

The Role of Halal Awareness in Mediating the Influence of Digital Content and Influencers on the Intention to Purchase Halal Food Products among Tadulako University Students

Bayu Anggara Permana¹, Syamsul Bahri Daeng Parani², Maskuri Sutomo³, Sri Wanti⁴

¹²³⁴ Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia

Email: Bayuanggara0812@untad.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

digital content; influencer marketing; halal awareness; purchase intention; halal food

Objective: This study examines the influence of digital content and influencer marketing on halal food purchase intention among university students, with halal awareness acting as an intermediary variable. *Methods:* A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 301 undergraduate students at Tadulako University, Indonesia. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire using a validated measurement scale. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 software, implementing a two-stage assessment of the measurement and structural models. The mediation effect was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamplings, and predictive validity was tested through the PLS-Predict procedure. *Results:* The findings indicate that digital content and influencer marketing have a positive and significant influence on both halal awareness and purchase intention. Halal awareness also has a positive influence on purchase intention and partially mediates the relationship between digital marketing variables and purchase intention. *Implications:* This study confirms that halal awareness is the main mechanism linking digital marketing strategies with halal consumption behavior, and provides practical guidance for halal food businesses in reaching young Muslim consumers.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology in the Industry 4.0 era has significantly changed consumer behavior, particularly in how people search for information, evaluate products, and make purchasing decisions. Digital platforms such as social media, video-sharing apps, and online communities have become key channels for interacting, promoting, and influencing consumer decisions. (Safeer, 2024) The role of social media is currently very vital because it can convey information about a business's identity easily, complete with product details to help solve problems faced by consumers. (Article, 2024) For young consumers, particularly college students, purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by digital content and influencer recommendations compared to conventional marketing methods. This shift presents a challenge for businesses operating in value-driven markets, including the halal food industry, to align digital marketing strategies with consumer expectations and ethical values, especially considering the continued increase in Muslim consumer spending on halal food products worldwide. (Jakarta, 8 July 2025 – DinarStandard Today Unveiled the Findings of The, 2025).

Theoretically, the consumption of halal products is a unique form of consumer behavior, driven not only by functional benefits or pleasure but also by deeply rooted in the principles and moral values of Islamic teachings. In a predominantly Muslim country

like Indonesia, the consumption of halal food not only reflects religious devotion but also serves as a symbol of trust, transparency of information, and an assessment of product quality. (Karimah & Darwanto, 2021) (Sholihin et al., 2022) This trust arises from consumers' perception that a brand is responsible for their interests and well-being through consistent interactions. (Science & University, 2018). Although the halal food market continues to grow rapidly, understanding how modern digital marketing tools—particularly digital content and influencer marketing—interact with consumers' internal mindsets, such as halal awareness levels, in shaping halal food purchase intentions remains limited.

Recent research in Islamic marketing has begun to examine the role of digital marketing in influencing halal consumption behavior. Previous research has shown that social media marketing, online reviews, and influencer endorsements positively influence purchase intentions by increasing consumer engagement, trust, and perceived benefits. (Ghosh et al., 2024) In the local context of Palu City, research shows that effective marketing strategies must consider product quality and the role of influencers simultaneously to increase consumer satisfaction and purchasing decisions. (Yulianti et al., 2025). Marketing through influencers has been proven to have a strong influence, considering that these figures are often considered credible sources of information, easy to relate to, and more trusted than regular advertising. (Marketing & Decisions, 2023). This is also in line with research (Karim et al., 2022) which emphasizes that halal supply chain optimization cannot be separated from the integration of IoT technology and collaboration with suppliers and consumers to improve operational performance and sustainable excellence.

In the context of halal products, a number of studies confirm that halal awareness has an important role in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions. (Hasan et al., 2024) (Pratama et al., 2023) Halal awareness encompasses consumer knowledge and understanding of Islamic consumption regulations, halal certification, and sharia-compliant production processes. This principle not only regulates the raw materials used but also encompasses the entire production and distribution process, all in accordance with halal product assurance standards. (Bahri et al., 2025) Empirical evidence shows that consumers who have higher halal awareness tend to have stronger intentions to purchase halal products, even when exposed to similar promotional information as other consumers. (Karimah & Darwanto, 2021) The meaning of halal values has evolved from being merely a religious obligation to a symbol of quality, cleanliness, and moral responsibility that provides a sense of psychological security and comfort for consumers. (Badjamal & Zahara, 2025) This shows that the success of marketing strategies in the halal sector is closely related to the extent to which consumers understand and internalize these halal values.

