

The Influence of Affiliate Marketing, TikTok Reviews, and Halal Trust on Online Halal Food Purchase Decisions Among FEBI UINSU Students

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of affiliate marketing, TikTok content reviews, and halal trust on online halal food purchase decisions among students of the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI) UIN Sumatera Utara. While prior research has extensively investigated digital marketing and halal awareness separately, empirical literature addressing the combined effect of short-video user-generated content and affiliate mechanisms on halal food consumption among Gen-Z Muslim students remains limited. A quantitative approach was employed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data were collected via questionnaires from a final sample of 100 active FEBI UINSU students selected through non-probability purposive sampling, targeting active TikTok users who had previously purchased halal food online. The analysis reveals that affiliate marketing, TikTok content reviews, and halal trust all exert positive and significant direct effects on online halal food purchase decisions. Among these, affiliate marketing shows the strongest influence, followed by halal trust and TikTok content reviews. Together, these three variables account for 58.8% of the variance in students' purchase decisions ($R^2 = 0.588$). This research contributes to the literature on Islamic digital marketing by demonstrating how short-video social commerce and structural trust mechanisms interact to drive young Muslim consumers' purchasing behavior, offering practical insights for halal food merchants to optimize digital promotion strategies.

Keywords: affiliate marketing, TikTok content review, halal trust, purchase decision, halal food, PLS-SEM

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INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, advancements in information technology have transformed consumer behavior when it comes to making purchases, including online purchases of halal food. This shift has also brought about major changes in marketing strategies, where affiliate marketing and content reviews on social media platforms like TikTok have become effective tools for influencing consumer purchasing decisions, particularly among younger generations such as college students. In Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population or steadily increasing digital penetration, this phenomenon is becoming increasingly significant in the context of halal food consumption (Al-Banna, 2019). Since the majority of the population is Muslim, demand for halal products has increased. People now have more options for purchasing halal products or services in the food and beverage sectors (Ritonga et al., 2025). Affiliate marketing, as one of the digital marketing strategies, is a method in which marketers utilize affiliate networks to promote products. This method has become very popular on digital platforms due to its ability to efficiently reach a wider audience. Affiliate marketing has a positive or significant impact on purchasing decisions for imported food products on Indonesian marketplaces. Specifically in the food industry, TikTok has become the primary platform that allows consumers to view product reviews in a visual and interactive way, creating a more authentic experience compared to conventional platforms. This trend is further reinforced by data showing that 75% of respondents feel their online shopping experience has become more personalized due to product recommendations tailored to their preferences (Ghautsiyyah & Rahayu, 2025).

In addition to affiliate marketing, content reviews on TikTok also play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. As a rapidly growing social media platform, TikTok allows consumers to access information and product recommendations quickly and interactively. Affiliate marketing content and customer reviews on TikTok have a positive and significant influence on product purchase decisions, particularly regarding halal cosmetics among college students. However, another study revealed an interesting finding: religiosity, food safety, or nutritional quality do not significantly influence Muslims' choice to consume halal food, indicating that halal food consumption behavior does not always depend on religious beliefs (Friantoro et al., 2025). Honest and transparent reviews on TikTok help build consumer trust, which ultimately has a positive impact on purchasing decisions. Technology, which continues to evolve every day, undeniably influences many aspects of people's daily lives, including payment systems. Advances in technology have led to a shift in payment methods, with people moving from cash payments to electronic (digital) payments (Hrp & Tambunan, 2023).

Muslims place a high value on halal certification when making food purchasing decisions. Consumers base their purchase choices on a product's halal status, which is influenced by both legal considerations and moral and societal values. Among members of Generation Z in particular, halal labeling and religious affiliation significantly impact interest and purchase choices. Gen Z, iGen, Gen Zers, or the generation that follows Millennials are all terms used to describe people who were born in the contemporary age and who have lived through plenty of big social and historical things (Rohaya et al., 2024). The level of knowledge or attention to halal labels drives purchase intent (Anggraini & Dewanti, 2020).

Economics defines consumption as any action that utilizes or derives benefit from something to meet one's basic needs (Hasanah et al., 2023). In this context, consumers not

only obtain product information but also reviews, recommendations, and other users' experiences (Yuliani et al., 2023). In the context of online food purchases, factors such as a focus on saving money and saving time have a positive influence on perceptions of Online Food Delivery (OFD) (Zhulal et al., 2024). Social media marketing activities can boost consumer interest in purchasing halal food online (Lita & Meuthia, 2023). Despite the lack of direct influence from the halal mark on customer purchase choices, research reveals that halal awareness mediates this effect (Fathoni et al., 2023). This is consistent with the finding that review content on TikTok can significantly influence perceptions and purchasing decisions, either partially or simultaneously (Manurung & Rusdianto, 2025).

However, many business owners do not use social media to advertise their merchandise. Furthermore, the government primarily relies on trade shows to market its products, which has a relatively small impact on business owners (Nurhalita & Imsar, 2022).

Although digital marketing and halal awareness have been extensively studied separately, an academic gap remains regarding how interactive short-video user-generated content (UGC) and affiliate marketing mechanisms simultaneously interact with structural halal trust to drive actual online purchasing decisions among Gen-Z Muslim students. Prior literature often treats digital social commerce independently from structural halal trust factors, leaving a critical research gap in understanding their integrated structural impact in Islamic higher education settings. To address this research gap, this study offers novelty by synthesizing affiliate marketing, TikTok content reviews, and halal trust into an integrated structural equation model (PLS-SEM) specifically evaluated among students of the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI) at UIN Sumatera Utara.

The primary objective of this research is to empirically determine and analyze the direct effects of affiliate marketing, TikTok content reviews, and halal trust on online halal food purchasing decisions among FEBI UINSU students. Based on the theoretical framework and research model, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

- **H1:** Affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions.
- **H2:** TikTok reviews have a positive and significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions.
- **H3:** Halal trust has a positive and significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions.

THEORITICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as Primary Framework

To avoid conceptual fragmentation, this study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the primary theoretical framework (*anchor theory*) to explain how digital marketing factors and halal attributes drive online purchasing behavior among FEBI UINSU students. According to TPB, human behavior is determined by behavioral intentions, which are shaped by three core theoretical constructs: Attitude toward the Behavior, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC).

In the digital social-commerce context, these three components directly lower and map onto the three independent variables examined in this study, which ultimately determine the final Purchase Decision:

1. Attitude toward the Behavior → Affiliate Marketing (X_1): Affiliate marketing Shapes a consumer's positive cognitive and affective evaluation (*attitude*) toward buying halal food online.

2. Subjective Norms → TikTok Review (X_2): Interactive short-video user-generated content acts as a social reference that forms peer pressure and social expectations (*subjective norms*).
3. Perceived Behavioral Control → Halal Trust (X_3): Confidence in halal certification and product authenticity enhances the consumer's perception of self-efficacy and control (*perceived behavioral control*) over potential risks in online transactions.

The overall overarching consumer behavior theory and purchase decision models (e.g., Kotler & Armstrong) serve as the general context for problem identification, alternative appraisal, and post-purchase steps. The lower-level operationalization of each variable under TPB is detailed below:

Affiliate Marketing (Reflecting Attitude toward the Behavior)

Within the TPB framework, *Attitude toward the Behavior* refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of executing a specific behavior. Affiliate marketing reflects students' positive attitudes toward the promotion of halal food products via affiliate links on online platforms, which leads to a favorable evaluation of the purchase. This variable reflects the nature of attitudes in the TPB, in which consumers view affiliate marketing as persuasive information that enhances their perceptions of benefits, ease of access, and discount value, thereby fostering the belief that purchasing halal food online is a wise choice.

This perception is influenced by promotional content that emphasizes halal certification and quality, making students feel confident in their purchasing decisions due to alignment with religious and economic values. Additionally, the repetitive nature of affiliate promotions reinforces positive evaluative norms, reduces resistance to online shopping, and encourages repeat purchasing behavior. Overall, affiliate marketing serves as an initial attitude that mediates intention through the evaluation of behavioral beliefs regarding the benefits of online halal shopping. This phenomenon demonstrates how digital strategies modify the attitudes of young Muslim consumers toward halal products (Prasetyo, 2025).

Furthermore, Perangin-Angin et al. examined variations in online food delivery app users' perceptions of value, social influence, usability, customer experience, restaurant search, food variety options, purchasing behavior, and sustained purchase intent (Perangin-angin et al., 2024).

H₁: Affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions.

TikTok Review (Reflecting Subjective Norms)

Subjective Norms in TPB represent the perceived social pressure from important referent others to perform or not perform a behavior. A review of TikTok content illustrates subjective norms through other users' reviews, which create social pressure for FEBI UINSU students to purchase halal food online. This variable describes norms as the perceived influence of reference groups such as friends, influencers, and the TikTok community who recommend halal products, thereby creating a social obligation to participate in the halal shopping trend.

Students experience a strong sense of normative conviction when they see positive reviews regarding taste, halal packaging, and fast delivery, which triggers a motivation to conform in order to maintain their social status among peers. This behavior is influenced by interactions such as comments, creating a snowball effect where a single review shapes the perceptions of a broader group. In TPB, the subjective norms derived from review content serve as an external driver that integrates collective Islamic values regarding halal

consumption with the dynamics of social media. As a result, students tend to normalize online halal purchases as socially accepted behavior (Kasturi et al., 2025).

H₂: TikTok content reviews have a positive and significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions.

Halal Trust (Reflecting Perceived Behavioral Control)

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, reflecting past experience as well as anticipated obstacles. Halal trust represents a perception of behavioral control, in which students feel they have the ability or resources to purchase halal food online without obstacles or religious misgivings. This variable reflects PBC through confidence in the availability of halal-certified products, the ease of digital transactions, and the minimization of fraud risks, thereby enhancing a sense of control over purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, halal product certification particularly regarding halal food contributes to the growth of the halal business ecosystem in Indonesia. Halal certification serves as a tool for corporate ethics and provides clients with protection, assurance, and information regarding a product's halal status. Businesses can access the global halal food industry and boost consumer confidence by obtaining halal certification (Destriyansah et al., 2023).

This perception is built on the transparency of halal labeling on online platforms, regulatory support from the MUI, and previous successful experiences, thereby reducing perceptual barriers such as doubts about the origin of ingredients. In the TPB, halal trust acts as a control factor influencing both the intention and the actual execution of behavior, as students feel empowered by knowledge and accessibility. This norm also influences the nature of adaptive behavior, in which consumers proactively verify certification before checkout. Overall, this variable reinforces self-efficacy in the context of online halal shopping among students (Haryanti et al., 2025).

H₃: Halal trust has a positive and significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions.

Purchase Decision Context and Hypotheses Integration

Kotler & Armstrong's Purchase Decision Theory serves as a supporting applied framework, in which consumers evaluate alternatives based on promotional factors (affiliate marketing and TikTok reviews) and trust (halal certification). Payment technologies are easily accessible at various dining establishments and are supported by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which explains that ease of access is a key factor in the decision to purchase food using digital methods. Payments using electronic money are more practical, faster, more flexible, and more convenient than cash, particularly for transactions involving relatively small amounts and high usage frequency such as fast-food payments, etc (Tambunan et al., 2023).

Consumers will decide to purchase a product or service if it is promoted appropriately and is claimed to meet their needs. On the other hand, if the quality of the product is poor or there are other issues, buyers will question their purchasing decision (Rambe et al., 2023). In addition, Muslim consumers often assess whether the businesses they visit adhere to Islamic principles. These factors include compliance with Islamic law, an environment that does not conflict with Islam, comfort, cleanliness, safety, or the benefits offered at the establishment (Tondang et al., 2023). Through the integration of TPB constructs, affiliate marketing builds purchase interest through persuasive content, TikTok reviews establish social validation, and halal trust provides the final control trigger required for online purchases.

