

HALAL FOOD CULTURE IN INDONESIA: Faith, Knowledge, and Demand

Asep Yusup Hanapia

Universitas Siliwangi
Jl. Siliwangi No. 24, Kahuripan, Tasikmalaya, 46115, Indonesia
e-mail: asepyusup@unsil.ac.id

Fatimah Zahra Nasution

Universitas Gadjah Mada
Jl. Teknika Utara, Pogung, Sinduadi, Mlati, Sleman, Yogyakarta, 55284, Indonesia
e-mail: fatimahzahranasution@mail.ugm.ac.id

**Asep Muhammad Adam, Anwar Taufik Rakhmat &
Iwan Ridwan Paturochman**

Universitas Siliwangi
Jl. Siliwangi No. 24, Kahuripan, Tasikmalaya, 46115, Indonesia
e-mail: a.m.adam@unsil.ac.id, anwar.taufik@unsil.ac.id, iwanridwan@unsil.ac.id

Abstract: Consumption constitutes a central aspect of daily life, in which individuals are required to evaluate the appropriateness of products, particularly in relation to ethical and religious considerations such as halal compliance. This study analyzes how literacy of halal products can strengthen or weaken the relationship between economic factors and consumer preferences for the demand for halal food products among the Nahdatul Ulama Muslimat, Tasikmalaya City, West Java administrators. We used a sample of 100 women registered in Nahdlatul Ulama organizations in Tasikmalaya. In this study, the average age of the sample is 49, with an average education of 11.45 years, or equivalent to senior high school. We conducted data analysis using the ordered probit method. Meanwhile, the ordered probit estimation results show that halal literacy predicts increased demand for halal products due to cognitive aspects in consumption decision-making. However, income and religious beliefs also influence demand. The study also shows a positive relationship between price and demand, contradicting the conventional law of supply and demand in microeconomics. The study has limitations, including insufficient consideration of socio-demographic variables and product specifications, necessitating further research to gain a comprehensive understanding.

Keywords: Demand, Income, Price, Literacy of Halal Product, Halal Food

Corresponding Author	Fatimah Zahra Nasution			
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Introduction

Humans cannot exist in a world without activities to meet their basic requirements. Consumption plays a significant role in daily life as it meets their needs. Individuals are required to make decisions on what is good and bad to eat, including its halalness.¹ All aspects of human life are regulated in such a way that Muslims live in the world following the goals of their creator and obtaining the benefits of life.² As Muslims, fulfilling their needs must be based on Islamic law, especially in their consumption behavior; a Muslim must consume products under Islamic law. Islam regulates how humans can engage in activities that bring goodness to their lives. The primary consumption goal is to fulfill food.³ This includes the living arrangements of a Muslim in fulfilling his economic life. The Islamic teaching strictly classifies edible and non-edible foods. In this case, Islam classifies food into halal food and haram food. This principle reflects the verses of the Al-Quran Al-Baqarah verse 173,⁵ which regulates foods prohibited for Muslims to eat, such as carrion, blood, pork, and animals slaughtered, not according to Islamic law.⁴ The word halal is usually associated with something permissible for Muslims to consume. Therefore, it is forbidden for Muslims to consume haram products. This condition follows one of Allah SWT's words in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 173. The food consumed by Muslims is halal or permitted, except for food categorized as haram according to the Al-Quran and Hadith.⁶

Theoretically, human wants are limitless, but many ways exist to meet those needs. Price and income are the two main variables influencing the demand for halal food items.⁷ In the scope of Islamic business, demand, income, and price play an important role, reflecting the different market dynamics of each business sector. Islamic economic principles are rooted in religious and ethical values, affecting how demand, income, and price are regulated and understood in Muslim economics.⁸ If consumers perceive that the benefits they gain are smaller than the amount they spend, they will consider the product expensive. Therefore, purchasing decisions depend on the perceived value of the product relative to its price. The consumer's income can also influence purchases made by consumers.⁹ Higher-income consumers have more purchasing power than lower-income consumers. This proves that purchasing decisions depend on income and the product's price. Thus, a person's income and price levels can influence demand.