Recent studies have also begun to combine digital marketing variables with halal-related concepts using consumer behavior theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. (Pradana et al., 2024) (Safeer, 2024). The study shows that digital marketing influences consumer behavior not only directly, but also through indirect channels, namely involving internal psychological mechanisms such as attitudes, beliefs, and consumer awareness levels. (Marketing & Decisions, 2023) However, the current research results are still isolated and have limitations in terms of the scope of the research context.

Although research on halal marketing and online consumer behavior continues to grow, several gaps remain that require further investigation. First, most previous studies have only examined partial relationships, such as the direct influence of influencer marketing or halal awareness on purchase intentions, without integrating digital content, influencer marketing, and halal awareness into a comprehensive research model. As a result, the mechanisms by which digital marketing stimuli translate into halal product

purchase intentions remain unclear. Second, existing empirical evidence largely focuses on major urban areas in Indonesia, particularly the islands of Java and Sumatra. (Pradana et al., 2024) (Sholihin et al., 2022). Attention to Eastern Indonesia remains very limited, despite the significant differences in socio-cultural characteristics, access to digital technology, and consumer behavior patterns in this region. This unequal distribution of research locations limits the ability to generalize findings amidst the diversity of conditions in Indonesia. Third, although halal awareness is often cited as a key determinant of purchase intention, its role as an intermediary variable in the context of digital marketing—especially among university students—has not been extensively studied empirically. Based on the identified research gap, this study aims to examine the influence of digital content and influencer marketing on halal food purchase intentions, with halal awareness acting as an intermediary variable. This study focuses on university students as a consumer group familiar with digital technology in Eastern Indonesia. Therefore, this study answers the following questions:

1. How does digital content and influencer marketing impact halal awareness?
2. How do digital content, influencer marketing, and halal awareness influence halal food purchase intentions?
3. Does halal awareness play a mediating role in the relationship between digital marketing strategies and halal food purchase intentions?

The novelty of this research lies in its integrated model, which simultaneously combines external stimuli from digital marketing (digital content and influencer marketing) and internal mechanisms of thought and values (halal awareness) to explain the formation of halal product purchase intentions. Furthermore, by focusing on university students in Eastern Indonesia, this study expands the scope of empirical studies on halal marketing to a region that has been under-researched. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic marketing theory and serve as a practical guide for halal food businesses and policymakers in designing digital marketing strategies based on sharia values.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Digital Content and Interest in Purchasing Halal Products

In the era of digital transformation, digital content has become a key tool in modern marketing strategies. Digital content refers to all forms of informational materials, from text and images to audio and video, distributed through digital platforms such as websites, social media, and mobile apps. According to (Ashley & Tuten, 2015) Well-managed digital content can increase brand engagement, strengthen brand equity, and ultimately influence consumer purchasing decisions. In the context of halal products, digital content plays a strategic role. People, especially the younger generation, tend to seek product information through digital media before making a purchase. Digital content that explains halal certification, sharia-compliant production processes, and the benefits of halal products can increase consumer trust in those products. A study conducted by (Aji, 2023) found that digital educational content related to halal products significantly increased consumer purchasing interest among college students. This aligns with the view that easily accessible and relevant information will accelerate the decision-making process. The growing number of digital natives, particularly among university students, further underscores the significant role of digital content in marketing communications. This group demonstrates a higher preference for visual, concise, and easily accessible information compared to conventional promotional approaches. This indicates that the quality and relevance of digital content has the potential to increase consumer interest and purchase intention for halal products.

H1: Digital content has a positive influence on interest in purchasing halal products.

Influencer Marketing and Interest in Buying Halal Products

Influencer marketing is a form of marketing in which companies partner with influential individuals on social media to convey messages or promote products. Influencers play a crucial role because they are considered credible and relatable sources of information compared to traditional advertising. According to the Source Credibility theory, (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) Message effectiveness is greatly influenced by the communicator's level of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. In the context of halal product marketing, influencers with a religious reputation, a positive image, or consistency in conveying halal messages can influence consumer behavior. Research conducted by (Rokhmah et al., 2025) shows that Muslim influencers who convey messages related to halal products are proven to increase audience trust, which in turn has a positive effect on the intention to purchase halal products. The rise of social media has increased the importance of influencers in marketing communications, as consumers tend to place greater trust in personal recommendations than in formal corporate promotional messages. Influencers are perceived as having a close relationship with their audience, making their messages more credible and authentic. This explains the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies in shaping consumer perceptions and driving purchase intentions.

