

# Behavioral Perspectives of Gen Z on Halal Cosmetics Purchase Intentions in Northern Malaysia

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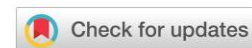
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## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**

*Gen Z, purchase intention, halal cosmetics, brand image, northern Malaysia.*

This study investigates the factors that influence Gen Z's purchase intention towards halal cosmetics in Northern Malaysia, using the SEM-PLS approach. The results show that attitude plays a significant role, where positive perceptions towards halal products substantially increase purchase intention. Gen Z's preference for ethical and sustainable choices emphasizes the importance of aligning product offerings with their values. Brand image also proved to be a key driving factor, as the high level of digital engagement of this generation makes them highly responsive to brands that create a strong online presence, work with influencers and participate through social media platforms. While subjective norms are meaningful, their impact is not as strong as personal attitudes and brand image, underscoring Gen Z's digital autonomy and reliance on personal preferences over peer influence. These findings suggest that halal cosmetic brands need to focus on building an authentic and relevant digital brand image to effectively engage with Gen Z consumers. This study provides insights for halal brands looking to reach this influential and tech-savvy generation, highlighting the importance of

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transparency, digital engagement, and alignment with sustainability and ethical values.

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## INTRODUCTION

- a) Halal concept is increasingly accepted as a universal concept, extending from food and beverages to sectors such as beauty and personal care (Hashim & Musa, 2014; Siddique et al., 2020). In Malaysia, this trend has been positively received with high demand for halal-certified beauty products (Wei et al., 2020), supported by industry players and consumers. The global halal cosmetics market is predicted to experience significant growth (Shahid et al., 2018), driven by the rising Muslim population and increasing consumer awareness (Naseri & Abdullah, 2022; Wibowo, 2023). This growth is not only happening in Muslim-majority countries; non-Muslim-majority countries are also seeing a surge in demand for halal-certified products, making halal certification a strategic necessity for global beauty brands (Ngah et al., 2021). In Malaysia, where 61.3% of the total population is Muslim, Gen Z (aged 13-28 years) is one of the largest consumer groups (DOSM, 2024). According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2023, Malaysia ranks third globally in the halal pharmaceuticals and cosmetics market (SGIE Report, 2023). The SGIE report estimates that Muslims will make up 2.2 billion of the global population by 2030, signaling enormous growth potential for halal products in various sectors, including beauty and cosmetics (Fakir et al., 2023).
- b) The demand for halal beauty products is further strengthened by the sharp rise in Muslim consumer spending, which reached US\$84 billion in 2022, registering a 14.3% increase over the previous year (Briliana & Mursito, 2017). This growth trend demonstrates the increasing interest in halal-certified products among the global Muslim population. Projections suggest that the market will continue to expand, with spending expected to increase to US\$129 billion by 2027, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.9% (Kadam & Deshmukh, 2020).

This significant growth reflects the increasing purchasing power of Muslim consumers as well as their growing preference for cosmetics that conform to Islamic principles, emphasizing the importance of halal certification in the beauty industry (Irfany et al., 2024).

- c) Modern Muslim consumers emphasize the importance of quality, hygiene, and ethical practices in addition to religious considerations (Bhutto et al., 2023). Businesses that ignore this demand risk missing out on significant growth opportunities, especially within the beauty and personal care sector (Zainudin et al., 2020). Despite the growing demand, the halal cosmetics market is still dominated by non-Muslim companies, while Muslim entrepreneurs have a smaller role. This study examines the factors that influence the purchase intention of halal cosmetics among Northern Malaysian Gen Z, two generations that have great influence in the market.
- d) Gen Z, in particular, is known for its digital engagement and trend impact, especially through social media (Slepian et al., 2023). They prioritize transparency, ethical practices, and environmentally friendly products that comply with halal principles (Nagvanshi et al., 2023). Increased consumer awareness regarding cosmetic ingredients increases the demand for halal-certified and sustainable products (Bhutto et al., 2023). Building a relevant brand image with an emphasis on ethical and halal aspects is more appealing to Millennials and Gen Z compared to campaigns that only focus on product attributes (Hussain et al., 2024). Thus, this study aims to investigate the factors that influence purchase intention of halal cosmetics, particularly among Gen Z consumers, who are highly influenced by digital platforms and social media.
- e) This study aims to identify the factors that influence Gen Z's purchase intention towards halal cosmetics in Northern Malaysia. This study applies the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to provide a comprehensive framework in understanding Gen Z's purchase intention towards halal cosmetics. The TPB is highly relevant for this study as it provides insights into how attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control influence purchase decisions, particularly in the context of significant culture and religion. Given that Gen Z consumers are influenced by the digital environment, brand image was used as an additional variable in this study. In addition, religiosity plays an important role, especially in Northern Malaysia, where Islamic values significantly influence consumer behavior.

