



*Original Research Article*

## Generation Z's Awareness of Eating at *Halal* Certified Restaurants

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**Abstract:** *Halal* food indeed remains the main concern among consumers when they decide to eat outside. As there are many different approaches in choosing a restaurant among consumers especially the youngsters, the *halal* status of these restaurants usually raises some critical issues particularly on ingredients used, *halal* certification, and logo issuance. Hence, this study was carried out to investigate the level of awareness among Generation Z (Gen Z) towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants, to examine the association between socio-demographic profiles of Gen Z and level of awareness towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants and to determine factors that influence Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants. Data was gathered via a self-administered questionnaire survey with 1,050 Gen Z respondents. Descriptive analysis, Chi-square analysis, and factor analysis were used to analyse the data. The results revealed that a low level of awareness was found among Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants with an average mean score of 3.809. The results also showed a few socio-demographic profiles to have associations with the awareness level towards dining at *halal* certified restaurants. Five factors were revealed to influence Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants namely, *halal* certification and logo, religious responsibility, lifestyle, social influence, and attitude. This study concludes that Gen Z should increase their level of awareness towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants and this could be feasible by engaging with relevant awareness programs and *halal* campaigns by social media and community engagement.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Eating, Generation Z, *Halal*, *Halal* Certified Restaurants

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## 1. Introduction

Based on the State of Global Islamic Report 2017/2018, the Islamic economy is recorded as the fastest growing market in the world with more than 1.7 billion Muslim populations around the world. In general, consumers spent around \$2 trillion in 2016 on halal sectors, while it is expected to rise to \$2.6 trillion in 2020. Malaysia is reported on the Top 10 list in *Halal* Food Indicator in the global market where the country has the best developed Islamic economy of halal food (Thomson Reuters, 2018). According to the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), there are around seven million businesses registered in Malaysia in 2018 and it is estimated over 200,000 food and beverage (F&B) businesses operating in Malaysia, since 2015. As there are opportunities to expand, *halal* food industries also have developed rapidly in Malaysia. Due to the *halal* food industry growth, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are also attracted to involve in the processing and production of halal food (Mujar & Hassan, 2014). It also creates job opportunities for Malaysians and contributes to the increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. Raising in the number of both the F&B businesses and the Muslim population, this had led to more food choices available to the consumers, served by various restaurants in the market, including Hipster style, Korean style, Japanese style as well as Western and Chinese cuisines. Nevertheless, not all food choices in the market are certified as *halal*. Although Muslim consumers are offered a variety of foods and restaurants, they need to be wise in selecting restaurants to dine in to ensure the foods they consume are *halal*, clean, healthy, and wholesome. Thus, it has directly influenced the demand for *halal* foods and *halal* restaurants across the countries in the world.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020), the population of Malaysia in 2019 is estimated at 32.6 million, increased from 32.4 million in 2018 and most of the citizens are Muslims. This has made *halal* food high in demand and becomes very important to Muslims in Malaysia. Malaysia, a country with an Islamic background has a minority of Muslim *halal* producers, where 80% of *halal* products are manufactured by non-Muslims. In 2015, the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC), currently known as Halal Development Corporation Berhad, in its report indicated that non-Muslim producers are the dominator of the *halal* market in Malaysia. Berjaya Food Bhd. and Farm's Best Food Industries Sdn. Bhd. are two examples of a non-Muslim producer of halal food. Therefore, it has become a huge challenge for Muslim society to contribute more to halal foods in the local economy as well as the international markets.