H2: Influencer marketing has a positive influence on interest in purchasing halal products.

Digital Content and Halal Awareness

Halal awareness is consumers' understanding and concern for the importance of consuming products that comply with Islamic law. This level of awareness typically includes knowledge of the certification process, halal labels, and the belief that consuming halal products is part of their religious identity and obedience. Digital content plays a crucial role in increasing halal awareness. When consumers are exposed to content that explains the halal production process, the benefits of consuming halal products, and the risks of non-halal products, their knowledge and awareness tend to increase. (Ambali & Bakar, 2014) found that halal education through digital media is a key determinant in increasing halal awareness among the Muslim community. Furthermore, (Rahman & others, 2022) This study demonstrates that consistent halal information on social media not only increases halal awareness but also strengthens consumer loyalty to brands. Therefore, digital content can be viewed not only as a promotional medium but also as a means of halal education that shapes Sharia-compliant consumer behavior.

H3: Digital content has a positive effect on halal awareness.

Influencer Marketing and Halal Awareness

In addition to institutional digital content, the presence of influencers also influences halal awareness. Influencers with a religious reputation or known for practicing Islamic values can serve as role models for halal consumption behavior. According to Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), consumers tend to adopt the behavior and values demonstrated by influencers when they feel emotionally connected. In this context, halal product endorsements by Muslim influencers not only influence consumption preferences but also increase consumer understanding and awareness of the product's halal status. Dewi and Gunanto (2023) demonstrated that halal product messages conveyed by influencers have an impact on increasing halal awareness among Indonesian Muslim youth. This confirms that influencer marketing is not merely a promotional tool but also a medium for socializing halal values to consumers.

H4: Influencer marketing has a positive influence on halal awareness.

Halal Awareness and Interest in Purchasing Halal Products

Halal awareness is an important determinant of Muslim consumer behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) explains that an individual's beliefs about a behavior (behavioral beliefs) will shape attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control, which ultimately influence intentions. Thus, halal awareness can be seen as part of consumer beliefs that influence attitudes and purchase intentions. A classic study by Lada et al. (2009) found that halal awareness is positively related to purchase intention for halal products, while Awan et al. (2015) confirmed that halal awareness increases consumer trust in halal labels and purchasing decisions. In the context of college students, the level of halal awareness often determines whether they will choose halal products or not, especially amidst the many alternative non-halal products on the market. Therefore, the higher a consumer's halal awareness, the greater the likelihood of their purchase intention for halal products.

H5: Halal awareness has a positive influence on interest in purchasing halal products.

The Role of Halal Awareness Mediating

The Stimulus-Organism-Response Model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) provides a theoretical basis for understanding how external stimuli (digital content, influencer marketing) influence consumers' internal states (halal awareness), ultimately resulting in a response in the form of purchase intention. In this case, halal awareness functions as a psychological mechanism that bridges the relationship between digital marketing strategies and Muslim consumer behavior. Several empirical studies support this assumption. Aji et al. (2023) found that halal awareness acts as a mediator in the relationship between digital marketing and purchasing decisions for halal products. Similarly, Dewi and Gunanto (2023) stated that the influence of influencer marketing on purchase intention for halal products is strengthened through increased halal awareness. This indicates that halal awareness not only directly influences purchase intention but also explains why digital marketing strategies and influencer marketing are more effective when linked to halal values. Thus, a hypothesis can be proposed.

H6: Halal awareness mediates the influence of digital content on interest in purchasing halal products.

H7: Halal awareness mediates the influence of influencer marketing on interest in purchasing halal products.