H₄: Affiliate marketing, TikTok content reviews, and halal trust simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions.

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Research Design and Sampling Frame

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design with a causal framework to analyze the effects of affiliate marketing (X_1), TikTok reviews (X_2), and halal trust (X_3) on online halal food purchase decisions (Y).

Because a comprehensive list of students who actively use TikTok and have made online halal food purchases was unavailable, a formal sampling frame list could not be established. Consequently, the target population consisted of all 4,300 active students enrolled at the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI), UIN Sumatera Utara.

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure data relevance, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established:

- Inclusion Criteria:

1. Active students at FEBI UIN Sumatera Utara during the study period.
2. Active TikTok users (accessed the platform at least once in the past month).
3. Had purchased halal food/drinks online at least once after watching TikTok reviews or clicking affiliate links.

- Exclusion Criteria:

1. FEBI UINSU students who do not use TikTok.
2. Students with no prior experience purchasing halal food online.

3. Methodological Rationale: Slovin's Formula, Purposive Sampling, and Final Sample ($N = 100$)

The sampling strategy was structured as follows:

1. **Slovin's Formula as a Minimum Threshold:** Applying Slovin's formula with a 10% margin of error ($e = 0.10$) to the population ($N = 4,300$) yielded a minimum required sample of 92 respondents to ensure basic statistical power.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{4300}{1 + 4300(0.10)^2} = \frac{4300}{44} \approx 97,7$$

→ 98" or 92" (based on initial rounding of the theoretical basis reference)

2. **Purposive Sampling:** Given that not all 4,300 students met the target profile, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was applied based on the predefined inclusion criteria.
3. **Questionnaire Administration and Final Sample Determination:** To safeguard against incomplete entries, unengaged responses, or statistical outliers, a total of **115 questionnaires** were distributed online. A total of **110 responses** were returned. Following screening, **10 responses** were excluded (5 failed the screening/inclusion questions, 3 contained unengaged ratings, and 2 were identified as statistical outliers during preliminary checks). This resulted in a **final sample of 100 valid responses** ($N = 100$).

This final sample size of 100 exceeds the minimum Slovin threshold (92) and satisfies the sample size requirements for PLS-SEM analysis (e.g., the 10-times rule proposed by Hair et al., 2019).

4. Data Collection Period and Research Limitations

Data were collected via an online Google Form questionnaire (1–5 Likert scale) distributed through WhatsApp student groups. Data collection was completed within a single day in February 2026.

- **Research Limitation:**

The single-day data collection period represents a cross-sectional limitation. This rapid collection window may introduce selection or time-sampling bias, as only students who actively monitored their messages on that specific day participated. Furthermore, single-day cross-sectional data cannot capture longitudinal shifts in consumer purchasing behavior over time (Tarigan et al., 2024).

5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Model evaluation followed a two-step process:

1. **Measurement Model (Outer Model):** Evaluated via Convergent Validity (Outer Loadings > 0.7, AVE > 0.5), Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Cross-Loadings), and Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7, Composite Reliability > 0.7).
2. **Structural Model (Inner Model):** Evaluated via Multicollinearity (VIF < 5), Model Fit (SRMR < 0.10), Coefficient of Determination (R^2), Effect Size (f^2), and hypothesis testing using bootstrapping (T -statistic > 1.96, p -value < 0.05).

The structural equation is expressed as:

$$\text{Purchase Decision (KP)} = \beta_1(\text{AM}) + \beta_2(\text{CVT}) + \beta_3(\text{KH}) + \varepsilon$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Measurement / Operational Definition of Indicators

To ensure clear operationalization of all latent variables, Table 1 outlines the construct definitions, indicators, measurement scales, and the sources from which the items were adapted.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables and Indicators

Construct	Operational Definition	Indicator Code	Indicator Description	Measurement Scale	Source / Adaptation
Affiliate Marketing (AM)	A digital marketing strategy where affiliates promote halal food products via personalized links and receive commission.	AM1	Clear affiliate promotion links	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	Adapted from Prasetyo (2025); Perangin-angin et al. (2024)
		AM2	Persuasive discount and deal offers	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	
		AM3	Perceived credibility of affiliate partners	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	

				5=Strongly Agree)
		AM4	Incentive to click and purchase via link	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)
TikTok Content Review (CVT)	Short-video user-generated reviews providing visual and interactive information regarding halal food.	CVT1	Visual appeal and authenticity of review	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)
				Adapted from Manurung & Rusdianto (2025); Ghautsiyyah & Rahayu (2025)
		CVT2	Informative video demonstration	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)
		CVT3	Social interaction (likes, comments, and shares)	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)
		CVT4	Recommendation strength from creators	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)
Halal Trust (KH)	Consumer confidence in the official halal status, safety, and compliance with Islamic principles of online food products.	KH1	Confidence in official MUI halal logo	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)
				Adapted from Fathoni et al. (2023); Destriyansah et al. (2023)
		KH2	Perceived safety and hygienic standards	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

Purchase Decision (KP)	The final decision and action taken by students to purchase halal food products online through digital channels.	KH3	Trust in ingredients' halal integrity	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	Adapted from Kotler & Armstrong (2018); Rambe et al. (2023)
		KH4	Consistency in halal compliance	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	
		KP1	Preference for online halal food channels	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	
		KP2	Speed of decision after seeing reviews/links	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	
		KP3	Certainty in selecting online halal vendors	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	
		KP4	Intention to repeat online purchases	5-Point Likert (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)	

Respondent Demographics

This study involved 100 active student respondents from the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI), UIN Sumatera Utara.