### ***Theory of planned behavior***

Intention is central to theory of planned behavior (TPB) and is considered the strongest predictor of an individual's behavior, especially in purchase halal cosmetic (Perdana et al., 2019). This intention is formed from the belief that one is capable of controlling their actions and that these actions align with their values and norms (Ajzen, 1991; Bhutto et al., 2023). The stronger the individual's intention, the more likely they are to perform the desired behavior. The idea of planned behavior is a popular tool for studying consumer behavior, especially when it comes to halal goods. According to this theory, an individual's desire to carry out a conduct is what ultimately determines that behavior, and three important variables influence this intention are attitude, and subjective norm, perceived behavioral control (Nuryakin et al., 2023a; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011).

These three variables are in fact highly significant determinants of consumers' intentions, according to research on the purchase intention of halal cosmetics. Purchase intention for halal cosmetics has been found to be significantly influenced by attitude, which expresses one's opinion of the behavior, whether favorable or negative (Pasha et al., 2019) (Ansari & Mohammed, 2015). Similarly, it has been demonstrated that purchase intention is influenced by subjective norm, which is defined as the social pressure to engage in or refrain from engaging in the action (Nawawi et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been found that a strong predictor of the desire to purchase halal cosmetics is perceived behavioral control, which measures how easy or difficult the action is to accomplish (Yaacob et al., 2023).

### ***Hypotheses development***

Purchase intention is a metric that integrates consumer interest with the likelihood of acquiring a product or service, thereby affecting subsequent purchasing behavior. The authors contend that consumers exhibiting elevated positive emotional responses are more inclined to make purchases.

The term attitude describes a person's entire assessment of engaging in an action, including both favorable and unfavorable sentiments. It indicates the extent to which an individual view taking a specific action favorably or unfavorably. Prior research has demonstrated that consumers' attitudes toward halal cosmetics have a significant impact on their intention to buy them (Shmailan & Alfalih, 2024; Sriminarti & Nora, 2018; Suryadi et al., 2020). They are more likely to express an intention to buy halal cosmetics if they have positive attitudes toward them and believe that they are pure, high-quality, and in line with their moral and religious beliefs.

H1. Attitude positively influence halal cosmetic purchase intention

In the context of halal cosmetics, subjective norm represents the influence that important social groups exert on an individual's decision to purchase these products.. The desire to gain approval and avoid disapproval from influential social groups is a powerful

motivator in shaping consumer behavior. Studies show that when consumers feel that their peers, family, or members of their religious community approve of or expect them to use halal cosmetics, they are more likely to form a strong intention to purchase these products (Nuryakin et al., 2023b). This effect can be especially pronounced in communities where religious adherence and social conformity are highly valued (Utami & Fetrina, 2024). In such cases, purchasing halal cosmetics becomes not just a personal choice, but a reflection of social and religious identity (Supriani et al., 2024).

#### H2. Subjective norm positively influence halal cosmetic purchase intention

The perceived behavioral control refers to the extent to which consumers believe they have the ability, resources, and opportunities necessary to purchase halal-certified products (Y. J. Memon et al., 2020). When consumers perceive that halal cosmetics are easily accessible in local markets, that they have sufficient financial resources, and possess adequate knowledge to identify and verify halal certifications, their PBC is strengthened (Abbas Helmi et al., 2020). If consumers struggle to find halal-certified cosmetics or if these products are priced beyond their budget, they may feel less capable of buying them, even if their attitude and subjective norms are favourable (Oktavia Fatmi et al., 2022). As a result, the reduced sense of control hampers their intention to purchase.