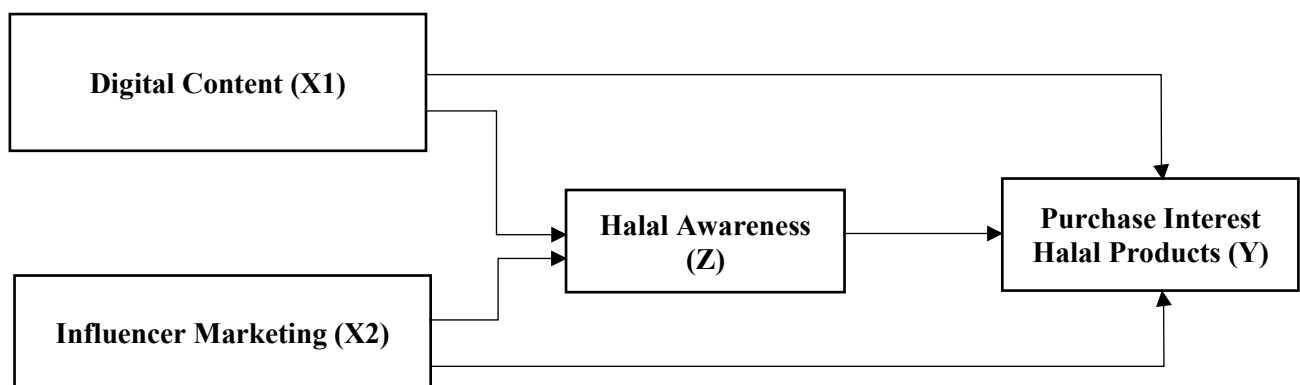


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey method. The aim was to examine the relationship between digital content, influencer marketing,

halal awareness, and halal food purchase intention, as well as to examine the role of halal awareness as an intermediary variable. The analytical technique used was Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is considered appropriate for predictive research, has a complex model with mediating effects, and can be used with non-normally distributed data.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was all undergraduate students enrolled at Tadulako University, Indonesia. Students were selected as the research subjects because they are a consumer group familiar with the digital world and highly exposed to online content and marketing. Non-random sampling was conducted using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria being that students were Muslim and had seen or received recommendations about halal food products through digital content or influencers. A total of 301 valid and complete responses were collected for analysis. This sample size met the minimum requirement for PLS-SEM analysis based on the "10 times the number of indicators" rule and was deemed sufficient to estimate the proposed structural model.(Hair et al., 2019).

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that the study was solely for academic purposes. Confidentiality of identity and personal data was guaranteed to reduce potential bias. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and appropriateness of the questions to the research objectives.

Variable Measurement

All variables were measured using questionnaires adapted from valid previous research and tailored to the context of halal food consumption. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

1. Digital Content: Measured through questions that assess the level of clarity, usefulness, and appropriateness of halal information presented on digital platforms.
2. Marketing Through Influencers: Assessed based on respondents' perceptions of the credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness of influencers promoting halal food products.
3. Halal Awareness: Reflects the level of respondents' knowledge and attention to halal principles, halal certification, and sharia-compliant production processes.
4. Halal Food Purchase Intention: Measures the level of possibility and desire of respondents to purchase halal food products.
- 5.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data processing was performed using SmartPLS 4 software with a two-stage assessment procedure. First, the measurement model was tested by examining indicator loading values, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability), convergent validity (Average Extracted Variance or AVE), and discriminant validity (HTMT and Fornell–Larcker criteria).(Hair et al., 2019) (Henseler et al., 2015)Second, the structural model was evaluated through multicollinearity tests (VIF), coefficient of determination (R^2), path coefficient values, effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The significance of direct and indirect relationships was tested using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resampling times and a 95% confidence level. The

mediation effect was assessed based on the significance of the indirect path, and the model's predictive ability was further verified through the PLS-Predict procedure. (Shmueli et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Faculty	Amount
Faculty of Public Health	93
medical School	60
Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	39
Faculty of Engineering	32
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education	24
Faculty of Economics and Business	18
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	9
Faculty of Agriculture	8
faculty of Humanities	11
Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries	4
Graduate program	2
Total	301

Table 1 This section presents the distribution of respondent characteristics by faculty at Tadulako University. The sample consisted of 301 students from various academic backgrounds, with the largest number coming from the Faculty of Public Health, followed by the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. This distribution is highly relevant in the context of halal food consumption research, given that students from health and science fields generally have a higher sensitivity to food safety, hygiene, and responsible consumption. These characteristics strengthen the validity of the findings, as halal consumption is not only related to religious observance but also encompasses product quality, safety, and goodness (tayyib), which are the main principles of consumption ethics in Islam. (Sholihin et al., 2022) The predominance of respondents from health and science-oriented faculties strengthens the relevance of this study. Students from these fields tend to be more conscientious about food safety and hygiene, which aligns with the halal concept, which emphasizes not only religious permissibility but also product quality and goodness. Therefore, this sample composition supports the validity of the findings in this study on halal food consumption.

