recognised foreign halal certification bodies & authorities as guidelines for Malaysian Muslims before consuming any products. As a Muslim in Malaysia, we need to follow this, as it is the officially recognised authority responsible for ensuring that products and services comply with Islamic dietary and ethical standards.

According to the halal concept, it is very important for a Muslim to be aware of the halal status of food. In this digital era, food products are easily accessible, including through social media. Even the non-halal foods are spread among Muslim consumers because they are not aware of the halal status of the products. Halal awareness can be determined through the positive attitude of consumers (El Ashfahany et al., 2024). If a Muslim is aware of the halal status of a product, they may be checking the halal status of food before purchasing and consuming it. According to Wan et al. (2014), even though a Muslim is aware of the importance of purchasing halal food products, they might have failed to execute their awareness and beliefs into actions. This may be

caused by various factors from social media, which include the persuasive and appealing nature of content shared on social media. In some cases, the perceived appeal of viral food trends and aesthetic food presentations may overshadow religious considerations, especially among younger Muslim consumers such as Gen Z.

Currently, there is a growing phenomenon which is fear of being left behind the trend, also known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). According to Wirasukessa and Sanica (2023, as cited in Istiqomah & Wahyudi, 2024), this encourages individuals to continue to consume goods or participate in activities that are considered part of the trending social standards. This may be one of the factors that cause a challenge for Gen Z to apply the awareness towards action for viral food trends.

2.4 Gen Z behaviour and digital influence

According to Warwas et al. (2021), the highest average time spent on social media in 2019 in Europe is the age group of Gen Z (16-22 years old). This shows that they are the most active age group on social media compared to other generations. Similarly, a national study in the US found that 69.5% of adolescents aged 11–15 had at least one social media account, with TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram being the most used platforms (Nagata et al., 2025). Generation Z uses social media for more varied purposes, like developing and maintaining connections, building self-image, expressing thoughts and emotions, and seeking entertainment (Nuzulita & Subriadi, 2019). Apart from that, social media also serve as major sources of viral content, including trending food videos. This will significantly shape their food preferences, perceptions and even awareness towards the halal status of a product, especially when viral food trends spread rapidly on social media. Some of the viral foods are spread among consumers without proper information about ingredients or certifications.

The need to be involved and informed with other people is the main rationale behind the use of online socialising by Gen Z (Yadav & Rai, 2017). However, this strong social drive may also cause them to follow trends blindly, without verifying the halal status of viral food from the food on social media.

The reliance of Gen Z on social media for entertainment, communication, and emotional gratification raises concerns about the impact of halal awareness on viral food trends. This generation is a vigorous contributor cohort and high consumer of online content, as well as creative and mash-up experts. They have a strong attachment to online communication and prefer to stay connected through technology available at their fingertips (Yadav & Rai, 2017). This connection may overshadow the need for checking the halal status of the viral food, especially when it is visually appealing and widely endorsed by peers or influencers.

Their high level of engagement with social media exposes them to a wide range of viral food content. The tendency of this generation to seek peer reviews and shared opinions online significantly influences how they perceive the halal status of such trends. As peer influence becomes a dominant factor in decision-making, Gen Z may rely more on social validation than the halal status of food products. Their desire for popularity and social affirmation may cause them to overlook the halal status of viral foods in pursuit of online attention.

In addition, digital media plays a role in providing psychological and emotional support for Gen Z. It helps them feel socially accepted and offers emotional satisfaction through their interactions on social media. However, their tendency to overshare food experiences without verifying the food's halal status may influence individual behaviour and potentially mislead others. It is especially when the viral food content becomes viral without factual or religious consideration.

Lastly, it is observed that Gen Z frequently check their social media profiles and updates (Yadav & Rai, 2017). This shows that they are highly active in engaging with viral food content on social media. As a result, this may indirectly affect their awareness of the halal status of food shared online, due to their high level of engagement with food-related content.

2.5 Relationship between social media trend and halal awareness

A social media trend is a small set of topics that become part of the trending set, meaning that they will capture the attention of a large audience for a short time, thus contributing in some measure to the public agenda (Asur et al., 2021). It includes viral videos, memes, fashion styles, challenges, dances, or conversations around specific themes. Social media trends are usually driven by influencers. The social media influencers attempt to impact all areas of their target audience's lives, including encouraging audience to buy or use a particular product or service, using their influence to change habits, attitudes and behaviours, including food consumption, lifestyle choices and even how a target audience communicates and the language they use (Alves de Castro et al., 2021).

