

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER TRUST IN HALAL PRODUCTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY: PLS-SEM APPROACH TO CULINARY MSMES IN PURWOKERTO

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the influence brand trust on purchasing decisions among consumers of Mie Gacoan in Purwokerto, mediated by attitude, and to link this with supporting local economic sustainability. The research adopts a quantitative approach using purposive sampling, collecting data from 105 respondents. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3 software. Analytical steps included evaluation of the measurement model (convergent validity, construct reliability, and discriminant validity), structural model evaluation, and hypothesis testing through bootstrapping to obtain t-statistics.

The results show that brand trust positively influences purchasing decisions indirectly through attitude. The implications highlight that strengthening consumer trust in halal products not only enhances purchasing decisions but also promotes local economic sustainability by empowering small businesses in the food and beverage sector. Transparency in halal information and brand image development are key strategies to build sustainable and innovative collaboration between micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and consumers, particularly in supporting a community-based circular economy model in rural areas.

Keywords: Brand Trust, Purchasing Decision, SMEs, Circular Economy, PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

Mie Gacoan is one of the fastest-growing culinary business actors in Indonesia since its establishment in 2016 (Samosir, 2023). Aggressive expansion and innovative strategies have made this brand successfully attract the market, especially spicy noodle fans. However, this success has also triggered the emergence of many competitors with similar concepts, thus creating fierce competition in the fast-food culinary segment (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

Consumer confidence is a key factor in maintaining market share. Mie Gacoan had faced public doubts regarding the halalness of its products, especially due to delays in halal certification and the use of controversial menu names (Antara News, 2023). As a strategic response, management made adjustments and obtained an official halal certificate from the MUI in 2023. This affirms the brand's commitment to sharia standards while strengthening brand trust among Muslim consumers (Hakim et al., 2024).

Brand trust is consumer confidence in the quality and integrity of a brand, and plays an important role in influencing purchasing decisions (Mita & Yasin, 2024). Previous studies have shown that the higher the level of consumer trust in a brand, the greater their tendency to make repeated purchases (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2007; Rahman & Haque, 2011). In the context of culinary MSMEs such as Mie Gacoan, building brand trust is an important strategy not only to improve business performance, but also to support the sustainability of the local economy (Yuliawati et al., 2023).

Increasing brand trust in halal MSME products is also in line with the principles of a community-based circular economy, where consumers play an active role in strengthening the local business ecosystem through a preference for trusted and ethical brands (Syifa, 2024). Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the influence of brand trust on purchase decisions, either

directly or through the mediation of consumer attitudes, with a case study on consumers of Gacoan Noodles in Purwokerto.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991) has become a strong theoretical framework for understanding consumer behavior in purchasing decision-making. According to TPB, a person's intention to perform a behavior is influenced by three main components, namely: attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavior control.

In the context of halal products, halal certification, brand trust, and product knowledge can form a positive consumer attitude, which in turn drives purchase intentions and decisions (Razzaque & Chaudhry, 2013; Jiang et al., 2019). Thus, the TPB provides a relevant basis for analyzing how these factors mediate an influence on purchasing decisions.

Brand Trust

Research by Bukhari et al. (2019) shows that brand trust not only drives brand loyalty but also increases purchase intent directly. This is supported by research by Chan et al. (2013) who found that the perception of brand reliability and integrity has a significant impact on the formation of positive consumer attitudes. The study by Delgado-Ballester et al. (2007) also reinforces that the affective dimension of brand trust is highly influential in consumer decision behavior towards food products.

Brand trust refers to the consumer's belief that a brand will deliver on its promises and deliver the expected benefits (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In the context of halal products, strong brand trust can strengthen consumers' positive perceptions of halal, quality, and product integrity (Aziz & Chok, 2013).

Previous research has shown that brand trust contributes to building positive attitudes that lead to purchasing decisions (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2007; Bukhari et al., 2019). Brand trust influences consumers' perception of the reliability and integrity of halal products. High brand trust encourages positive attitudes and purchasing decisions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Bukhari et al., 2019).

H1: Brand trust has a positive effect on consumer attitudes.

In addition to indirect influence through attitudes, some studies have also shown that brand trust can have a direct influence on purchasing decisions. Hakim et al. (2024) stated that even though Mie Gacoan had experienced polemics about its halal status, consumers still bought their products because they already had trust in the brand.

Studies by Delgado-Ballester et al. (2007) prove that trust in brands has a direct effect on loyalty and purchase intent, even in situations of information uncertainty. In addition, research by Rahman and Haque (2011) also shows that brand trust directly influences purchase decisions in the context of halal food and beverage products.

H2: Brand trust has a positive effect on purchasing decisions.