Evaluation of Measurement Model

As seen in Table 2, all research variables demonstrated good levels of reliability and convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values were above the recommended standard limit of 0.70, indicating strong measurement consistency across all variables. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.687 to 0.778, demonstrating that each variable was able to explain a significant portion of the data variability from its indicators.

Specifically, the purchase intention variable demonstrated the highest AVE value, indicating that the questionnaire was highly effective in measuring the intention to purchase halal food. Furthermore, discriminant validity was also met based on the HTMT criteria, with all values falling below the strict threshold of 0.90. (Henseler et al., 2015) This confirms that the variables studied—digital content, influencer marketing, halal awareness, and purchase intention—are separate concepts but still fit the theoretical

framework used, and follow the PLS-SEM research standards in the field of Islamic marketing.(Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Marketing Through Influencers	0.908	0.930	0.692
Digital Content	0.935	0.946	0.687
Halal Awareness	0.850	0.899	0.689
Purchase Intention	0.928	0.946	0.778

Structural Model and Model Fit

Table 3 summarizes the model fit indices. The SRMR value of 0.087 is below the maximum acceptable limit of 0.10 and approaches the more stringent standard of 0.08. This indicates a fairly good model fit for the prediction-oriented PLS-SEM analysis framework.(Hair et al., 2019)Although the NFI value of 0.750 has not reached the standard commonly used in covariance-based SEM analysis, this result is still reasonable and in line with previous research in the field of Islamic marketing which prioritizes predictive ability over absolute model suitability.(Hasan et al., 2024) (Sholihin et al., 2022).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criteria)

Variables	Influencer Marketing	Digital Content	Halal Awareness	Purchase Intention
Marketing Through Influencers	—			
Digital Content	0.858	—		
Halal Awareness	0.871	0.823	—	
Purchase Intention	0.863	0.836	0.851	—

Table 3 confirms the fulfillment of discriminant validity, because all HTMT values are below the required limit. This proves that the four variables are empirically distinct concepts, thus providing a strong basis for further analysis of the relationships between the variables.

Table 4. Structural Path Estimation

Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Results
Influencer Marketing → Halal Awareness	0.429	8,014	< 0.001	Supported
Influencer Marketing → Purchase Intent	0.222	3,764	< 0.001	Supported
Digital Content → Halal Awareness	0.440	7,435	< 0.001	Supported
Digital Content → Purchase Intent	0.369	4,836	< 0.001	Supported
Halal Awareness → Purchase Intention	0.313	4,208	< 0.001	Supported

Table 4 presents the results of the estimated relationships between variables. The findings indicate that both digital content and influencer marketing have a positive and significant influence on halal awareness and purchase intention. Digital content has the strongest influence on halal awareness ($\beta = 0.440$), which confirms the importance of clear, relevant, and interactive information in improving students' understanding of halal principles. Influencer marketing also has a significant influence on halal awareness ($\beta = 0.429$), which indicates the important role of trusted figures in disseminating halal-related

values. Furthermore, halal awareness has been shown to have a significant influence on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.313$). This confirms its function as an internal mechanism that shapes the behavioral intentions of Muslim consumers. These results are highly consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior and Islamic consumer behavior theory, which states that knowledge and awareness precede intention, which is then manifested in concrete actions.

The Mediating Effect of Halal Awareness

The mediation analysis presented in Table 5 shows that halal awareness plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between: (1) digital content and purchase intention, and (2) marketing through influencers and purchase intention.(Hasan et al., 2024) (Pratama et al., 2023). The existence of this significant indirect influence proves that digital marketing strategies will be more effective if they are able to increase the level of consumer halal awareness. This finding strengthens the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, where digital content and influencer endorsements function as external stimuli, halal awareness represents the state of mind and values within consumers, and purchase intention is a form of behavioral response that results.(Safeer, 2024) (Marketing & Decisions, 2023).