#### H3. PBC positively influence halal cosmetic purchase intention

Brand image denotes the overall perception created by all information associated with the brand. This includes the unique attributes of the brand, user preferences, organizational culture, product functionalities, and the intangible emotions and essence linked to it (Chin et al., 2024). It can also be characterized as the expectations, behaviors, mindsets, and attitudes of customers in relation to their perception of a brand (Zhong, 2023). A product associated with a strong brand image positively influences purchase intention. Brand image in today's era can be built through online presence and telling the story of the product to customers through digital platforms such as social media. (Agmeka et al., 2019; Ihzaturrahma & Kusumawati, 2021). A positive brand image enhances consumer trust and loyalty which is can leading customer to repurchase goods (Azizan & Yusr, 2019; Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Martin & Nasib, 2021).

#### H4. Brand Image positively influence halal cosmetic purchase intention

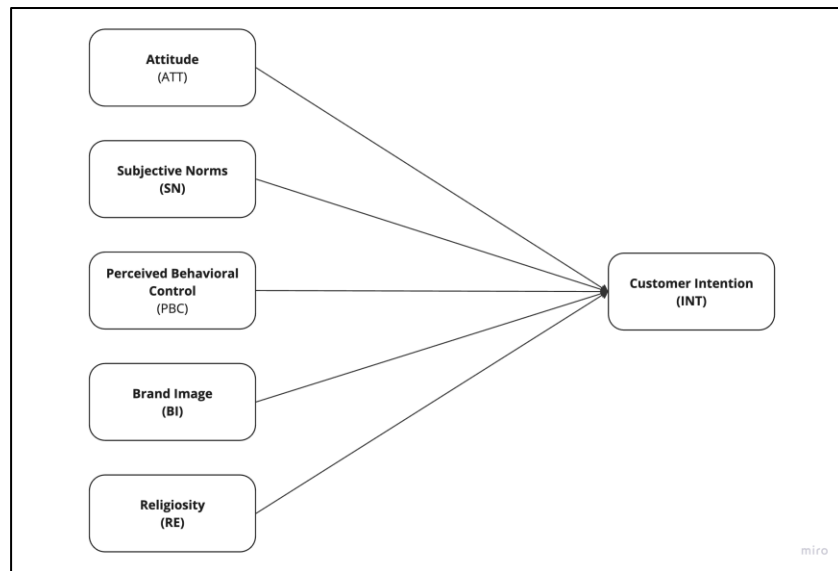
Religiosity is one of the factors considered in many studies on halal products such as halal cosmetics, halal fashion, to Islamic banking (M. M. Khan & Rashid, 2023; Yudha et al., 2024). Religiosity encompasses various aspects, including religious obligations. These obligations are compulsory and normative, consisting of fatwas issued by muftis on current issues (Charag et al., 2020). In research conducted by (Bhutto et al., 2023; N. Khan et al., 2021), religiosity was found to have a positive influence both directly and as a mediating variable on purchase intention of halal cosmetics products. Meanwhile, in

research conducted by (Yudha et al., 2024), religiosity was found to have no effect either directly or as a mediating variable.

H5. Religiosity positively influence halal cosmetic purchase intention

## RESEARCH METHOD

**Figure 1:** Research design



This study uses a quantitative approach that uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework by Ajzen, (1991) as the main framework in analyzing the intention to buy halal cosmetics by Gen Z in the northern Malaysia. The data source in this study was obtained from primary data collected using a digital questionnaire in the form of a google form distributed via online social media directly to the respondents. The indicators in this research questionnaire refer to research by (Handriana et al., 2020; Haque et al., 2018; Isa et al., 2023; N. Khan et al., 2021; Mbawuni & Nimako, 2017; Ngah et al., 2021; Nuryakin et al., 2023; Reni & Ahmad, 2016). Furthermore, there are 6 indicators used in total, namely 5 independent indicators, namely attitude (ATT), subjective norms (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC), religiosity (RE), and brand image (BI). Then the dependent variable is purchase intention (PI). The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method was used to process and analyze data in this study (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is a statistical method used to determine the relationship that occurs between the variables tested (Hair et al., 2019; Karoui et al., 2024). In this study, PLS-SEM was used for hypothesis testing and statistical testing.

### ***Population and sample***

The population taken in this study is the population of Gen Z in Malaysia, especially in the northern part of Malaysia. In the discussion of the scope of generational groups, there is a term known as Gen Z. Based on Slepian et al., (2023), explained that Gen Z is a generation group born in 1997 to 2012 or aged 13 to 28 years. With this age range, this

research takes the scope of university students in norther Malaysia as the main scope of this research.