Muslim consumers will obtain optimal benefits and blessings if they take rational actions in their consumption activities. The rationality of a Muslim consumer is closely related to their personality, such as (1) having the character of social sincerity through being patient, empathizing with fellow humans, and being sensitive to the environment. (2) Have rational thinking through logical, calculated, measurable, well-analyzed actions and a reasoning process. (3) Have happiness by getting closer to Allah SWT, being calm in your soul, being physically satisfied and loving beauty.¹⁰

In terms of Muslim rationality, there is still a common misconception among people about halal products that a product's halal status is only determined by its raw material. However, they should consider that the materials' composition, the production process applied, and other factors can influence the product's halal status. The literacy of halal goods impacts the predicted demand for halal food items. This is due to Muslim consumers' decisions in meeting their needs, which are affected by Sharia literacy.¹¹ Religion is one factor that has the potential to make decisions regarding consumption, especially in the Islamic religion, where a Muslim is required to be able to determine whether the food he will consume is halal.¹² A Muslim's awareness is the first step in deciding on halal food purchases. A Muslim who gets social pressure from the surrounding environment, be it the family environment, work environment, or friendship environment, is a person who consumes halal food.¹³ Rasyid¹⁴ emphasized that public understanding of halal certification remains limited, undermining consumer awareness and weakening the enforcement of halal standards in food products.

Several studies have been conducted extensively to examine the demand for halal products.¹⁵ A study conducted by Aziz and Chok¹⁶ and Awan et al.¹⁷ states that there are five main factors where halal marketing has the most significant impact and has a positive relationship with halal awareness. This result shows the importance of marketing strategies for halal products in influencing purchasing decisions and increasing awareness of halal products through effective marketing campaigns.¹⁸ Other studies state that the concept of consumption and consumer behavior offered by Islam can realize public welfare.¹⁹ The idea of consumption and consumer behavior in Islam puts forward principles such as benefit and practicality. In addition, studies from Ranaldi and Setiawati²⁰ revealed that household spending behavior plays an essential role in halal food purchasing decisions.²¹ This part must be studied and gets a big research focus. However, this subject requires substantial research to contribute to the diversity of understanding of halal food literature. Several previous studies have pointed out that limited halal product literacy poses a significant challenge to the development of the halal value chain in Indonesia, particularly within Islamic institutions such as pesantren.²² This highlights the possibility that literacy around halal concepts affects producers and institutions and may shape how individuals make everyday food choices.

There is still a gap regarding how economic factors, including income and product prices, affect the purchase intention of halal food, which in turn will impact the demand for halal food products.²³ Ambali and Bakar²⁴ stated that religious belief, exposure, certification logo, and health reasons are determining factors of Muslim awareness regarding halal consumption. Ismoyowati²⁵ found that taste and nutrition are the most significant factors influencing consumers' consumption of halal food. In addition, Putri et al.²⁶ found that knowledge of halal contributes to consumer awareness of the products. Previous research tends to highlight psychological and religious factors that influence consumer preferences without exploring the role of economic variables, which also significantly affect consumer preferences.²⁷

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by analyzing how literacy of halal products can strengthen or weaken the relationship between economic factors in consumer preferences for the demand of halal food products among the Nahdatul Ulama Muslimat, Tasikmalaya City, West Java administrators. In addition, the Muslim women who participated in this study were housewives who made spending decisions for their families. They play an essential role in the expenditure structure of households.²⁸ To the best of our knowledge, only a handful of studies target this group. The results of this study will provide an overview of the demand for halal food products from consumer perspectives, especially the understanding of halal products. Moreover, the results will become an essential reference for academics, practitioners, and policymakers in creating an economy based on Islamic principles, focusing on the halal food sector, especially in Tasikmalaya City, West Java Province.

Method

This study uses quantitative research methods and primary data sources. The sample used in this study was 100 people from 10 Nahdlatul Ulama Muslimat administrators from each sub-district in Tasikmalaya City. We collected data through direct interviews with respondents using a questionnaire.