For Muslims, to choose *halal* food and *halal* restaurant is an obligation to show their responsibility towards the Islamic religion. However, issues are arising at certain restaurants in Malaysia that they operate without halal certification from Malaysia's authorized body, which is the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). Besides, the choice of foods and eateries to eat may have the same consensus as it has been influenced by social media and community engagement. The spread of many types of restaurants offers a different type of cuisines from different countries like Japan, Korea, western countries, and Thailand has provided a wide choice of places for consumers. The food providers need to ensure that the served food is *halal* and its food preparation and their premise's operation have adhered to the Islamic rules and regulations. Malaysian Muslim Generation Z (Gen Z) are among the regular consumers of these restaurants and this generation is tech-savvy and has advanced knowledge and awareness in social media and other influences of food and restaurant trends. Gen Z are those who were born from 1995 until 2012 (Wiedmer, 2015), and the oldest year for them to join college were in 2013 (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). However, studies indicated that Malaysian Muslim Gen Z are lack of knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the *halal* concept that has led to the declining values of *halal* itself among this generation as well as lack of awareness in eating at *halal* restaurants (Abdul Khalek, 2014; Krishnan *et al.*, 2017; Mat Salleh *et al.*, 2017). Hence, this limits Gen Z on *halal* related issues.

Gen Z are supposed to be more aware, knowledgeable, and have a better understanding of the *halalan toyyiban* concept which could assist them in choosing *halal* restaurants. Nevertheless, Gen Z in Malaysia have easily exposed to many types of restaurants that the *halal* status is still doubtful. With a complete *halal* directory by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), it would be a proper guide to assist Gen Z to choose *halal* certified restaurants. Not only do the *halal* food producers and operators need to serve *halal* food, but they also need to have high *halal* awareness in meeting the high demand of consumers for *halalan toyyiban* food. Thus, every player in the food sector should have the knowledge and a good understanding of the *halal* concept so that the issues of *halal* food can be addressed accordingly. Thus, this study aims to investigate the level of awareness among Generation Z (Gen Z) towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants, to examine the association between socio-demographic profiles of Gen Z and level of awareness towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants, and to determine factors that influence Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 *Halal Awareness*

According to Merikle (1984), awareness is the ability to perceive, to feel, and to be conscious of events and objects. Awareness, in general, is also described as the ability to do better than a chance level and whether the decision made has been affected by the identity or the presence of the third person (Merikle, 1984). *Halal* awareness, on the other hand, is described as knowledge and thoughtful of *halal* issues and circumstances. It is a concept about implying the understanding and perception towards the events or subjects on *halal* (Abdul Aziz *et al.*, 2000).

### 2.2 *Halal Certification and Logo*

*Halal* certification and logo are very crucial indicators for Muslims especially in a multi-racial country and non-Muslim country. It represents product quality standards based on Islamic dietary standards (Muhamad *et al.*, 2017). In *halal* restaurant perspectives, *halal* certification is very prevalent among restaurant managers because it could help to promote the restaurant itself by knowing Muslims' dietary restrictions, sensitivity, and religious practices (Syed Marzuki *et al.*, 2012). Since *halal* certification is controlled by an authorized body, any restaurant that is certified as *halal* is considered trustworthy. However, with the emergence of international franchised restaurants in the local market, the *halal* status is questioned because not all *halal* certifications are equally perceived as trustworthy so do all the *halal* brands and products (Rios *et al.*, 2014).

### 2.3 *Religious Responsibility*

Religious responsibility is a source of awareness of consumers in choosing *halal* food. In Islam, responsibilities of a Muslim can be categorized in different ways as being addressed in the Islamic Holy book such as responsibility towards God; responsibility towards oneself; responsibility towards the community; responsibility towards other creations, nature, and environments; responsibility towards religion itself (Islamweb, 2004). To show a Muslim's responsibility towards his religion, he must obey all rules and regulations, however, secular Muslims as well as very pious Muslims can show the same degree of Islamic belief but may differ concerning other aspects of Muslim religiosity (El-Menouar, 2014). Autiero and Vinci (2016) described that religion could influence the growth of a person. Thus, by following

Islamic religious responsibility, consuming *halal* food and finding *halal* restaurants could develop a better Muslim in the future.