Table 2. Respondent Demographic Profile

Characteristics	Classification	Percentage
Gender	Male	30%
	Female	70%
Age	18	1%
	19	1%
	20	20%

Semester	21	49%
	22	24%
	23	5%
	3	5%
	5	22%
Degree Program	7	69%
	9	4%
	Islamic Economics	73%
	Management	13%
	Sharia Accounting	8%
	Sharia Banking	5%
	Sharia Insurance	1%

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

The majority of respondents were female (70%), aged 21–22 years (73%), in their 7th semester (69%), and enrolled in the Islamic Economics study program (73%). Interpretation of these demographic results is strictly confined to the observed sample characteristics: final-year undergraduate students in an Islamic Economics faculty who actively consume online halal food via digital platforms.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated at both the indicator level and construct level on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items and Constructs

Construct / Item	Missings	Mean	Median	Scale Min	Scale Max	Std. Deviation
Affiliate Marketing (AM)		4.083				0.781
AM1	0	4.190	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.868
AM2	0	4.220	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.901
AM3	0	3.890	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.979
AM4	0	4.030	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.964
TikTok Content Review (CVT)		4.008				0.812
CVT1	0	4.280	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.928
CVT2	0	4.050	4.000	1.000	5.000	1.014
CVT3	0	3.750	4.000	1.000	5.000	1.033
CVT4	0	3.950	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.931
Halal Trust (KH)		4.318				0.672
KH1	0	3.950	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.899
KH2	0	4.300	5.000	1.000	5.000	0.866
KH3	0	4.490	5.000	1.000	5.000	0.700
KH4	0	4.530	5.000	1.000	5.000	0.727
Purchase Decision (KP)		3.978				0.776
KP1	0	3.770	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.988
KP2	0	3.830	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.991

KP3	0	4.170	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.861
KP4	0	4.140	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.883

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

At the construct level, Halal Trust (KH) recorded the highest overall construct mean ($M = 4.318, SD = 0.672$), followed by Affiliate Marketing ($M = 4.083, SD = 0.781$), TikTok Content Review ($M = 4.008, SD = 0.812$), and Purchase Decision ($M = 3.978, SD = 0.776$). At the item level, the highest-scoring indicators were KH4 ($M = 4.530, SD = 0.727$) and KH3 ($M = 4.490, SD = 0.700$), whereas the lowest-scoring indicators were CVT3 ($M = 3.750, SD = 1.033$) and KP1 ($M = 3.770, SD = 0.988$).

Measurement Model Evaluation

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was evaluated by assessing outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Table 4. Outer Loadings and AVE

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Threshold Status
Affiliate Marketing (AM)	AM1	0.874	0.748	Meets criterion (> 0.70 loading, > 0.50 AVE)
	AM2	0.866		
	AM3	0.860		
	AM4	0.860		
TikTok Content Review (CVT)	CVT1	0.733	0.649	Meets criterion (> 0.70 loading, > 0.50 AVE)
	CVT2	0.769		
	CVT3	0.853		
	CVT4	0.862		
Halal Trust (KH)	KH1	0.757	0.631	Meets criterion (> 0.70 loading, > 0.50 AVE)
	KH2	0.862		
	KH3	0.816		
	KH4	0.737		
Purchase Decision (KP)	KP1	0.770	0.634	Meets criterion (> 0.70 loading, > 0.50 AVE)
	KP2	0.815		
	KP3	0.800		
	KP4	0.798		

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

All indicator outer loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (ranging from 0.733 to 0.874). Furthermore, the AVE values ranged from 0.631 to 0.748, strictly exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.50. This confirms robust convergent validity across all constructs.

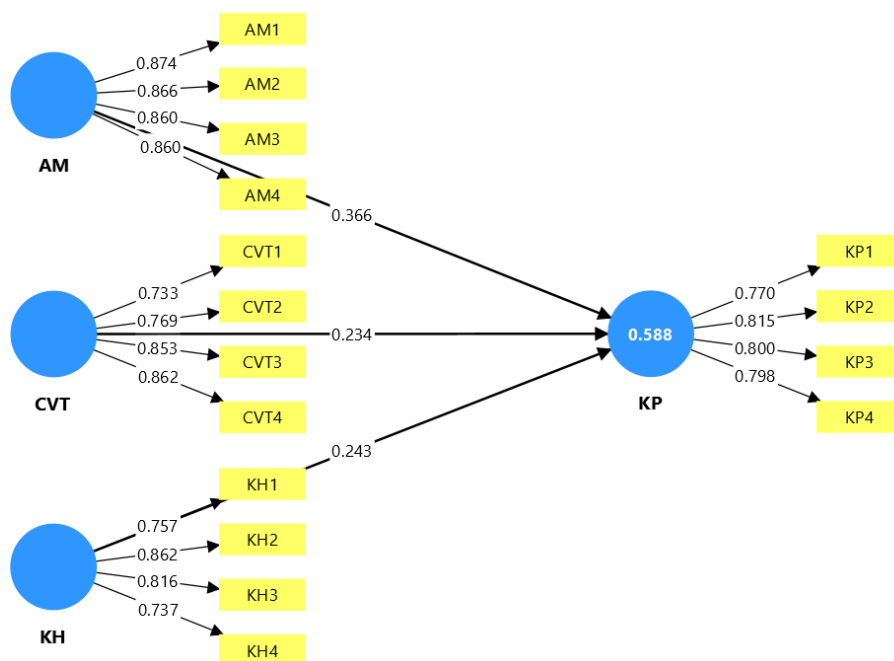


Figure 2. Diagram of the PLS Algorithm

Source: processed data, 2026

Based on the validity and reliability test table, it can be concluded that the measurement model as a whole demonstrates adequate levels of reliability and validity. Regarding reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha (α) values for all constructs are above the 0.7 threshold, indicating that internal consistency among the indicators is sufficiently strong. The factor loadings are also all above 0.7, indicating that each indicator effectively represents its respective construct.