Taking the scope of university students is also in line with research conducted by Shome et al., (2018), who took a similar scope. The reason is because the university environment is a place that has diverse demographic and social diversification, reflecting the diverse conditions of the country (Al-Kamal et al., 2024; Andrean et al., 2024; Shome et al., 2018). Then because this research focuses on northern Malaysia, so the universities taken for the research site are Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UNIMAP), Universiti Utara Malaysai (UUM) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling with the aim that respondents who fill out the questionnaire are certain groups that match the research target (Campbell et al., 2020). Thus, in this study purposive sampling will be by taking samples that only come from the Gen Z.

The determination of the sampling number in this study took two main references. The first is from (Hair et al., 2014), stating that the determination of the number of samples is based on the number of indicators and multiplied by 5 to 10 per indicator (Hair et al., 2014). Thus the number of samples based on this reference is 115 to 230 respondents. The second reference used is M. A. Memon et al., (2020), who conducted research in determining the most optimal sample size for research with a multivariate analysis approach such as PLS-SEM. Based on these references, it is recommended that the optimal sample size is 160 to 300 respondents, which is the right amount not too large and not too small while maintaining reliable and accurate results (Kock & Hadaya, 2018; M. A. Memon et al., 2020). Thus the minimum sample size determined in this study is 115 to 300 respondents.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Respondents profile*

**Table 1:** Demographic profile

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender	Male	82	30
	Female	190	70
University	UUM	122	45
	UNIMAP	82	30
	USM	68	25
Educational background	Pre-university	41	15
	Degree	109	40
	Master	95	35
	PhD	27	10
Intensity of cosmetic use	Daily	150	55

	2-3 days a week	54	20
	1 day a week	68	25
Intensity in purchasing cosmetics	Once a month	150	55
	Once in 3 months	122	45

The demographic profile of the 272 respondents provides valuable insights into the characteristics of the sample population. Most of the respondents were female (70%), while males accounted for 30% of the sample. This is in line with the general trend of the cosmetics industry being dominated by women, although the participation of men indicates the growing interest in halal cosmetics among men. In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents had a bachelor's degree (40%), followed by those with a master's degree (35%). Smaller percentages had pre-university (15%) or PhD (10%) qualifications. This shows that the sample has a high level of education, which may affect their awareness and understanding of halal cosmetics as well as their purchase intention.

The respondents came from three universities: Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) (45%), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UNIMAP) (30%), and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) (25%). This distribution reflects the geographical focus of this study in Northern Malaysia. Regarding cosmetics use, 55% of respondents reported using cosmetics daily, while 20% use them 2-3 times a week, and 25% use them once a week. This indicates a high level of engagement with cosmetic products among the sample. Similarly, 55% of respondents reported purchasing cosmetics once a month, while 45% make purchases every three months. This frequency highlights the importance of cosmetics as a regular expense for most respondents.

#### 4.2 Inner model result

This study applies PLS-SEM to analyze the relationship between variables and the effect of each variable on purchase intention. Based on studies by (Khan et al., 2021; Mbawuni & Nimako, 2017), there are several main steps in assessing the tested model, including evaluating the level of reliability, validity, collinearity, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), path coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) (Hair et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2021).

**Table 2:** Inner model result

Construct	Items	Factor loadings	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
ATT	ATT1	0.732	1.933	0.759	0.841	0.571
	ATT2	0.709	1.833			
	ATT3	0.736	1.279			
	ATT4	0.839	1.672			
SN	SN2	0.832	1.883	0.853	0.910	0.771
	SN3	0.894	2.382			

	SN4	0.906	2.204			
PBC	PBC1	0.755	1.420			
	PBC2	0.915	1.907	0.755	0.858	0.669
	PBC3	0.776	1.575			
BI	BI1	0.804	1.749			
	BI2	0.836	2.010	0.858	0.904	0.701
	BI3	0.854	2.183			
	BI4	0.855	2.081			
RE	RE1	0.877	2.705			
	RE2	0.804	2.126	0.838	0.891	0.673
	RE3	0.771	1.980			
	RE4	0.824	2.233			
PI	PI1	0.789	1.582			
	PI2	0.808	1.751	0.819	0.880	0.648
	PI3	0.821	2.098			
	PI4	0.801	1.882			