Table 5. Mediating Effect of Halal Awareness

Indirect Relationship	Indirect Influence	t-value	p-value	Types of Mediation
Influencer Marketing → Halal Awareness → Purchase Intention	0.134	3,719	< 0.001	Partial
Digital Content → Halal Awareness → Purchase Intention	0.138	3,361	0.001	Partial

This partial mediation explains that while digital content and influencer recommendations can immediately generate purchase intention, their influence will be much stronger if consumers truly understand and internalize halal values. This is crucial in the world of Islamic marketing, as it demonstrates that effective halal marketing strategies are not simply about persuasion but must prioritize the internalization of values and communication in accordance with ethical principles.

Model Prediction Ability

Table 6 presents the test results using the PLS-Predict method. The Q² prediction value for the halal awareness variable (0.664) and purchase intention (0.665) is much greater than zero, which indicates the model's ability to predict new data is very good.(Shmueli et al., 2019). In addition, the relatively small RMSE and MAE values also indicate that this model is capable of providing accurate estimates on previously untested data.

Table 6. Model Fit and Prediction Ability

Indicator	Mark
SRMR	0.087
R ² (Halal Awareness)	0.675
R ² (Purchase Intention)	0.700
Q ² prediction (Halal Awareness)	0.664
Q ² prediction (Purchase Intention)	0.665

These results confirm that the proposed research model is not only capable of explaining the relationships between variables but also has good predictive power. This is a crucial point in high-quality PLS-SEM research. (Shmueli et al., 2019) (Hair et al., 2019) In the context of halal marketing, this predictive capability is extremely useful for businesses in estimating consumer responses to digital marketing campaigns and influencer partnerships.

DISCUSSION

Digital Content and Influencer Marketing in Building Halal Awareness

The findings of this study indicate that both digital content and influencer marketing contribute significantly to shaping halal awareness among Muslim students. These results indicate that online marketing communications serve not only as a promotional tool but also as an educational medium that disseminates knowledge and values related to halal. From the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, digital content and influencer messages act as external stimuli that shape consumers' internal mindsets, particularly their understanding and awareness of halal principles, which subsequently influence their actions. (Safeer, 2024) (Marketing & Decisions, 2023).

Well-crafted digital content, for example, that emphasizes information about halal certification, clarity of raw materials, and compliance with Islamic provisions, will help consumers process this information better. (Ghosh et al., 2024) This reinforces the view that halal awareness is formed through repeated exposure to meaningful and credible information, not simply seeing a halal label on packaging. Influencer marketing further amplifies this effect by conveying halal messages in a way that is more relevant to everyday life. Influencers act as trusted conduits, making their recommendations more authentic and readily accepted than conventional advertising, ultimately increasing consumer interest in understanding halal information. (Liu, 2025).

The significance of this finding reflects the changing patterns of halal consumption in the digital era, where awareness is no longer solely driven by official institutions or traditional methods, but rather by interactive online platforms. This is reinforced by data showing that online advertising spending has increased significantly compared to traditional media such as television, due to its ability to reach a wider and more efficient audience. (Article, 2024) This condition shows that the digital ecosystem has an increasingly large role in shaping consumption behavior based on religious teachings, especially for the younger generation who are highly dependent on social media as a source of information about products. (Hakim et al., 2023) (Jakarta, 8 July 2025 – DinarStandard Today Unveiled the Findings of The, 2025).

Halal Awareness as an Intermediary Variable

The main contribution of this study is to empirically demonstrate the role of halal awareness as a mediating variable in the relationship between digital marketing strategies and purchase intentions. The analysis shows that halal awareness partially mediates the influence of digital content and influencer marketing on halal food purchase intentions. (Hasan et al., 2024) (Pratama et al., 2023) This means that while digital marketing can immediately attract consumer interest, its impact will be much more pronounced if accompanied by increased understanding and appreciation of halal values. This finding aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that behavioral intentions are shaped by attitudes, social norms, and perceptions of the ability to control actions. (Pradana et al., 2024) In the context of this research, halal awareness serves as a foundation of thought and morals that shapes positive attitudes toward halal products and

strengthens the belief that halal consumption is an obligation in accordance with religious teachings. Digital content and influencers play a role in supporting this process by presenting halal consumption as a behavior that is both desirable and religiously meaningful. From an Islamic perspective, halal awareness reflects the application of sharia principles in everyday consumption activities. This concept goes beyond recognizing the halal logo, but also encompasses a broader understanding of the permissibility of production processes, fairness in raw material procurement, and responsibility before God. This aligns with the Maqasid Sharia framework, particularly regarding maintaining faith and well-being, which emphasizes that every consumption decision must be based on moral awareness and a sense of responsibility. (Sholihin et al., 2022) Therefore, the role of halal awareness as an intermediary variable confirms its function as the primary link between external marketing stimuli and the formation of behavioral intentions in the market based on Islamic values.