Influencers regularly create and disseminate content on social media relevant to their supporters and have thus reached many followers (Lou et al., 2019; Ye et al., 2021). Trust in influencers can influence consumers' intention to buy a product (Sholihah, 2024). 44% of Gen Z and 26% of the general population reported making purchases based on influencer recommendations (Williams, 2020). 30% of the survey participants claimed that they prefer purchasing products recommended by online influencers (Barker, 2017).

Due to the implementation of the non-subscription following model, it allows TikTok’s algorithm to expose users to a wide range of content, potentially introducing users to new trends, creators, and interests that could shape their identities (Wang et al., 2024). This is not only applicable to TikTok's ‘For You’ page but also to YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels or Explore and also Facebook Reels. This theoretical construct allows social media trends to spread like viruses among social media users.

Yanti (2024) reports that the frequency of social media usage affects consumers' awareness of halal products. The more often an individual uses social media, the higher the likelihood of being exposed to information related to halal products across various platforms. But as mentioned above, the theoretical construct of social media exposes users to a wide range of content. The social media trend does not specifically focus on halal awareness but on a wide range of content, including viral food content. When it comes to viral food, Gen Z users are often influenced by the aesthetic appeal and popularity of the trend. This shows that they do not have proper exposure to halal. Exposure is an important key to trigger the emergence of knowledge and awareness, either directly or indirectly (Usman et al., 2021). Consumer awareness of halal products directly affects their intention to purchase (Yanti, 2024)

2.6 Conceptual framework

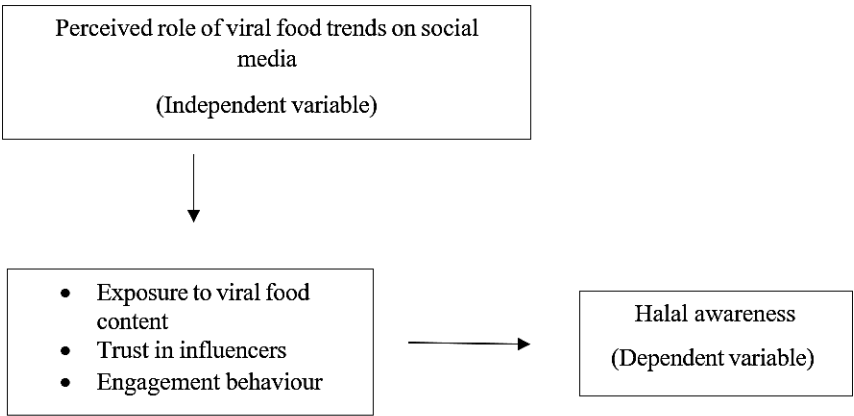


Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research was conducted using a cross-sectional, descriptive and quantitative research design. The research employed an online platform that used a questionnaire to determine perceived role of viral food trends on social media among Gen Z and its association with halal awareness. The most prominent characteristic of cross-sectional designs was that all of the observed data are collected at a single point in time (Cummings, 2017). The respondents selected based on the exclusion and inclusion criteria set by the researcher for the study. Cross-sectional designs were relatively easy to conduct, and they tend to be cheaper to implement because they observed all variables at one point in time, so there is no long wait period or lag in data collection efforts (Cummings, 2017).

3.2 Study area

This study was conducted online and focused on Muslim individuals from Gen Z in university setting. This study sample is comprised of people aged between 18 and 28 years old. The use of online platforms enabled wider access to the target population regardless of geographical location. As the Gen Z age range in 2025 was roughly 13 to 28 years old, 18 were legally adults, and they were more likely to make their own decisions regarding the viral food trend on social media.

This approach was appropriate, as this age group was the most active on social media and no longer under parental supervision for their usage of gadgets and social media. Thus, they were the most exposed to viral food trends on social media. The exposure to viral food trends will influence their halal awareness towards it. They may be aware of halal status, but not when it comes to viral food, they cannot apply it into

action. The desire to try viral food is to gain social acceptance from peers and family. This may be driven by the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). As a result, they may be overlooking halal verification, particularly when the product is widely shared or endorsed on social media.

3.3 Study population

The study population is a subset of the target population from which the sample of the study is selected (Shu Hu, 2014). This study, the population consists of Muslim individuals from Generation Z, specifically those aged between 18 to 28 years old who study in university.