We divided the questions into two sections: respondents' socioeconomic characteristics and consumers' perceptions of halal literacy and halal products. Respondents were asked about their perceptions of halal products' demand, price, and literacy. They were given options on a Likert scale, including 1: very low, 2: low, 3: medium, 4: high, and 5: very high. In addition, we also constructed categories based on the sum values of each variable, as shown in Table 1. We employed 23-question instruments on the demand variable, 13-question instruments on the halal literacy variable, 28-question instruments on the income variable, and 11-question instruments on the price variable to construct the research variables. Then, we conducted reliability and validity tests on the question instruments for each variable. The findings verify the reliability and validity of all instruments employed in this investigation.

Table 1. Class Categories on Ordinal Data

Variables	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Demand for halal products	88 - 93	94 - 99	100 - 104	105 - 110	111 - 115
Literacy of halal	42 - 47	48 - 51	52 - 56	57 - 60	61 - 65
Income	104 - 111	112 - 118	119 - 125	126 - 132	133 - 139
Price of halal products	37 - 41	42 - 44	45 - 48	49 - 51	52 - 55

Source: Data processed

The data processing method in this study uses the ordered probit method. This model is suitable for conducting statistical data analysis on ordinal data.²⁹ We use ordinal data for both the dependent and independent variables within the model applied. The ordered probit model begins by referring to the following model equation.³⁰

$$Y^* = \beta_0 + \beta^T x + \varepsilon \quad \dots \quad (1)$$

Y^* is the dependent variable, which is a discrete variable; β_0 is the intercept variable; and β is a vector of coefficients with $\beta = [\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n]^T$, x is a vector of independent variables with $x = [x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n]^T$ and ε is the error, assuming $N(0, \sigma^2)$. We can transform equation (1) above into the following form:

$$Z = \frac{Y^* - (\beta_0 + \beta^T x)}{\sigma} \quad \dots \quad (2)$$

Where σ is the standard deviation value of the population and $Z \sim N(0,1)$ is assumed to be normally distributed. Then the probability density function on the variable Y^* can be determined with the following equation:

$$F(Y^*) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{Y^* - \beta^T x}{\sigma}\right)^2\right) \quad \dots \quad (3)$$

Then from equation (3), it can be expressed that Y^* has a normal distribution with mean $\beta^T x$ and variance σ^2 or can be expressed mathematically as $Y^* \sim N(\beta^T x, \sigma^2)$. From the above equation, categorization of Y^* can be done with ordinal form, namely $Y^* \leq \gamma_1$ which has category $Y = 1$, then $\gamma_1 < Y^* \leq \gamma_2$ has category $Y = 2$, then $\gamma_{i-1} < Y^* \leq \gamma_i$ is categorized with $Y = i$, and $Y^* > \gamma_k$ has category $Y = k$. Then the ordered probit model can generally be written mathematically in the following equation.

$$P(Y = 1) = \phi(\gamma_1 - \beta^T x)$$

$$P(Y = 2) = \phi(\gamma_2 - \beta^T x) - \phi(\gamma_1 - \beta^T x)$$

⋮

$$P(Y = k) = 1 - \phi(\gamma_{k-1} - \beta^T x) \quad \dots \quad (4)$$

In this context, Y represents 1 for the category with the lowest value, Y equals k for the categories with the highest value, and ϕ denotes the cumulative distribution function in the normal distribution. This study uses the ordered probit model, which can be mathematically written as follows:

$$Y_i^* = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad \dots \quad (5)$$

Where Y_i^* is the dependent variable for the demand for halal products; X_i is explanatory variables including literacy of halal products, income, price of products, age, and level of education; β is the coefficient of the independent variables; and ε_i is the error term. Table 2 summarizes the operational definitions of the variables used in this study.

Table 2. Description of Variables

Variables	Type/Description
(1)	(2)
Demand for halal products	Ordinal/level
Literacy of halal	Ordinal/level
Income	Ordinal/level
Price of halal products	Ordinal/level
Age	Years/ratio
Level of education	Years

Results and Discussion

Table 3 summarizes the statistics for each variable used in this study. Based on statistical data, the average demand for halal products is 4.21. This indicates that the sampled individuals in this study fall into categories 4 and 5, representing high halal demand, respectively. The average values for the halal literacy, income, and price variables are 3.67, 3.29, and 3.16, respectively. This indicates that the sample of this study has a level of halal literacy, income, and product price perspective in the medium and high categories, respectively. This finding indicates that while the participants generally exhibit a strong demand for halal products, their understanding of halal concepts, income levels, and perceptions of product pricing are moderate to high. Consequently, this suggests a potential gap between their demand for halal products and their overall literacy and economic capacity related to those products.