Theoretical Contributions to Islamic Marketing Studies

This research makes several important contributions to the development of Islamic marketing. First, it integrates current digital marketing concepts—namely digital content and influencer marketing—with existing consumer behavior theories, but relates them to an Islamic context. By using halal awareness as a mediating variable, this study explains how digital stimuli interact with religious awareness to shape purchase intentions, thereby enriching both the TPB and S–O–R theoretical frameworks with dimensions of religious values. (Marketing & Decisions, 2023) (Safeer, 2024).

Second, these findings address the need for a more comprehensive research model in halal marketing. Previous research has tended to examine only one aspect, such as the influence of influencers separately or halal awareness, without linking it to digital marketing media. (Karimah & Darwanto, 2021) (Hakim et al., 2023) This study expands on these findings by empirically testing an integrated model that not only explains the influence of digital marketing on purchase intentions but also reveals how and through what mechanisms this influence operates. The model's high explanatory power demonstrates that combining external communication factors with internal religious awareness provides a more comprehensive picture of Muslim consumer behavior. Third, this study provides specific empirical evidence from Eastern Indonesia, a region that has rarely been the focus of Islamic marketing studies. (Pradana et al., 2024) (Sholihin et al., 2022) By drawing on data from Muslim students in this region, this study broadens the geographic and cultural scope of halal marketing studies and supports the application of Islamic consumer behavior theory beyond large cities.

Practical Implications for Halal Food Marketing

While the primary contribution of this research is theoretical, there are several practical guidelines that can be applied. For halal food businesses, an effective digital marketing strategy should not only aim to attract purchase interest but also provide educational benefits to consumers. (Hasan et al., 2024) Digital content that clearly conveys information about a product's halal status, production process, and quality standards will be more effective in increasing halal awareness, ultimately driving purchasing intentions. Similarly, collaboration with influencers should not be based solely on popularity but also on credibility and alignment of values with halal principles. (Ghosh et al., 2024). The findings of this study are in line with (Rombe & Hadi, 2022) This finding indicates that supply chain capabilities have a positive and significant impact on marketing performance. This reinforces the argument that digital marketing strategies that increase halal awareness must be accompanied by strong supply chain capabilities to achieve optimal marketing performance. For policymakers and halal certification bodies, this finding demonstrates that digital platforms can be optimally utilized to increase public understanding of halal products, especially among the younger generation. (Jakarta, 8 July 2025 – DinarStandard

Today Unveiled the Findings of The, 2025) (Fachrurazi et al., 2022) A well-structured online campaign can complement official outreach efforts, building trust and deeper understanding. Overall, this study confirms that increasing halal awareness is key to building long-term relationships and consumer trust in the halal food market.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital content and influencer marketing significantly influence college students' halal food purchase intentions, both directly and indirectly through halal awareness. The role of halal awareness as an intermediary variable confirms that effective digital marketing strategies in the halal context should not only focus on persuading consumers but also actively enhance their understanding of halal principles. By combining digital marketing variables with Islamic consumption values, this study enriches consumer behavior theory in the field of Islamic marketing. However, the results should be interpreted with caution due to the limited sample size of a single university and the use of a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to draw absolute causal conclusions. Nevertheless, this study provides empirical evidence regarding the importance of halal awareness as a link between digital marketing strategies and purchase intentions.

For future research, it is recommended to involve more diverse samples from different regions and age groups, as well as include additional variables such as levels of religiosity, trust, or perceptions of the credibility of information. (Ashfahany, 2024) The use of long-term or experimental research designs can also strengthen the analysis of causal relationships between variables. Practically, halal food businesses are advised to focus on creating informative content and collaborating with trusted influencers to raise halal awareness, while authorities can utilize digital media to increase public understanding of halal products among the younger generation.

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