3.4 Subject criteria

Subject selection was based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

3.4.1 Inclusion criteria

- a) Muslim students studying in university
- b) Aged 18 to 28 years old
- c) Actively using social media platforms

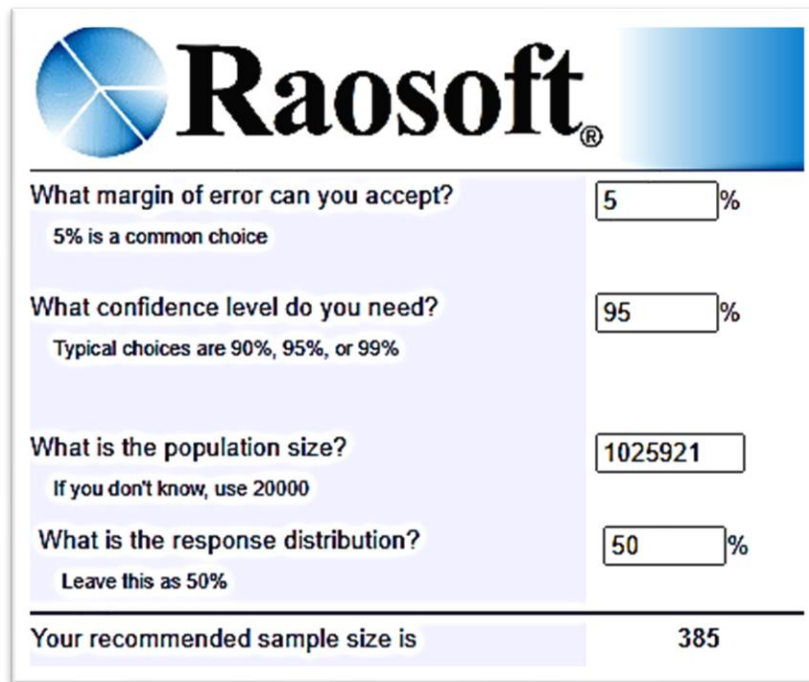
3.4.2 Exclusion criteria

- a) Individuals with restricted diets (e.g, diabetic diet, renal diet)

3.5 Sample size estimation

The sample size for this study was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator to estimate an appropriate sample size based on a known population. The target population in this study was Muslim Gen Z university students in Malaysia, typically aged between 18 and 28 years old. The total number of university students enrolled in public and private universities in Malaysia was 1,025,921, according to data provided by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia ("Private Higher Education

Institutions," 2024; "Public Universities," 2024). Using a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and 50% response distribution, the minimum required sample size was calculated to be 385 respondents.



The image shows a screenshot of the Raosoft sample size calculator. The interface has a blue header with the Raosoft logo. Below the header, there are four input fields with labels and suggestions. The first field is 'What margin of error can you accept?' with a value of 5% and a suggestion '5% is a common choice'. The second field is 'What confidence level do you need?' with a value of 95% and a suggestion 'Typical choices are 90%, 95%, or 99%'. The third field is 'What is the population size?' with a value of 1025921 and a suggestion 'If you don't know, use 20000'. The fourth field is 'What is the response distribution?' with a value of 50% and a suggestion 'Leave this as 50%'. At the bottom, there is a summary line: 'Your recommended sample size is 385'.

Input	Value
What margin of error can you accept?	5%
What confidence level do you need?	95%
What is the population size?	1025921
What is the response distribution?	50%
Your recommended sample size is	385

Figure 3.1 Raosoft sample size calculator 2004

3.6 Sampling method & subject recruitment

For this study, a convenience sampling method used to select respondents from Muslim university students to explore the perceived role of viral food trend on social media towards halal awareness. Convenience sampling (sometimes called accidental sampling) is the selection of a sample of participants from a population based on how convenient and readily available that group of participants is (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). It consumed less effort to select the participants compared to other non-random sampling techniques. However, results may not be generalizable to all Gen Z Muslims in Malaysia due to the non-random sampling method.

This type of sampling used in this study, as the respondents can be reached easily and conveniently through online communication platforms such as WhatsApp with the help of family and friends. A poster and an online questionnaire, (Google Form) was distributed to the Muslim university students aged 18 to 28 years old easily through social media without the need for face-to-face interaction. By using a convenience sampling technique, it allows reaching a broad and accessible pool of participants (Maheshwari & Samantaray, 2025).

Respondents participated voluntarily without being forced by others. And those who fulfilled the inclusion criteria and consented to participate were included in the study. The subject requirement was run until the number of respondents reach the calculated required sample size, 385 respondents.

3.7 Research tools

3.7.1 Questionnaire design

Data collection was gathered using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire form consists of four parts. Part A: Demographic information, Part B: Perceived role of viral food trend, Part C: Halal awareness, and Part D: Influence of viral food trends on halal food decision-making.

For Part A, B and D, the questionnaire was adopted from previously published studies as developed by (Tamby Chik et al., 2019). For Part C, the questionnaire was adopted from previously published studies as developed by (El Ashfahany et al., 2024). The permission to use the questionnaire is granted by the author (see Appendix A).