#### 2.4 Lifestyle

Living in an environmentally friendly lifestyle is challenging for a growing and developing economy like Malaysia (Ong & Choon, 2018). Aligning with the development of *halal* industries in Malaysia, lifestyle is an important factor as a social pressure to perform certain behavior towards religious obligation. Lifestyles are influenced by people in the surrounding for example family, relatives, friends, and society. Lifestyle could affect awareness in choosing *halal* foods and restaurants. According to Krishnan *et al.* (2017), Gen Z have a lack of awareness in consuming *halal* food due to their lifestyle that are attached to the social media update where they tend to eat in the famous and viral restaurants and gain popularity when it is posted on the social media.

#### 2.5 Social Influence

Fisher (2005) claimed that younger generation consumers in Malaysia are exposed to *halal* issues. Gen Z should be aware of *halal* issues, however, crucial external forces such as the internet, social media, and peer-influence would affect their awareness level in choosing *halal* restaurants. There are lots of factors that influenced *halal* industries, both internally and externally. Evolving technology had exposed Gen Z to constant social and technological changes (Roblek *et al.*, 2018). Further, the internet and social media have become a necessity in daily life in attaining and sharing information and knowledge, which indirectly could give positive and negative implications to a person.

#### 2.6 Attitude

Attitude is a way of thinking or feeling about something. Abdul Khalek (2014) described that attitude and perceived behavioural control could influence behavioural intention of young consumers to choose *halal* food outlets. *Halal* food awareness is influenced by the attitude and understanding of the *halal* concept. Most of the young consumers understand that eating in a *halal* restaurant is important and a restaurant must display a *halal* logo or certificate at their premises.

### 3. Methodology

To measure the factors that influence awareness level towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants among Gen Z, 1,050 youngsters who were below 23 years old representing respondents of Malaysian Gen Z and living in Peninsular Malaysia were selected. The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling method. Using a self-administered questionnaire survey, the respondents' responses were gathered through various approaches such as email, social media, and phone calls. The questionnaires consisting of questions and statements on awareness of eating at *halal* certified restaurants were established using a 5-point Likert scale of '1-Strongly disagree', '2-Disagree', '3-Neutral', '4-Agree' and '5-Strongly agree'. Descriptive analysis, Chi-square analysis, and factor analysis were used to analyse the data. Descriptive analysis was carried out to determine the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents and the level of awareness among Gen Z. Chi-square analysis was performed to determine the association between socio-demographic profiles of Gen Z and awareness level, while factor analysis was conducted to extract factors influencing Gen Z's awareness towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants. The conceptual framework of this study is depicted in Figure 1 and the hypotheses of the study were established as follows: -

H<sub>0</sub> : There is no association between socio-demographic profiles and awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants.

H<sub>1</sub> : There is a significant association between socio-demographic profiles and awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants.

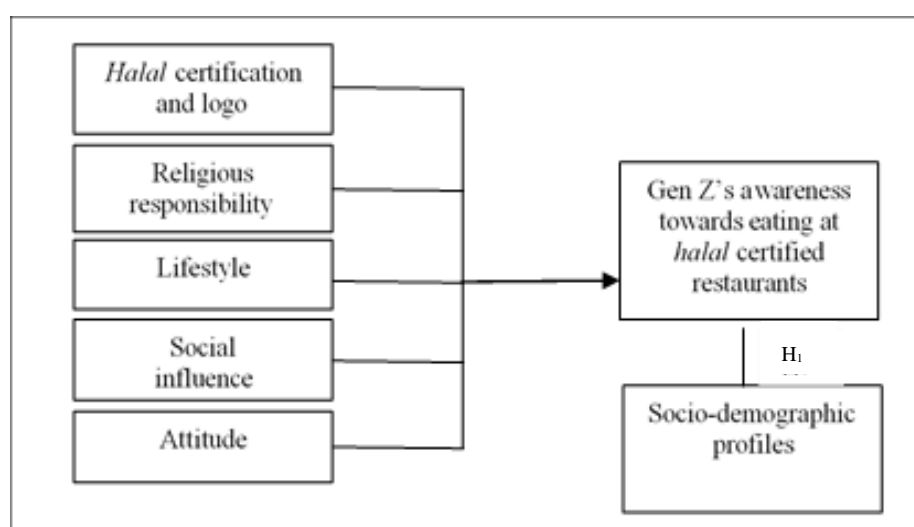


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1 Respondents' Socio-Demographic Profiles