Meanwhile, the average age of the respondents is 49, ranging from 21 to 69. The average education level is 11.45, indicating that most respondents are high school graduates. However, one must examine the obtained estimation results to describe the relationship pattern between the explanatory and dependent variables.

Table 3. Summary Statistics (n = 100)

Variables		Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Demand for halal products	1	5	4.21	0.98	
Literacy of halal	1	5	3.67	1.08	
Income	1	5	3.29	0.99	
Price of halal products	1	5	3.16	1.14	
Age	21	69	49.1	11.29	
Level of education	0	18	11.45	3.83	

Source: Data processed by author, 2024

The coefficients for the factors that influence the demand for halal products are presented in Table 4. The data processing results indicate that halal literacy, income, price, and individual age influence the demand for halal products. The coefficient value of 0.274 ($p < 0.05$) suggests that halal literacy positively impacts the likelihood of an increase in demand for halal products among Muslim women. Table 4 also shows that the income variable's coefficient is significant ($p < 0.01$) and positive (0.614). This suggests that the demand for halal products will increase as the individual's income increases. Additionally, the price variable indicates a substantial positive impact, with a coefficient value of 0.254 ($p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that the demand for halal commodities will increase as halal product prices rise. The age variable shows the same result, with a coefficient value of 0.040 ($p < 0.01$). This finding implies that the demand for halal products will increase as individuals age.

Table 4. Estimation Results of the Demand for Halal Products Model

Variables	Coefficients
(1)	(2)
Literacy of halal	0.274** (0.137)
Income	0.614*** (0.195)
Price of halal products	0.254** (0.124)
Age	0.040*** (0.010)
Level of education	0.006 (0.037)

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

The marginal effect (average marginal effect) of the factors affecting demand for halal products is shown in Table 5. In income, there is a significant and consistent effect whereby an increase in income reduces the probability of individuals being in the low-demand category (categories 1–4) and increases the likelihood of being in the highest-demand category (category 5). Specifically, the marginal effect on category 5 is 0.1584 ($p = 0.000$), indicating that an increase in income increases the probability of being in the highest demand category by 15.84 percent. Conversely, in category 4, the marginal effect is -0.0593 ($p = 0.002$), indicating a decrease in the probability of being in the medium demand category as income increases. The price variable for halal products also shows a similar effect. Although not all categories are significant, the marginal effect for the highest demand category is 0.0656 ($p = 0.038$), indicating that a price increase raises the chance of customers belonging to the highest demand category by

6.56 percent. This evidence shows that halal products are perceived as superior goods, where demand is not sensitive to price because consumer value preferences or beliefs drive it. Similarly, halal literacy positively affects the demand for halal products. The marginal effect in category 5 is 0.0708 ($p = 0.032$), indicating that an increase in halal literacy increases the likelihood of being in the highest demand category by 7.08 percent. Conversely, increasing halal literacy reduces the probability of being in a lower demand category. These findings demonstrate the value of education and information about product halalness in shaping consumption behavior.

The age variable also shows a significant effect. The marginal effect on the highest demand category is 0.0106 ($p = 0.000$), which means that each additional year of age increases the probability of being in the highest category by 1.06 percent. Age also reduces the likelihood of being in the middle category, for example, in category 4 with a marginal effect of -0.00395 ($p = 0.000$). These findings may reflect that older age groups have a stronger preference for halal product consumption, possibly due to religious factors or lifestyle habits.

In contrast, educational attainment did not significantly influence the demand for halal goods across all categories. The marginal impact values were low and not statistically significant (e.g., category 5: 0.00173, $p = 0.857$), suggesting that formal education did not directly influence the demand for halal items. The results indicate that preferences for halal goods are more significantly affected by specialized halal-related literacy than overall educational attainment.