This questionnaire was designed in English as the participants in this study are university students who are assumed to have sufficient proficiency in the language. All parts will be answered by the participants.

PART A: Demographic

This section consists of 11 questions related to the demographic background of the respondents. Participants will be asked about their age, gender, marital status, and university they currently rolled on. Additional questions include how often they use social media daily, and which social media platform they use the most also included.

PART B: Perceived role of viral food trend on social media

This section includes 5 questions that aim to assess the participants' perception of the role of social media in spreading viral food trends. Respondents will be asked whether social media influences their food choices, whether they often come across viral food content, and whether such content captures their attention. The questions also explore the participants' engagement with food influencers or food-related pages, their belief in how quickly trends spread through social media, and their tendency to trust food reviews online. Participants will also be asked if they search for viral food trends on platforms like TikTok or Instagram, if they share food content, and if social media affects their cravings or keeps them updated on food trends. All responses will be rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

PART C: Halal awareness

This section contains 5 questions designed to measure the participants' awareness regarding halal food. Participants will be asked if they always check the halal status of food before consumption, if they understand the concepts of halal and haram, and if they can identify halal logos or certification. The questions also explore their awareness of the possibility that some viral foods may not be halal, and the importance they place on halal status when eating outside. Responses will be recorded using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

PART D: Influence of viral food trends on halal food decision-making

This final section consists of 10 questions that assess the influence of viral food trends on participants' decision-making regarding halal food. Participants will be asked if they usually check the halal status before trying viral food, if viral trends sometimes lead them to overlook halal concerns, and whether they avoid viral food without clear halal status. Other questions examine whether they verify ingredients, prefer halal- certified viral foods, or follow Muslim influencers for guidance. Additionally, the questions explore whether they experience internal conflict when unsure about halal status, whether they consult friends, and whether they believe social media should highlight halal information. Responses will be rated using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.8 Operational definition/measurement of variable

3.8.1 Viral food

Viral foods refer to foods that are widely welcomed by the public for a period of time through online marketing and publicity (Song et al., 2021).

3.8.2 Halal awareness

Halal awareness is information about whether the food consumed is good or not, as well as what items are halal and suitable for consumption by Muslims (Mutmainah, 2018). Halal awareness can be determined through the positive attitude of consumers (El Ashfahany et al., 2024).