The results of the socio-demographic profiles of 1,050 respondents who participated in the study are depicted in Table 1. Two-third of the respondents were female accounted for 67.4% (708), while the remaining 32.6% (342) were male. About 90% (1,002) of the respondents were aged between 19-23 years old and only 10% (48) of the respondents were aged between 14-18 years old. The respondents were dominated by Malays accounted for 92.9% (975) while Chinese, Indians, and other races accounted for 4.3% (45), 0.6% (6), and 2.3% (24), respectively. From a total of 1,050 respondents, 97.4% (1,023) of them were single and only 2.6% (27) respondents were married. Most of the respondents 73.3% (770) have less than three (3) people in their household and 83.1% (873) of the respondents obtained a bachelor's degree and they were mostly university students accounted for 88.9% (933). The remaining 11.1% (117) of the respondents were reported working with the government, private sector, self-employed, and others. The distribution of the respondents living in the rural and urban areas was slightly balanced in which 52% (546) respondents were from the rural residential area, while the remaining 48% (504) respondents were from the urban residential area. As more than 80% of the respondents were dominated by the students, most of them 88.9% (933) earned a monthly income of less than RM1,000, while the remaining 11.1% (117) respondents earned more than RM1,000 per month.

**Table 1.** Respondents' socio-demographic profiles.

Profile	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	342	32.6
Female	708	67.4
Age (years old)		
14-18	48	10
19-23	1,002	90
Race		
Malay	975	92.9
Chinese	45	4.3
Indian	6	0.6
Others	24	2.3
Marital Status		
Single	1,023	97.4
Married	27	2.6

Profile	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percentage (%)
Education		
Primary school	3	0.3
Secondary school	90	8.6
Diploma	84	8.0
Bachelor	873	83.1
No of Household (people)		
< 3	770	73.3
≥ 3	280	26.7
Occupation		
Government	15	1.4
Private Sector	75	7.1
Self-Employed	12	1.1
Student	933	88.9
Others	15	1.4
Residential Area		
Rural	546	52
Urban	504	48
Monthly Income (RM)		
<1000	933	88.9
≥1000	117	11.1
<i>n</i> = 1,050		

#### 4.2 Awareness Level of Gen Z towards Eating at Halal Certified Restaurants

Descriptive analysis was used to determine the mean score and to measure Gen Z awareness level towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants. Ten relevant statements on *halal* awareness were established based on 5-point Likert scales ranging from ‘1-Strongly disagree’ to ‘5-Strongly agree’. The highest mean score for the established statement of “*I believe eating halal food shows that someone is obedient to religion*” was 4.59, while the lowest mean score for the established statement of “*Muslim consumers who visit a non-halal restaurant reassure me to visit the same restaurant*” was 2.89. The result of the average mean score was 3.809 in which an average mean score of above 4.00 indicated a high level of awareness, while an average mean score of below 4.00 indicated a low level of awareness (refer to Table 2). Thus, the average mean scores of 3.809 clearly showed that Gen Z have a low level of awareness towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants.



**Table 2.** Awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants.

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	I believe eating <i>halal</i> food shows that someone is obedient to religion.	4.59	0.645
2.	I believe Muslims should avoid eating doubtful <i>halal</i> food.	4.47	0.693
3.	<i>Halal</i> certificate and <i>halal</i> logo are the main references and sources before choosing a restaurant.	4.00	0.707
4.	I believe <i>halal</i> food help to boost someone's internal side.	4.12	0.645
5.	I believe eating <i>halal</i> food can improve health.	4.10	0.809
6.	I believe a restaurant that viral on social media is <i>halal</i> .	3.73	0.756
7.	I believe a restaurant that is certified <i>halal</i> only prepared <i>halal</i> dishes.	3.73	0.800
8.	The 'Pork-free' sign convinces me to try the food served by the restaurant.	3.35	0.875
9.	I search for the <i>halal</i> status of a restaurant to ensure its <i>halal</i> .	3.11	0.824
10.	Muslim consumers who visit a non- <i>halal</i> restaurant reassure me to visit the same restaurant.	2.89	0.609
<b>Average mean</b>		<b>3.809</b>	<b>0.7363</b>