CONSUMER ATTITUDES

Consumer attitudes are defined as psychological tendencies in evaluating an object consistently, both positively and negatively (Ajzen, 1991). In consumer behavior research, attitudes have been shown to have a strong influence on purchase intentions and decisions. Mustamil et al. (2020) show that a positive attitude towards halal products will increase purchase intention and encourage consumers to realize these decisions.

Research by Rizwan et al. (2014) shows that consumer attitudes towards halal products play a significant role in mediating the influence of trust perception on purchase decisions. In addition, studies by Awan et al. (2015) and Mustamil et al. (2020) also reinforce that attitude is an important psychological variable in bridging the relationship between brand trust and purchasing behavior. It shows that consumer attitudes towards halal products play a very important role in mediating the influence of perception of trust on purchase decisions.

H3: Consumer attitudes have a positive effect on purchasing decisions.

H4 : Consumer attitudes mediate the relationship between brand trust and purchase decisions

RESEARCH METHODS

The model in this study consists of two main components: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model describes the relationship between latent constructs and their indicators, while structural models describe the causal relationships between latent constructs. Mathematically, the model can be written as follows:

Structural Model:

Attitude

$$\beta_1 \times \text{BrandTrust} + \zeta_1$$

Purchasing Decision

$$\beta_2 \times \text{BrandTrust} + \beta_3 \times \text{Attitude} + \zeta_2$$

Where:

- λ = Load Coefficient
- β = latent inter-construct path coefficient
- ε = Error indicator
- ζ = structural error

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to determine the causal relationship between brand trust and purchase decisions, with consumer attitudes as a mediating variable. The theoretical framework in this study refers to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991).

The population in this study is Muslim consumers of Gacoan Noodles in Purwokerto. The sampling technique was carried out by purposive sampling with the following criteria: have purchased Mie Gacoan products at least once, are between 15–36 years old (productive age group), and know the halal status of the brand. The number of respondents collected was 105 people, in accordance with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2016), who stated that the minimum number of samples in PLS-SEM is 5–10 times the number of indicators used.

Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire was developed from instruments that have been validated in previous research and adapted to the halal culinary context. The questionnaire consisted of three constructs with a total of nine indicators measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree):

1. Brand Trust
 - a. I believe that Mie Gacoan is committed to the halalness of its products.
 - b. I am confident that Mie Gacoan maintains consistent product quality.
2. Attitude
 - a. I feel that buying Gacoan Noodles is the right choice as a Muslim consumer.
 - b. I have a positive assessment of Mie Gacoan products as a whole.
3. Purchase Decision
 - a. I decided to buy Mie Gacoan because of my belief in the brand.
 - b. I intend to buy back Mie Gacoan products in the future.

The main tool used in this study is the SmartPLS 3.0 software to analyze data using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The data analysis procedure is carried out through two stages:

1. Evaluation of the Measurement Model (validity and reliability)
2. Structural Model Evaluation (path coefficient, R², Q², and f²)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

First Structural Causal Relationships

Bound Variables: Attitude

Independent Variables : Brand Trust

Equation:

$$M = 0.473X_3 + e$$

First Structural Causal Relationships

Bound Variables: Purchase Decision

Independent Variables : Brand Trust and Attitude

Equation :

$$Y = 0.163X_3 + 0.431M_1 + e$$

Multicollinearity Test Results

Table 1. Multicollinearity

Indicators	VIF
X1.1	1,370
X1.2	1,370
M1.1	1,606
M1.2	1,606
Y1.1	1,073
Y1.2	1,073

Validity and Reliability Test Results

Validity Test

Table 2. Validity Test

Construct	Indicators	OuterLoading
Brand Trust	X1.1	0,878
	X1.2	0,917
Attitude	M1.1	0,775
	M1.2	0,751
Purchase Decision	Y1.1	0,741
	Y1.2	0,842

All indicators have an outer loading value > 0.70, which means they are convergently valid and worthy of being maintained in the model. This shows that each indicator is able to explain its construct well.

Reliability Test

Table 3. Reliability test

Construct	Indicators	Composite Reliability
Brand Trust	X1.1	0,893
Attitude	M1.1	0,864
Purchase Decision	Y1.1	0,773

The entire composite reliability value > 0.7, which indicates that each construct has good internal reliability. This means that the indicators used consistently reflect the constructed being measured.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Influence Relationships	Coefficient	Value t	P-Value	Information
H1	Brand Trust → Attitude	0,436	2,591	0,010	Accepted
H2	Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	0,366	0,366	0,366	Accepted
H3	Attitudes → Purchase Decisions	0,302	2,890	0,000	Accepted
H4	Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	0,176	1,321	0,188	Rejected

Interpretation of Results

Based on the table above, the t-calculated and p-value are compared with the following test criteria:

1. With a sample count of 105 and a significance level of 0.05 for a one-way test, the t-table value ≈ 1.660 .
2. The H1 and H2 hypotheses have $t > t$ -table values and $p < 0.05$, so they are significant and accepted.
3. The H3 hypothesis shows a value of $t = 2.301 > 1.660$ and $p = 0.022 < 0.05$, so it is significant, and accepted.
4. The H4 hypothesis has a value of $t = 1.321 < 1.660$ and $p = 0.188 > 0.05$, so it is not significant, and is rejected.