Table 5. Marginal Effect of Demand for Halal Products Model

Dependent Variable: Demand for halal products	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Literacy of halal	-0.011 (0.006)	-0.015* (0.008)	-0.013* (0.008)	-0.024* (0.013)	0.065** (0.031)
Income	-0.027** (0.012)	-0.038** (0.019)	-0.033** (0.013)	-0.059*** (0.019)	0.158*** (0.043)
Price of halal products	-0.011 (0.006)	-0.015* (0.008)	-0.013* (0.008)	-0.024* (0.013)	0.065** (0.031)
Age	-0.001* (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.003*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.002)
Level of education	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.001 (0.009)

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

The findings of our study indicate that halal literacy has served as a reliable predictor of heightened demand for halal products. This study confirms previous research,³¹ highlighting that strengthening halal product literacy can bridge the gap between regulatory frameworks and actual consumer behavior, especially among Muslim women communities. Several studies support these results, finding a positive relationship between halal literacy and the demand for halal products.³² This finding reinforces the importance of cognitive aspects in consumption decision-making, particularly in the context of products with strong religious and ethical dimensions.³³ Halal literacy, in this case, not only reflects a technical understanding of the concept of halal but also includes consumer awareness of sharia values, production ethics, and the importance of product certification and halal assurance.³⁴ Muslims must follow the provisions of Sharia as described in Islamic teachings in all facets of their halal lifestyle and ensure that the products they consume adhere to the standards of halal products. This straightforward reasoning demonstrates that the rising level of awareness regarding halal products corresponds with an increasing demand for such products.

Beyond its economic role, halal food carries deep cultural significance. For many communities, choosing halal is not only about observing religious obligations but also about affirming identity, fostering trust, and sustaining shared values. These practices are embedded in daily life through family traditions, religious celebrations, community gatherings, and local customs, shaping how people eat and interact. In multicultural societies, halal certification also serves as a cultural bridge, promoting inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding. In the Indonesian context, the behavior of consuming halal products is driven by individual religious obligations and shaped by external cultural, social, and institutional dynamics.³⁵ As a Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has long integrated halal consumption into daily practices, influencing the development of eating habits from an early age through communal experiences such as recitations, weddings, and religious festivals, where halal food is viewed as an unquestionable norm.³⁶ Additionally, government policies—most notably the Mandatory Halal Certification Law (Law No. 33/2014)—have formalized halal practices as part of the cultural economy, enhancing its presence in urban and rural markets.³⁷

While halal literacy offers some understanding, it cannot fully explain the factors behind the demand for halal products. At the same time, a person's awareness of halal products is not shaped by their religious affiliation. This result is consistent with specific findings from research that focuses on products associated with either non-Muslim or Muslim demographics. Non-Muslim consumers also consider the halal attributes of the products they intend to consume.³⁸ Furthermore, according to Bhutto et al.,³⁹ Individuals with greater access to knowledge and information show a higher propensity to purchase a product. This suggests that halal literacy alone may not adequately explain its correlation with the demand for halal products; instead, it requires reinforcement through additional literacies, such as media literacy.

This study also confirms that income significantly influences the demand for halal products. In explaining this relationship, we will examine it from two theoretical perspectives: traditional and Islamic. First, from the standpoint of conventional theory, it is explained that income is one of the critical factors in the amount of demand for goods.⁴⁰ An increase in one's income is interpreted as an increase in the individual's ability to consume more products.⁴¹ Layard et al.⁴² elucidate the relationship between an increase in income and the maximization of satisfaction. This may not be based on the norms in Islam, which causes this increase in consumption to be limited to self-satisfaction only. Second, from an Islamic perspective, an increase in income may benefit halal products, but it is irrelevant for haram goods.⁴³ We endeavor to interpret this outcome with greater caution, as Islamic teachings urge Muslims to fulfill their needs with a particular proportion of their income. Following that, they allocate the remaining income for ZISWAF expenditures or savings.⁴⁴ The Quran explains that Muslims should refrain from overconsumption.⁴⁵ While this argument may be debatable, it does illustrate that the relationship between a Muslim's income and the amount of halal goods may vary.