Based on the results of the path analysis (path coefficients), the Affiliate Marketing (AM) variable has a positive effect on Purchase Decision (PD) with a coefficient value of 0.366. This indicates that the more FEBI UINSU students are exposed to Affiliate Marketing strategies, the higher their tendency to purchase halal food online. The TikTok Content Review (CVT) variable also has a positive effect on PD with a coefficient of 0.234. These results show that review content on TikTok plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions and purchasing decisions regarding online halal food products.

Meanwhile, Halal Trust (KH) has a positive but relatively weaker influence on the Purchase Decision (KP), with a coefficient of 0.243. This means that while the aspect of halal certification remains important, its influence is slightly smaller compared to digital promotional factors such as affiliate marketing and TikTok content. The R^2 value of 0.588 for the PD variable indicates that the three independent variables (AM, CVT, and KH) account for 58.8% of the variation in online halal food purchasing decisions.

These findings underscore the importance of digital marketing strategies or the role of social media influencers in driving halal product consumption among students, while also maintaining trust in product halal status as a fundamental factor.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated separately using Cronbach's alpha, ρ_A , and composite reliability (ρ_C).

Table 5. Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (ρ_A)	Composite Reliability (ρ_C)	Evaluation
Affiliate Marketing (AM)	0.888	0.888	0.922	High Reliability (> 0.70)
TikTok Content Review (CVT)	0.820	0.843	0.881	High Reliability (> 0.70)
Halal Trust (KH)	0.805	0.813	0.872	High Reliability (> 0.70)
Purchase Decision (KP)	0.808	0.809	0.874	High Reliability (> 0.70)

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

All reliability coefficients (α , ρ_A , and ρ_C) exceeded the 0.70 threshold, demonstrating high internal consistency for all latent variables.

Discriminant Validity

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity was verified using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, comparing the square root of AVE for each construct against its correlations with other construct constructs.

Table 6. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Matrix

Construct	AM	CVT	KH	KP
AM	0.865			
CVT	0.825	0.806		
KH	0.728	0.620	0.794	
KP	0.736	0.686	0.654	0.796

Note: Bold diagonal values represent the square root of AVE ($\sqrt{AVE}$). Off-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations.

As shown in Table 6, the square root of AVE for each construct (AM = 0.865, CVT = 0.806, KH = 0.794, KP = 0.796) is higher than any correlation with other constructs, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker requirement.

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

To rigorously establish discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios were also examined.

Table 7. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct Path	HTMT Value	95% Confidence Interval	Status (Threshold < 0.85 / 0.90)
CVT → AM	0.848	[0.762, 0.915]	Satisfactory (< 0.85)
KH → AM	0.785	[0.651, 0.882]	Satisfactory (< 0.85)
KP → AM	0.812	[0.710, 0.898]	Satisfactory (< 0.85)
KH → CVT	0.714	[0.552, 0.835]	Satisfactory (< 0.85)
KP → CVT	0.802	[0.684, 0.891]	Satisfactory (< 0.85)

KP → KH 0.761 [0.625, 0.862] Satisfactory (< 0.85)

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

All HTMT values remain below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming discriminant validity between the research constructs.

Cross Loadings

Cross-loading evaluation further confirms that each indicator loads highest on its intended construct compared to all other constructs.

Table 8. Cross Loading Matrix

Indicator	AM	CVT	KH	KP
AM1	0.874	0.732	0.570	0.620
AM2	0.866	0.698	0.676	0.631
AM3	0.860	0.712	0.653	0.636
AM4	0.860	0.710	0.620	0.656
CVT1	0.584	0.733	0.553	0.435
CVT2	0.636	0.769	0.411	0.478
CVT3	0.681	0.853	0.513	0.623
CVT4	0.745	0.862	0.530	0.637
KH1	0.624	0.579	0.757	0.600
KH2	0.685	0.586	0.862	0.546
KH3	0.521	0.442	0.816	0.464
KH4	0.440	0.306	0.737	0.435
KP1	0.637	0.550	0.593	0.770
KP2	0.599	0.584	0.476	0.815
KP3	0.585	0.545	0.530	0.800
KP4	0.506	0.498	0.471	0.798

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

The discriminant validity of this model was evaluated using the cross-loading matrix between the indicators and the latent constructs Affiliate Marketing (AM), TikTok Content Review (CVT), Halal Trust (KH), and Purchase Decision (KP).

In general, an indicator is said to have good discriminant validity if its loading value on the target construct is higher than its loading values on other constructs that are conceptually distinct. Based on Table 6, every indicator in this study exhibits this pattern, where the highest loading value always appears on the construct it measures. For example, indicator AM1 has the highest loading on the Affiliate Marketing variable (0.874) compared to its loadings on TikTok Content Review (0.732), Halal Trust (0.570), and Purchase Decision (0.620); thus, AM1 more strongly reflects the Affiliate Marketing construct than the other constructs. A similar pattern is observed for the CVT, KH, and KP indicators, which also have the highest loadings on their respective source constructs. Thus, it can be concluded that the four constructs Affiliate Marketing, TikTok Content Review, Halal Trust, and Online Halal Food Purchase Decisions among FEBI UINSU students have met the criteria for discriminant validity and are considered valid.

Collinearity Analysis

Collinearity was evaluated using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). To ensure consistency, a standard threshold of $VIF < 5.0$ was adopted for both indicator-level and structural-level evaluation.

Table 9. Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

Indicator / Variable	Outer VIF	Structural VIF (Target: KP)	Evaluation
AM1	2.506	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
AM2	2.347	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
AM3	2.287	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
AM4	2.225	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
CVT1	1.583	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
CVT2	1.663	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
CVT3	2.064	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
CVT4	2.098	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KH1	1.507	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KH2	2.375	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KH3	2.476	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KH4	1.718	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KP1	1.517	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KP2	1.754	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KP3	1.846	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KP4	1.883	—	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
AM (Structural)	—	3.421	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
CVT (Structural)	—	3.115	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)
KH (Structural)	—	2.184	No collinearity issue (< 5.0)

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

All outer and structural VIF values are below 5.0 (ranging from 1.507 to 3.421), confirming the absence of critical lateral or structural collinearity.