#### 4.3 Association between Gen Z's Socio-Demographic Profiles and Awareness Level towards Eating at Halal Certified Restaurants

Chi-square analysis was used to measure the association between socio-demographic profiles and awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants. There were nine (9) socio-demographic profiles tested to determine their association with the awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants. Only six (6) socio-demographic profiles namely gender, age, race, education level, occupation, and monthly income showed significant associations with the awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants, thus  $H_0$  was rejected. As the results revealed gender has a significant association with the level of awareness, it indicated that female Gen Z were more concerned in choosing *halal* certified restaurants and this result was in line with studies by E. Gammie and B. Gammie (2009) and Sezer *et al.* (2015). Meanwhile, age and race also showed significant associations with the awareness level in choosing *halal* certified restaurants due to *halal* awareness level increased as the age of a person increased. As supported by Wilford and Wakunuma (2014) that awareness of youngsters towards *halal* issues was based on their experience and knowledge towards the issues. Since most of the respondents were above 18 years old, they all were assumed to have *halal* knowledge and

experience. Monthly income, education level, and occupation were also revealed to have significant associations with the awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants. This clearly showed that those Gen Z with a better income, they were more aware of choosing *halal* restaurants or places to eat, while education level and occupation gave positive influences in choosing *halal* certified restaurants. The education level represents Gen Z's knowledge in *halal*, while occupation represents Gen Z's social circle where it influenced the *halal* awareness. Table 3 shows the summary results of the association between socio-demographic profiles and awareness level among Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants.

**Table 3.** Association between Gen Z's socio-demographic profiles and awareness level towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants.

Variable	Chi-Square	df	Significant	Decision
Gender	121.833	1	0.000*	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Age	666.179	1	0.000*	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Race	1437.877	3	0.000*	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
No. of household	811.533	1	0.184	Fail to Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Education level	241.757	3	0.000*	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Marital status	952.233	1	0.236	Fail to reject H <sub>0</sub>
Occupation	582.601	4	0.000*	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Residential area	84.320	1	0.144	Fail to Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Monthly income	124.110	1	0.000*	Reject H <sub>0</sub>

Note: \*significant at 1% level of significance

#### 4.4 Factors that Influence Gen Z's Awareness towards Eating at Halal Certified Restaurants

The result of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) obtained was 0.782, which was above 0.6 and the Barlett's Test showed the significant level was significant at 0.00, therefore factor analysis was appropriate for this study. Based on the factor analysis result, there were five (5) factors extracted that influenced Gen Z awareness of eating at *halal* certified restaurants namely '*halal* certification and logo', 'religious responsibility', 'lifestyle', 'social influence' and 'attitude'. The cumulative percentage of variance explained for *halal* certification and logo, religious responsibility, lifestyle, social influence, and attitude was 57.28%. Table 4 shows the five (5) factors extracted from factor analysis.