**Note:** CR = Composite reliability

Validity and reliability testing in models using PLS-SEM can be measured through construct reliability, convergent reliability, and discriminant reliability (Hair et al., 2022; Mbawuni & Nimako, 2017). Construct reliability itself is evaluated from the value of factor loadings with a minimum threshold of 0.70 and through Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70 (Almarzouqi et al., 2022; Ghozali, 2015; Hair et al., 2019). In this research, SN1 failed to fulfil outer loading 0.7 ( $0.7 <$ ) threshold. Afterwards, SN1 then removed and the model analysis process was repeated without involving SN1. Based on Table 2, it can be noted that the factor loadings and Cronbach's Alpha values all meet the criteria, so this model is considered reliable. For the collinearity test, this is checked through the variance inflation factor (VIF) value which should not exceed 5 ( $VIF \leq 5$ ) (Hair et al., 2019; A. H. Memon et al., 2014). Table 2 shows that all indicators used do not experience collinearity problems.

**Table 3:** Fornell-Larckner result

	ATT	BI	PBC	PI	RE	SN
ATT	0.756					
BI	0.229	0.837				
PBC	0.311	0.167	0.818			
PI	0.356	0.572	0.244	0.805		
RE	0.261	0.171	0.606	0.271	0.820	

SN	0.367	0.150	0.503	0.282	0.401	0.878
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To assess convergent reliability, it can be seen from the average variance extracted (AVE) value with a minimum value of 0.50 and the composite reliability (CR) value with a minimum value of 0.70 (Ghozali, 2015; Hair et al., 2019). Based on Table 2, it can be seen that all AVE and CR values have exceeded the minimum requirements set. Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which measurement items correctly explain certain constructs better than other constructs in the structural model (Hair et al., 2019). The assessment can be done through the square root of the AVE of each construct which must be greater than the correlation between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019; Lasker et al., 2017). In Table 3, all AVE square root values (on the diagonal) show larger values than the correlation values between other constructs. Therefore, all of the above measuring indicators confirm that the discriminatory validity of the constructs in the proposed model is adequate and meets the criteria. Considering that the reliability and construct validity of the measurement model are acceptable.

The next step is to evaluate the coefficient of determination in the analyzed model. In PLS-SEM, the indicator used to assess the coefficient of determination is  $R^2$  (Hair et al., 2014; Yana et al., 2015). According to Hair et al. (2014), the  $R^2$  result can have three meanings, namely substantial, moderate, and weak, depending on the value, namely 0.75, 0.50, 0.25 respectively. In this study, the  $R^2$  value is 0.404, which means it falls into the moderate category (see Table 4).

In assessing the effect size of the model. Referring to (Hamid & Anwar, 2019), the effect size ( $f^2$ ) categorization is divided into 3 categories, namely strong, moderate and weak with the  $f^2$  values being 0.35, 0.15, 0.02 respectively (Hair et al., 2019; Hamid & Anwar, 2019). Regarding the effect size ( $f^2$ ), it was found that the largest effect was on BI with a  $f^2$  value of 0.464, then ATT with value 0.044 and then SN with value 0.013. This is classified as variables that have strong and moderate influence (Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 4:** Quality criteria

	$R^2$	$f^2$	$Q^2$
ATT		0.044	
SN		0.013	
PBC		0.000	
BI		0.464	
RE		0.011	
PI	0.404		0.360

Furthermore, it is necessary to assess the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) of the tested model. Based on Hair et al. (2019), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) is the value used to measure the level of model prediction accuracy. The predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) value must be more than zero ( $Q^2 > 0$ ), so that the model can be considered to have good prediction accuracy

(Hair et al., 2019; Hamid & Anwar, 2019). In this study, the  $Q^2$  value is 0.360, greater than zero. This indicates that the model is well reconstructed and has predictive relevance (see Table 4).

### 4.3 Structural model result

Based on the results of the hypothesis tests that have been carried out, the findings of the hypothesis test results are summarized in Table 5. This study divides the results of hypothesis testing into two categories, namely supported and not supported. According to Hair et al., (2019), the indicators used are t-statistics and p-values. The t-statistic value that must be met to be considered significant is  $\geq 1.96$ . Meanwhile, the accepted p-values are below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2014; [Hamid & Anwar, 2019](#)).