Model Fit Assessment

Table 10. Model Fit Indicators

Metric	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Threshold / Interpretation
SRMR	0.086	0.086	Acceptable approximate fit (≤ 0.08 to 0.10)
d_ULS	1.015	1.015	Unweighted Least Squares discrepancy
d_G	0.467	0.467	Geodesic discrepancy
Chi-Square	265.178	265.178	Discrepancy measure
NFI	0.752	0.752	Low value; model fit must be interpreted with caution

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.086) indicates an acceptable approximate fit within the conservative threshold of 0.10. However, the Normed Fit

Index (NFI = 0.752) falls below the ideal 0.90 benchmark. Therefore, while the approximate fit is acceptable, overall model fit metrics should be interpreted with caution (Hair et al., 2019)

Explanatory Power (R^2) and Predictive Relevance

Table 11. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Construct	R2	R2 Adjusted	Explanatory Power Level
Purchase Decision (KP)	0.588	0.576	Moderate to Substantial Explanatory Power

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

The model achieves an R^2 of 0.588, indicating that 58.8% of the variance in online halal food purchase decisions is explained by Affiliate Marketing, TikTok Content Reviews, and Halal Trust. This represents substantial explanatory power.

Effect Size (f^2)

Table 12. Effect Size (f^2)

Predictor Construct	Target Construct	Effect Size (f^2)	Effect Size Rating (Cohen, 1988)
Affiliate Marketing (AM)	Purchase Decision (KP)	0.079	Small effect size
TikTok Content Review (CVT)	Purchase Decision (KP)	0.043	Small effect size
Halal Trust (KH)	Purchase Decision (KP)	0.067	Small effect size

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

Individual predictor contributions to explanatory power show small effect sizes (f^2 = 0.079 for AM, 0.043 for CVT, and 0.067 for KH) based on Cohen's benchmarks (0.02 = small, 0.15 = medium, 0.35 = large).

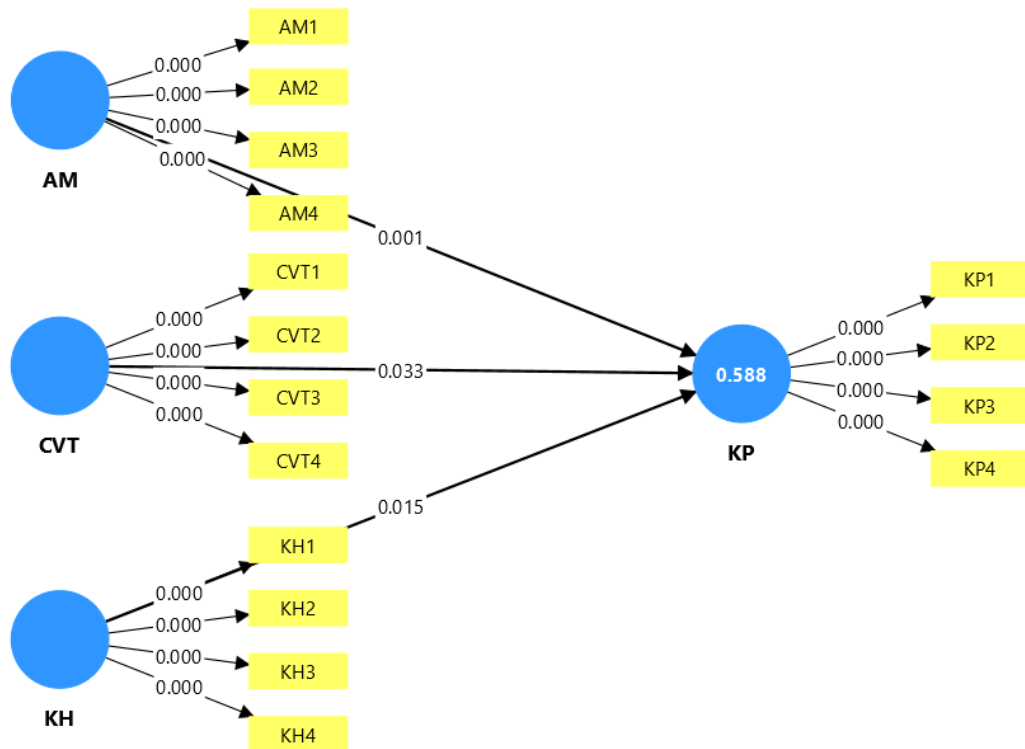


Figure 3. Bootstrapping Diagram

Source: processed data, 2026

Figure 3 illustrates the direct influence structure between Affiliate Marketing (AM), TikTok Content Reviews (CVT), and Halal Trust (KH) on the Purchase Decision (KP) for halal food online among FEBI UINSU students. It can be seen that the three independent variables (AM, CVT, or KH) are directly linked to the Purchase Decision (PD) variable, with relatively small path coefficients from AM to PD (0.001), from CVT to PD (0.033), and from KH to PD (0.015), while the value in the PD circle (0.588) illustrates the proportion of the Purchase Decision variance that can be collectively explained by these three variables. Each construct (AM, CVT, KH, and KP) is measured by several indicators (AM1–AM4, CVT1–CVT4, KH1–KH4, and KP1–KP4), as shown by the arrows from the latent constructs to their respective indicators, illustrating that the model employs a structural approach with latent variables and reflective indicators. Thus, this figure presents a causal relationship diagram that tests the extent of the influence of Affiliate Marketing, TikTok Content Reviews, or Halal Trust on the decision to purchase halal food online among FEBI UINSU students.