**Table 4.** Factors that influence Gen Z's awareness of eating at *halal* certified restaurants.

Statement	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% of Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Factor 1: Halal Certification and Logo</b>				
a. I prefer taking <i>halal</i> food because <i>halal</i> food makes me good and have a smart mind.	0.781			
b. <i>Halal</i> certification and logo are my priority in choosing <i>halal</i> food.	0.771			
c. <i>Halal</i> certification and logo should be placed in front of the premises.	0.734			
d. I believe a restaurant that certified <i>halal</i> by JAKIM serves <i>halal</i> , clean, and quality food.	0.774	4.304	15.50	0.808
e. I should avoid eating at a restaurant that has no <i>halal</i> certification.	0.674			
f. A restaurant that has <i>halal</i> certification and logo will attract more consumers.	0.631			
g. I prefer to eat at a restaurant which is clean and has a <i>halal</i> logo.	0.614			
<b>Factor 2: Religious Responsibility</b>				
a. I should avoid entering a restaurant that has no <i>halal</i> certification.	0.795			
b. Choosing a <i>halal</i> restaurant is my priority.	0.771			
c. I believe eating food that the <i>halal</i> status is doubtful is prohibited by religion.	0.742	3.395	28.65	0.804
d. I believe eating <i>halal</i> food is an individual responsibility towards religion.	0.652			
<b>Factor 3: Lifestyle</b>				
a. If I work or study in an urban area, I tend to go to a restaurant that has no or doubtful <i>halal</i> status.	0.828			
b. Lack of emphasis on <i>Halal</i> issues causes me to choose a restaurant that is not sure of its status.	0.785	2.035	40.04	0.723
c. I tend to go to the restaurant that is not sure of its <i>Halal</i> status if there is no supervision from parents.	0.762			

Statement	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% of Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Factor 4: Social Influence</b>				
a. Entering a restaurant that viral on social media has become a trend nowadays.	0.791			
b. Friends are a major influencer to visit a new restaurant.	0.757	1.251	49.45	0.660
c. Easy to access the internet could contribute to the spreading, not <i>Halal</i> food.	0.533			
<b>Factor 5: Attitude</b>				
a. I only care about appearance and taste when choosing a restaurant.	0.675			
b. I am not concern about the <i>halal</i> status of a restaurant because I believe in Malaysia all restaurants have followed rules and procedures before they start operating their business.	0.634	1.037	57.28	0.637
c. I believe most of the restaurants still do not display their <i>halal</i> certification and logo in front of their premises.	0.603			

#### 4.4.1 *Halal certification and logo*

The first factor extracted from factor analysis was '*halal certification and logo*' with the percentage of variance explained was 15.5% and the eigenvalue was 4.304. *Halal* certification and logo display shows an important role in any restaurant business nature as it provides fast, short, and concise *halal* information to consumers. As consumers look for clean, healthy, safe, and wholesome food, *halal* food will be the perfect choice compared to non-*halal* food according to a common perspective among Muslims. Gen Z believed that eating *halal* food will make them good and have a smart mind. This generation also believed that the *halal* certificate and logo displayed at the restaurant will help them to speed up choosing *halal* restaurants. Furthermore, *halal* certificate and logo, which are displayed in front of the premise will indirectly convince consumers especially Gen Z to choose the restaurants. This group of consumers believed that a restaurant with a *halal* certificate and logo serves clean and quality foods. They also believed that the *halal* logo itself will attract them to revisit the restaurant. The Cronbach's alpha for eight (8) items extracted under *halal* certification and logo factor was 0.808.

#### 4.4.1 Religious responsibility

The second factor extracted from factor analysis was '*religious responsibility*' with the percentage of variance explained was 13.15% and the eigenvalue was 3.395. As a Muslim, by doing permitted actions and avoiding prohibited actions by religion, it showed a person's responsibility as a believer towards the religion. Thus, as a Muslim Gen Z should be wise and smart in choosing *halal* food to show and signify their belief and responsibility towards Islam. Based on *Maqasid Shariah*, eating *halal* food and putting an effort into obtaining *halal* food is an individual responsibility towards religion. To show Muslim's responsibility, they should avoid entering the non-*halal* restaurant as the *halal* restaurant will be the top priority in choosing a place to eat. Muslims also are prohibited to eat food with non-confirm *halal* status or also called '*syubhah*' and avoiding food that is '*syubhah*' also showed good religious responsibility. The Cronbach's alpha for four (4) items extracted under the religious responsibility factor was 0.804, the second highest in this analysis apart from *halal* certification and logo factor.