Furthermore, this study also found a positive relationship between price and demand for halal products. This finding shows that an increase in the cost of halal products is correlated with an increase in the probability of consumers being in a higher demand category. This conclusion contradicts the basic principle of supply and demand in microeconomics, which holds that an increase in price typically leads to a decrease in demand. However, several unique social, cultural, and psychological factors can explain these results in the context of halal products. Some studies have found that Muslims are often willing to purchase premium halal-certified products due to their religious beliefs and confidence in the quality of halal-certified products.⁴⁶ Another study found that higher levels of religiosity correlate positively with the intention to purchase halal-certified products. Indirectly, the evidence shows that price sensitivity does not deter consumers from making purchases; in fact, they may even be willing to pay more for products that meet their halal requirements.⁴⁷

These findings indicate that some consumers perceive halal products as superior or prestige goods, where higher prices are considered a sign of quality and authenticity.⁴⁸ In the halal product market, especially those with official certification, price is often considered an indicator of trust and assurance regarding halal compliance and food safety. Consumers with a high sensitivity to religious and ethical values are willing to pay a premium price to ensure the product meets strict Sharia standards. These results are also consistent with value-based pricing theory, in which consumers evaluate products based on price and the added value inherent in the product.⁴⁹ In the context of halal products, this added value includes dimensions of spiritual, health, and social responsibility. Therefore, consumers with high halal awareness tend to internalize that higher prices are commensurate with guaranteed quality, safety, and halal status. However, we should interpret these findings cautiously and elaborate on them using traditional economic

perspectives and Islamic norms. In addition, product specifications may also need to be considered when interpreting these findings, as the characteristics of halal-certified products may differ from one another.

Interestingly, age is a determining factor in the demand for halal products concerning the sociodemographic variables that we employ. This shows that the increasing age of a Muslim influences the demand for halal products. Older consumers tend to prioritize essential products to meet their needs.⁵⁰ According to Dong,⁵¹ older people tend to have conservative consumption behavior, and increasing age gives an advantage to local products. Previous research has also found a significant difference between younger and older consumers who spend more on new goods. This indicates that older people are more cautious about the goods they consume and are more aware of Islamic teachings.

This study has several limitations. First, this study portrays the Muslim perspective through the Nahdlatul Ulama organization. However, this organization may not represent Indonesia's Muslim women's population. Therefore, we cannot compare the effect of halal literacy on the demand for halal products with other organizations, which may provide differentiation in effect. Secondly, we did not include complete socio-demographic variables such as culture, number of family members, and type of occupation of the head of the family that may influence the demand for halal goods. Third, further research should consider product specifications and characteristics to sharpen the analysis.

Conclusion

This study explores the influence of halal literacy on consumer preference for halal products among Muslim women in the Nahdlatul Ulama organization. The study reveals that halal literacy is a reliable predictor of increased demand for halal products. This is driven by cognitive factors in consumer decision-making, particularly for products shaped by religious and ethical considerations. Within households, women are often responsible for preserving and transmitting these values, particularly through their food selection and preparation roles. Mothers, for instance, are typically the ones who introduce children to the concept of halal from an early age, turning daily meals into lessons about faith and family identity.

The findings also suggest that increased halal literacy—especially among women in religious organizations—can strengthen cultural commitment to halal consumption in Indonesia. By combining religious knowledge with ethical, health, and social values, halal products acquire meaning beyond price sensitivity, transforming consumption into a marker of cultural identity. However, the halal literacy variable alone cannot explain the determinants influencing demand. As per traditional and Islamic perspectives, income also significantly influences the demand for halal products. However, the relationship

between a Muslim's income and the amount of halal goods may vary. The study reveals a positive relationship between price and demand for halal products, contradicting the conventional law of supply and demand in microeconomics. Factors such as religious beliefs, confidence in product quality, and added value, such as spiritual, health, and social responsibility, influence consumer behavior. Age also plays a role in demand, with older consumers prioritizing essential products and younger consumers spending more on new goods. Recognition of the role of income, age, and perceived spiritual benefits further strengthens the position of halal food not only as an individual choice but also as a shared cultural practice that integrates tradition, modernity, and socio-religious values. However, the study has limitations, such as not considering complete socio-demographic variables, product specifications, and characteristics. Further research is needed to understand these factors better.

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