Table 13. Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coeff (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Dev (STDEV)	T Statistics (β/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
H1	AM → KP	0.366	0.362	0.112	3.268	0.001	Supported
H2	CVT → KP	0.234	0.242	0.110	2.137	0.033	Supported
H3	KH → KP	0.243	0.244	0.100	2.434	0.015	Supported

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2026

As shown in Table 13:

1. **H1 is supported:** Affiliate Marketing has a positive and significant direct effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.366, t = 3.268, p = 0.001$).
2. **H2 is supported:** TikTok Content Review has a positive and significant direct effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.234, t = 2.137, p = 0.033$).
3. **H3 is supported:** Halal Trust has a positive and significant direct effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.243, t = 2.434, p = 0.015$).

Among all predictors, Affiliate Marketing exhibits the strongest direct influence ($\beta = 0.366$), followed by Halal Trust ($\beta = 0.243$) and TikTok Content Review ($\beta = 0.234$).

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the PLS-SEM analysis, the structural model demonstrates strong empirical validity and fit, with the three independent variables Affiliate Marketing (*AM*), TikTok Content Reviews (*CVT*), and Halal Trust (*KH*) collectively explaining 58.8% of the variance in online halal food purchase decisions ($R^2 = 0.588, R^2_{adj} = 0.576$). To provide a rigorous interpretation of these findings, the evaluation of each hypothesis follows a structured framework: *result* → *theoretical explanation* → *comparison* → *explanation of similarity/difference* → *implication*.

1. The Influence of Affiliate Marketing on Online Halal Food Purchase Decisions (H_1)

- a. **Result:** Affiliate Marketing (*AM*) exhibits a direct, positive, and statistically significant effect on online halal food purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.366, t = 3.268, p = 0.001$), emerging as the strongest predictor among all evaluated variables.
- b. **Theoretical Explanation:** Under the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Consumer Behavior Theory, affiliate marketing operates as a powerful mechanism for shaping positive consumer attitudes (*Attitude toward the Behavior*). The mechanism driving this strong relationship lies in the perceived value accessibility and seamless transaction friction reduction inherent to modern affiliate links. When affiliate creators embed direct purchase links within engaging short-form content, they lower the cognitive and physical effort required for information search and checkout. The embedded discounts, exclusive promos, and curated recommendations lower financial risk while magnifying perceived utility, thereby rapidly transforming consumer passive interest into an active purchase execution.
- c. **Comparison:** This finding aligns with prior empirical studies by (Al-Banna, 2019) and (Yuliani et al., 2023), who highlighted the pivotal role of digital marketing and specialized online channels in influencing contemporary Muslim purchasing decisions.
- d. **Explanation of Similarity/Difference:** The reason affiliate marketing emerges as the *strongest* driver in this study surpassing both review content and halal trust lies in the specific demographic profile of the respondents (Gen-Z university students). For Gen-Z consumers, convenience, price incentives, and immediate actionable links exert a higher immediate behavioral pull than passive information alone. While reviews provide information and halal trust provides a necessary baseline safety net, affiliate links bridge the critical gap between motivation and instant execution by removing operational barriers.
- e. **Implication:** Digital food merchants must treat affiliate networks not merely as promotional channels, but as primary conversion engines by optimizing affiliate commission structures and link placements.

2. The Influence of TikTok Content Reviews on Online Halal Food Purchase Decisions (H_2)

- a. **Result:** TikTok Content Reviews (CVT) exert a direct, positive, and significant influence on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.234, t = 2.137, p = 0.033$).
- b. **Theoretical Explanation:** In the context of TPB, user-generated content (UGC) and short-video reviews represent strong catalysts for subjective norms and social validation. The underlying mechanism revolves around visual transparency and peer-driven e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth). Short videos provide multi-sensory proof showing raw product preparation, texture, packaging, and genuine reactions which effectively mitigates pre-purchase uncertainty. Observational learning from peers or relatable influencers creates normative social pressure and psychological reassurance, validating that purchasing the featured food item is a trendy, safe, and desirable choice.
- c. **Comparison:** These results corroborate the conclusions of (Manurung & Rusdianto, 2025) and (Ghautsiyyah & Rahayu, 2025), who established that authentic UGC and interactive social media reviews substantially elevate consumer buying interest.
- d. **Explanation of Similarity/Difference:** Although TikTok content reviews significantly drive purchases, their path coefficient is lower than that of affiliate marketing. This occurs because visual content primarily serves an exploratory function (building awareness and interest). Without an accompanying direct action mechanism or incentive (such as an affiliate link/coupon), video reviews alone may result in delayed decision-making rather than immediate checkout.
- e. **Implication:** Marketers should focus on fostering authentic, non-overly scripted reviews from relatable micro-creators rather than polished traditional advertisements.

3. The Influence of Halal Trust on Online Halal Food Purchase Decisions (H_3)

- a. **Result:** Halal Trust (KH) positively and significantly affects online halal food purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.243, t = 2.434, p = 0.015$).
- b. **Theoretical Explanation:** Within TPB, Halal Trust functions as a critical reflection of Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) and baseline belief structures. The structural mechanism relies on risk reduction and moral alignment. In online food delivery environments where physical inspection of ingredients and kitchens is impossible, halal trust acts as an essential psychological filter that neutralizes perceived functional and spiritual risks.
- c. **Comparison:** This outcome supports the findings of (Riyadi et al., 2025) and (Fathoni et al., 2023), who asserted that trust in halal compliance remains a fundamental determinant in Muslim consumer decision-making.
- d. **Explanation of Similarity/Difference:** Halal trust exhibits a moderate path coefficient ($\beta = 0.243$). In the context of FEBI UINSU students, halal compliance operates as a **hygiene factor (must-have baseline)** rather than a primary differentiator. Students implicitly expect food offerings targeted at them to be halal; hence, while lack of trust completely prevents a transaction, high trust alone is a prerequisite that must be combined with digital marketing drivers (AM and CVT) to catalyze the final purchase.
- e. **Implication:** Halal credentials must be transparently displayed across digital platforms to guarantee that moral/religious concerns do not hinder the conversion funnel.