#### 4.4.2 Lifestyle

The third factor extracted from factor analysis was '*lifestyle*' with the percentage of variance explained was 11.38% and the eigenvalue was 2.035. The lifestyle of Gen Z was different from one to another. The way Gen Z chooses and decides in choosing a place to eat could assist in expressing their monthly income, level of education, occupation, and much more. As mentioned previously, lifestyle also could be influenced by society. By working or studying in the urban area, there is a high tendency among Gen Z to walk-in into lots of fancy, hipster restaurants. This happens when a lack of emphasis on *halal* issues among this generation and far and loose supervision from parents could lead to the same causal. As this happened, Gen Z showed that they have less concern about *halal* restaurants when influenced by lifestyle factors. The Cronbach's alpha for three (3) items extracted under lifestyle was 0.723.

#### 4.4.3 Social influence

The fourth factor extracted from factor analysis was '*social influence*' with the percentage of variance explained was 9.41% and the eigenvalue was 1.251. Almost the same to the lifestyle factor, social influence was another factor that influenced the awareness level among Gen Z. Nowadays, almost everyone owned social media accounts, where they can share what they are doing daily, what and where they eat regardless of the status of the actions or foods are permitted or not as long as they look great and fancy. Since many people are

updating about those restaurants through social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, the information goes viral and directly influences Gen Z entering the restaurants regardless of their *halal* status. External influence such as peers also is one of the major influencers to these groups of youngsters to visit new restaurants without having enough consideration on the price and *halal* status. Accessibility to the internet network is also one of the important influences for these youngsters to keep on spreading non-confirm information about restaurants whose *halal* status is still doubtful. The Cronbach's alpha for three (3) items extracted under the social influence factor was 0.660.

#### 4.4.4 Attitude

The fifth factor extracted from factor analysis was '*attitude*' with the percentage of variance explained was 7.82% and the eigenvalue was 1.037. Gen Z showed their attitude towards *halal* restaurants based on their style. Most Gen Z expressed their attitude towards *halal* restaurants by concerning on restaurant's appearance and taste, however, it creates apprehension when the restaurant's *halal* status is not a priority among this generation. Besides, this generation had less concern about the restaurant's *halal* status as they believed Malaysian restaurants need to follow specific rules and guidelines before the restaurants could operate in Malaysia. They are also claimed that most of the restaurants in Malaysia did not display their *halal* certification and *halal* logo and this situation allowed them to simply walk-in into any restaurant in Malaysia as they believed the restaurants serve *halal* food and other Muslims also walk-in into the restaurants. However, Gen Z did not aware of the ingredients used by the restaurants, handling, logistics, and other related issues that might affect the *halal* status of the food served. Overall, Gen Z's attitude showed less favorable towards awareness of *halal* restaurants, where they should be more concerned about ingredients, handling, and certification compared to only concern on taste, appearance, minimal procedure, and common practices among restaurants in Malaysia. The Cronbach's alpha for three (3) items extracted under the attitude factor was 0.637.

## 5. Conclusion

Gen Z is a generation who are very responsive, technology-savvy, modern, and educated, however, this study found that the awareness level of this generation towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants is low. Gen Z socio-demographic profiles such as gender, age, race, education level, monthly income, and occupation had significant associations with the awareness level of Gen Z towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants. Five factors influenced Gen Z's awareness towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants namely *halal* certification and

logo, religious responsibility, lifestyle, social influence and attitude. The practical implications of this finding will be extended to food policy decision-makers and restaurant operators who might use *halal* related strategies in the growing *halal* food market segment among Gen Z's consumers in Malaysia. Understanding the why and how Gen Z perceive *halal* food can lead *halal* certified restaurant operators to increase their level of awareness and knowledge on *halal* principles and *halal* food handling and process. On top of that, Gen Z should increase their level of awareness towards eating at *halal* certified restaurants and this could be done through engaging with relevant awareness programs and *halal* campaigns by social media and community engagement. The only main *halal* authority, JAKIM should also play a significant role by implementing regular enforcement at certain restaurants in Malaysia that they operate without *halal* certification or those with existing *halal* certification but in suspicion for invalid or questionable certification and logo from Malaysia's authorized body.

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