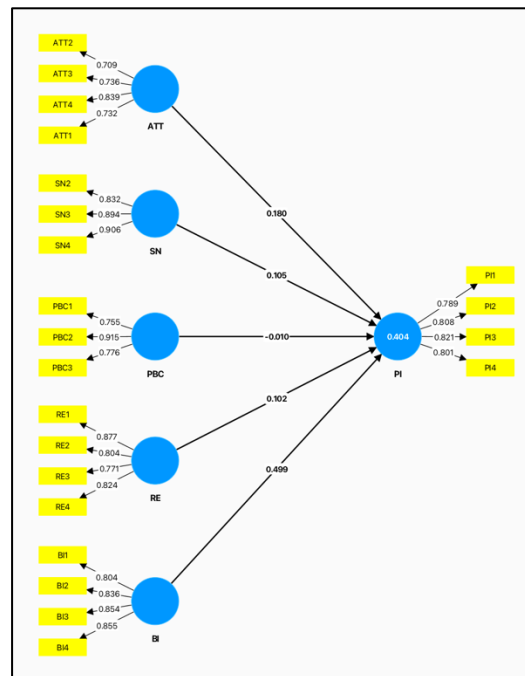
**Table 5:** Hypotheses test result

	Hypothesized relationship	Path coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-statistics	p-values	Remarks
<i>H1</i>	ATT -> PI	0.180	3.154	0.001	Supported
<i>H2</i>	BI -> PI	0.499	9.949	0.000	Supported
<i>H3</i>	PBC -> PI	-0.010	0.126	0.450	Not Supported
<i>H4</i>	RE -> PI	0.102	1.402	0.081	Not Supported
<i>H5</i>	SN -> PI	0.105	1.708	0.044	Not Supported

Referring to Table 5, ATT ( $\beta = 0.180$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ;  $t = 3.154$ ) is proven to have a positive and significant influence on PI. This finding is in line with research conducted by (Andrian et al., 2024; Damayanti et al., 2024; Handriana et al., 2020), which shows that the more open and positive consumer attitudes towards halal cosmetic products will increase their purchase intention for these products. This shows that Gen Z consumers who show a positive attitude towards halal products are more likely to buy them.

Subjective norm showed a weak but significant relationship with purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.105$ ,  $t = 1.708$ ,  $p = 0.044$ ). This finding partially supports TPB, which states that social influence can shape behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). This result is consistent with the findings of (Handriana et al., 2020; Ngah et al., 2021). However, the relatively low  $\beta$  value suggests that peer or societal influence may play a secondary role compared to personal attitudes and intentions in the context of Gen Z purchase intention towards halal cosmetics. Positive results were also obtained on the brand image (BI) variable ( $\beta = 0.499$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ;  $t = 9.949$ ) was also found to have a positive and significant influence on PI. This finding is in line with research conducted by (Damayanti et al., 2024; Ngah et al., 2021), which shows that the better the brand image built and the stronger the relevance of the brand image to the target customer, the customer's purchase intention for halal products will increase.

**Figure 2.** Structural model



Other factors such as PBC ( $\beta = -0.010$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ;  $t = 0.126$ ), and RE ( $\beta = 0.102$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ;  $t = 1.402$ ), were all found to be insignificant on purchase intention. The finding that PBC is not significant on purchase intention of halal cosmetics is in line with previous research (Bhutto et al., 2023). Furthermore, RE was also found to have no effect on PI. This result is quite unique considering that the northern part of Malaysia is a fairly conservative (Ismail et al., 2019). Therefore, finding that religiosity has no effect in this case is a finding that can state that the initial hypothesis proposed is not supported. Similar results were shown in this study by (Amin et al., 2011), where the context of products and services is considered to have no direct relationship with religious practices. In another study conducted by (Yudha et al., 2024), it was also found that religiosity has no positive influence directly or as a mediating variable on the purchase intention of halal fashion products.

#### 4.4 Discussion and managerial implication

This study also aims to determine the influence of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, brand image and religiosity towards Gen Z purchase intention for halal cosmetics in Northern Malaysia. The SEM-PLS approach was used to test the empirical framework and prove the constructs between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, brand image and religiosity towards Gen Z purchase intention for halal cosmetics.