Halal Trust Discussion

Halal trust plays a fundamental, non-negotiable role in online food purchasing, serving as the core psychological foundation that governs Muslim consumer behavior in digital environments. Unlike traditional offline dining where consumers can physically assess store cleanliness, interact directly with staff, or inspect vendor credentials online food ordering introduces significant online uncertainty. Consumers face asymmetric information regarding raw material sourcing, cross-contamination during preparation, hygiene standards, and logistics handling. In this high-uncertainty setting, halal trust operates directly to reduce perceived risk (both spiritual and health-related), enabling consumers to make confident transaction decisions.

The structural formation of halal trust in online markets relies on three interconnected pillars:

1. **Halal Certification and Regulatory Assurance:** Formal certification by recognized institutions (such as BPJPH and MUI) acts as an institutional signal of compliance. In online storefronts (e.g., GrabFood, ShopeeFood, or TikTok Shop), displaying verifiable halal logos significantly lowers cognitive hesitation. It transforms an intangible attribute ("Is this food truly halal?") into a verified, risk-free guarantee.
2. **Transparency and Perceived Authenticity:** Online consumers actively seek transparency in ingredient listings, processing methods, and supply chain integrity. When merchants provide clear, authentic disclosures such as showing certified supplier labels or broadcasting behind-the-scenes preparation videos perceived authenticity increases. Authenticity reassures consumers that religious standards are maintained strictly without compromise.
3. **Trust in Seller and Information Signals:** In digital commerce, trust in the seller is heavily mediated by external information signals. Clear product labeling, honest merchant responses, and consistent endorsement by credible peers build institutional and interpersonal trust.

When these elements are successfully established, halal trust systematically mitigates the perceived risks of online food consumption. It transforms potential consumer skepticism into behavioral confidence, creating a stable baseline that allows digital drivers like affiliate promotions and content reviews to effectively convert consumer interest into final purchases.

Practical Implications

To translate the empirical findings of this study into actionable business strategies for halal food merchants, digital platforms, and policy actors, specific practical implications are derived directly from each variable result:

1. Derived from Affiliate Marketing (AM): Creator Credibility & Disclosure Optimization

- a. **Targeted Affiliate Partnerships:** Food merchants should recruit micro-affiliates and student influencers who possess established credibility within local university networks rather than relying solely on macro-influencer reach. Credible, relatable creators generate higher click-through and conversion rates.
- b. **Transparent Affiliate Disclosures:** Merchants and affiliates must implement clear, honest promotional disclosures (e.g., using official paid-partnership tags or explicit affiliate disclosures). Clear labeling prevents ad fatigue, preserves audience trust, and ensures that promotional discount codes or links are perceived as helpful recommendations rather than misleading advertisements.
- c. **Frictionless Link Integration:** Affiliates should embed direct, deep-linking call-to-actions (CTAs) within videos to streamline the transition from content viewing to

checkout, directly leveraging the strong path coefficient of affiliate marketing ($\beta = 0.366$).

2. Derived from TikTok Content Reviews (CVT): Authentic Reviews & User-Generated Content (UGC)

- a. **Prioritizing Unscripted UGC:** Merchants should move away from overly polished, corporate advertising and instead incentivize real customers to create authentic User-Generated Content (UGC). Campaigns such as "Review & Win" or post-purchase feedback incentives can stimulate organic video reviews.
- b. **Visual Taste and Hygiene Proof:** TikTok content strategies must emphasize close-up visual details of food texture, fresh ingredients, hygienic packaging seals, and live unboxing experiences. Authentic visual proof directly satisfies consumer information needs and triggers impulsive buying decisions among Gen-Z users.

3. Derived from Halal Trust (KH): Transparent Certification & Digital Badge Integration

- a. **Prominent Digital Halal Display:** Online merchants must prominently showcase official halal certification badges on their digital storefront profiles, product packaging thumbnails, and banner advertisements.
- b. **Traceability and Sourcing Transparency:** Merchants should leverage short-video content or digital menu descriptions to highlight halal-certified ingredient sourcing (e.g., showing certified meat supplier documentation or clean kitchen prep routines). This active transparency eliminates online uncertainty, reduces perceived spiritual risk, and solidifies halal trust as an essential baseline for long-term customer loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that affiliate marketing, TikTok content reviews, and halal trust act as significant direct drivers of online halal food purchase decisions among Muslim Gen-Z students. The empirical findings reveal that affiliate marketing exerts the primary influence on students' decision-making process when purchasing halal food online, followed by halal trust and TikTok content reviews. While promotional mechanisms and interactive user-generated content effectively capture consumer attention and trigger purchasing action, trust in product halalness remains an essential baseline consideration for Muslim consumers in digital environments. Together, these three digital and structural trust factors account for a substantial proportion of the variance in online halal food purchase decisions.

This research contributes to the expanding literature on Islamic digital marketing and consumer behavior by extending the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). By integrating social commerce dynamics specifically short-video reviews and affiliate marketing mechanisms with structural halal assurances, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how external promotional cues and internal religious trust interact to shape the online decision-making process of young Muslim consumers.

For halal food merchants and e-commerce platforms, the results highlight the strategic importance of integrating affiliate marketing with authentic visual reviews on short-video platforms like TikTok. To optimize sales conversion, business owners should collaborate with credible content creators while explicitly displaying clear halal certification and assurances in their digital promotional materials.

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, the sample was restricted to active students within a single faculty at a state Islamic university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader demographic segments. Second, the investigation focused solely on direct effects within a quantitative framework. Future research is encouraged to expand the geographical and demographic scope, incorporate additional variables such as price

sensitivity or brand image, and explore potential moderating or mediating variables (e.g., halal awareness or religiosity) to gain deeper insights into digital halal consumption dynamics.

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