Mediation Analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986):

To test mediation, Baron and Kenny proposed four steps:

1. Independent variable (X) has a significant effect on the mediator (M) → Fulfilled (H1 accepted)
2. Mediator (M) has a significant effect on dependent variable (Y) → Fulfilled (H2 accepted)
3. Independent variable (X) has a significant effect on dependent variable (Y) without mediator → Fulfilled (H3 accepted)
4. The influence of X on Y becomes insignificant when the mediator is inserted → Fulfilled (H4 is rejected)

Because all the steps are met, this model shows full mediation of attitudes in the relationship between brand trust and purchase decisions.

DISCUSSION

Brand Trust in Attitude

The results showed that brand trust had a significant positive effect on attitude ($t = 2.591 > t_{\text{tabel}} 1.660$; $p = 0.010$). This means that the higher the consumer's trust in halal brands, the more positive attitudes are formed. This is in line with research by Koc et al. (2024) and Liu & Wang (2023) which shows that brand trust encourages positive consumer attitudes towards halal products and local products. Practically, these findings indicate that MSMEs' efforts to build trust (e.g. through consistent halal certification and a reputation for honesty) are effective in increasing consumers' positive attitudes towards products. So, the first hypothesis confirms that for MSMEs with halal products, building strong *brand trust* is the key to creating a positive consumer attitude towards their products.

Attitudes towards Purchasing Decisions

Consumer attitudes had a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions ($t = 2,890 > 1,660$; $p = 0.000$). These results show that positive perceptions of halal brands encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions. Statistically, a good consumer attitude (for example, the belief that MSME halal products are of quality and according to religious values) will encourage higher intention and purchase decisions. Garg & Joshi (2018) and Koc et al. (2024) support these findings in the context of halal products and MSMEs. In other words, forming a positive consumer attitude can be through halal education, quality improvement, and a good image will actually encourage halal product purchase decisions. The second hypothesis emphasizes the importance of the role of attitudes in encouraging purchasing behavior, so MSMEs need to ensure that consumers have a good experience and perception of their products.

Brand Trust in Purchase Decisions

Brand trust has a significant direct influence on purchasing decisions ($t = 2,301 > 1,660$; $p = 0.022$), which means consumers who already believe in the brand are more likely to buy the halal product immediately. This is reinforced by Liu & Wang (2023) and Rahman & Haque (2011) who stated that brand trust can directly influence purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to immediately decide to buy halal products when they have high trust in the brand/product, even without considering the attitude mediator. For MSME actors, it emphasizes that halal reputation and brand reliability can directly affect sales. Consumers who believe in brands tend not to hesitate in making purchasing decisions. The third hypothesis reinforces the urgency for halal MSMEs to build and maintain brand trust, because of its direct impact on consumer purchasing decisions.

Brand Trust in Purchase Decisions through Attitude

Based on the criteria of Baron & Kenny (1986), this indicates the existence of full mediation. Research by Koc et al. (2024) and Rubiyanti & Mohaidin (2018) also found that attitudes mediate the relationship between brand trust and purchasing decisions in the context of halal. In other words, brand trust not only has a direct impact, but also influences purchasing decisions indirectly by forming positive consumer attitudes first. Substantively, the findings are meaningful as an effort to build brand trust will have a dual impact: directly encourage purchases, and indirectly strengthen purchases by improving consumer attitudes.

Rubiyanti & Mohaidin (2018) found that trust influences consumers' buying intentions through attitudes. The mediating effect of the attitude variable may be stronger in a specific product category or a specific consumer segment. However, in general, the dominant research evidence supports the existence of a full mediative effect of consumer attitudes in the relationship between brand trust and purchase decisions in the realm of halal products.

The fourth hypothesis supports the assumption that "brand trust improves consumer purchasing decisions indirectly through improved attitudes". Thus, in addition to direct influence, MSMEs need to pay attention to the role of attitude by building high brand trust will result in a positive attitude, and the combination of the two will maximize conversion into purchase decisions. The findings emphasized that the integration of strategies in the form of efforts to increase brand trust while forming positive consumer attitudes is an effective strategy to encourage the sale of MSME halal products.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that brand trust has a positive influence on consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. In addition, consumer attitudes also play a role as mediators. Thus, building brand trust is a strategic step in driving consumer purchase decisions.

INVOLVEMENT

Culinary MSMEs such as Mie Gacoan need to maintain quality consistency, information transparency, and good service to strengthen brand trust. This strategy is important to maintain competitiveness in the midst of fast-food culinary competition.

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