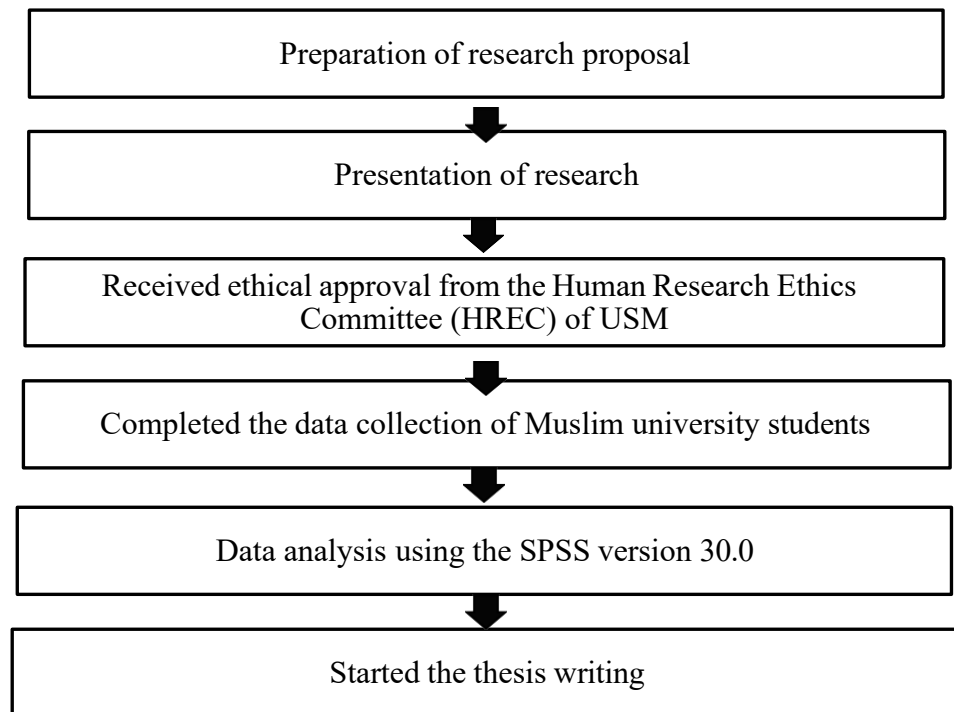
3.9 Data collection method

Data collection was started after receiving ethical approval from Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of USM. The estimation time for data collection process was carried out within two months. Utilizing online Google forms, a questionnaire was used to collect data. The link for online questionnaire was distributed via social network platform like WhatsApp and Instagram. Subjects was recruited by using convenience sampling that fulfil the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The first page of the questionnaire consists of email address and the informed consent form for the respondent to choose either to agree or disagree to participating in the study. There are four sections of the questionnaire which are Part A: Demographic information, Part B: Perceived role of social media in spreading viral food trend, Part C: Halal awareness, Part D: Influence of viral food trends on halal food decision-making. The expected time to answer all of the questions is about 10 to 15 minutes.

The researcher's contact information, including phone number and email address, was listed on the first page of the questionnaire. If subjects have any issues regarding the study or are unable to comprehend the questions, they can email the researcher or call at the provided number. Only one response per Google account was allowed on the form.

3.10 Study flowchart



Flowchart 3.1: Study flowchart

3.11 Data analysis

Data obtained from the survey and was analyzed by using IBM Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Software version 30.0. All data was represented by codes to protect the data privacy and confidentiality of respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to address the objectives of this study.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted to determine the level of halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z in the context of viral food trends on social media. The demographic data of the respondents (Part A) was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in terms of frequency and percentage. Due to the skewed distribution of data and the ordinal nature of Likert-scale measurements, descriptive data for Part B

(perceived role of viral food trends on social media), Part C (halal awareness), and Part D (influence of viral food trends on halal food decision-making) analysed using median and interquartile range (IQR). It used to describe the levels of respondents' perceptions and awareness across all constructs.

A reliability test using Cronbach's alpha was also conducted to find out the internal consistency of the items. Cronbach's alpha was appropriate to determine whether the items consistently reflect the underlying concept. If reliability was adequate enough ($\alpha \geq 0.7$), a composite halal awareness score was calculated through averaging every response of all items. This ensures that the averaged halal awareness score accurately represents respondents' overall awareness level, supporting the validity and credibility of the findings.

Inferential analysis

Inferential analysis was conducted to assess the perceived role of viral food trends on social media in relation to halal awareness and to examine Muslim Gen Z students' perceptions of how viral food trends on social media are associated with their halal awareness. A Spearman's correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between perceived role of viral food trends on social media and halal awareness among Muslim Gen Z. It was used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the composite scores of the respective constructs.

Additionally, simple linear regression analysis was carried out in order to discuss the relationship between the perceived role of the viral food trend on the social media and halal awareness further. The purpose of the regression analysis was to assess the explanatory role of perceived viral food trends to the differences in the halal awareness. Since this is a cross-sectional study, the findings represent associations

rather than causality. Thus, the findings cannot be seen as confirmations of cause and effect but rather as exploratory. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$, whereby a p-value less than 0.05 indicates a statistical significance relationship between the tested variables.

3.12 Ethical consideration

3.12.1 Subject vulnerability

This study involves Muslim Gen Z university students aged between 18 and 28 years old. As all participants are legal adults, informed consent will be obtained directly from them. A consent form will be attached at the beginning of the online questionnaire via Google Form.

The form will clearly explain the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. No participant will be forced to take part, and completing the questionnaire will only proceed after the participant gives their informed consent.

3.12.2 Declaration of absence of conflict of interest

I will ensure to conduct this study with no conflict of interest.

3.12.3 Privacy and confidentiality

The respondents' participation in this online survey is completely anonymous. The respondents' personal information, such as participant's name and email address, is not collected. On the first page of the online survey's Google Form, the respondents are briefly informed about their anonymity and informed concern. Participation in the online survey indicates that the respondents have read the consent information and have agreed to participate anonymously.

All data will be anonymous and entered into the SPSS software. The data will not be shared with anyone because only the study's researcher has access to it. To protect the privacy of participants, the data will be presented as grouped data that does not identify the responders individually.

3.12.4 Community sensitivities and benefits

Some questions can be sensitive for the participant to answer. As a result, the data of participants will be kept private and confidential. Also, in order to minimize sensitivity, participants were informed about the study and given the option of participating. Informed consent is obtained through the online questionnaire, where participants must acknowledge and agree before proceeding.

This study does not provide direct benefits to participants. However, it may increase awareness about the influence of viral food trends on halal decision-making, and contribute to a better understanding of halal-related concerns among Gen Z.

3.12.5 Honorarium and incentives

Participants in this study will not be rewarded an honorarium or receive any other incentives.