The results confirmed that attitude plays an pivotal role in influencing purchase intention, supporting H1. This shows that when Gen Z consumers have a positive perception of halal cosmetics, they will be more likely to buy them. This finding is in line with previous research (Andrean et al., 2024; Damayanti et al., 2024; Handriana et al.,

2020), which highlights how consumer attitudes directly shape purchasing decisions. Gen Z is known to be a highly value-driven generation, preferring brands that align with their personal ethics and beliefs. Gen Z also has a tendency to choose products that use organic ingredients and products that support environmental sustainability (Nagvanshi et al., 2023; Sagar et al., 2025; Tsai & Tang, 2024). Thus, halal cosmetic manufacturers must pay attention to this aspect if they want to make Gen Z take a more accepting attitude towards halal cosmetics products.

Another key finding is the strong influence of brand image on purchase intention, supporting H2. This result indicates that a well-established and reputable brand image significantly enhances consumer trust and preference. Gen Z is a generation that interacts and highly exposed by digital environments such as social media (Sharma et al., 2023). This kind of behavior makes Gen Z primarily through interact with brand through social media, making brand image a critical determinant of purchase decisions. Prior research (Damayanti et al., 2024; Ngah et al., 2021) suggests that brands with strong digital engagement, influencer collaborations, and visually appealing content are more likely to attract younger consumers.

In today's market, brand image is shaped by marketing through social media, endorsements from influencers, and user-generated content (UGC) (Belanche et al., 2021). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube play an important role in influencing how Gen Z perceives brands. Many cosmetic brands utilize beauty influencers, viral marketing campaigns and interactive content to strengthen their image. For example, brands that work with famous content creators to demonstrate the effectiveness and authenticity of products tend to build stronger consumer trust. Given that Gen Z places great importance on aesthetics, brand stories, and validation from peers, a brand's digital presence can greatly influence purchase intent.

Although subjective norms (H2) have a lower impact on purchase intention compared to attitude and brand image, subjective norms still have significance. This finding suggests that although peer and community influences contribute to supporting consumer behavior, they may not be as strong as personal attitudes and brand perception. Previous research (Handriana et al., 2020; Ngah et al., 2021) corroborates these results, showing that Gen Z consumers value recommendations from friends, family and online communities, but ultimately make purchasing decisions based on their personal preferences.

One potential reason for the comparatively diminished impact of subjective norms is Gen Z's digital autonomy and access to varied information sources. In contrast to earlier generations that depended significantly on word of mouth, Gen Z is more swayed by social media trends, product reviews, and online communities. Although peer influence

remains significant, the transition toward digital consumerism indicates that brand image and individual attitudes substantially influence purchasing decisions among Gen Z. Therefore, halal cosmetics brands should focus on these aspects and promote them to engage more Gen Z consumers in purchasing their products.

## CONCLUSION

This study contributes by presenting empirical evidence on the factors that influence Gen Z's purchase intention towards halal cosmetics in Northern Malaysia, specifically by examining attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, brand image, and religiosity. In contrast to previous studies that have placed much emphasis on halal certification or religiosity, this study foregrounds brand image as the strongest predictor of purchase intention, confirming the importance of social media and digital brand influence in shaping consumer behavior. In addition, this study also underscores the role of subjective norms, showing that peer influence remains important, although its impact is weaker when compared to personal attitudes and brand perception. From a practical perspective, the findings are useful for marketers, policymakers and industry players to refine their strategies to reach Gen Z consumers more effectively, through the utilization of strategies such as digital marketing, influencer collaboration and community-based branding. By bridging the gap in halal cosmetics research by highlighting social influence and digital consumerism, this study provides new insights into the purchasing behavior of young, growing Muslim consumers.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. First, the model was only able to explain 40.4% of the variance in purchase intention, which suggests that there are other unexamined factors that may also play an important role in influencing Gen Z's purchase decision. Future research should examine additional variables, such as trust, perceived product quality, social media engagement or influencer credibility, to strengthen the explanatory power of the model. Secondly, this study was limited to Gen Z consumers in Northern Malaysia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions, age groups or cultural contexts. Future studies could expand the research reach by conducting comparative analysis across different demographics or countries to identify potential variations in consumer behavior. In addition, while this study highlighted attitude, brand image and subjective norms, it did not examine mediation or moderation effects, which could deepen the understanding of purchase intention.

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