

Factors Influencing Local Tourists' Decision to Consume Halal Chinese Food at Local Festivals

Nurkhairun Shuhada Razali, Muhammad Hafizi Zamri*, Abdul Hamid Abdul Halim, Mohamad Imaduddin Zainal Abidin, Liyana Shamimi Mohamed Kamil

Faculty of Business and Management, University Technology MARA BERJAYA University College
Kuala Lumpur

*Corresponding author

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRIS.2025.906000485>

Received: 20 June 2025; Accepted: 24 June 2025; Published: 24 July 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the factors that influence local tourists in selecting Halal Chinese cuisine at cultural festivals in Malaysia. Malaysia A multicultural nation with increasing influx of culinary tourism, the growth of Halal Chinese food, a combination of Chinese dishes and Islamic law, simultaneously maintains traditional groundwork and extends widely in food culture in the multicultural community. Adopting the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study investigates the effects of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control on tourists' halal Chinese food consumption intention. Surveys, interviews, and observations at the local festival were used for data generation. The results indicate that the consumption intentions are significantly affected by positive attitude, subjective norm, and perceived ease of access. The results of the study could also provide valuable insights for endorsing Halal food during multicultural activities to accommodate the needs of various dietary requirements and, in turn, elevate the overall experience of culinary. Suggestions are offered to event planners, food vendors, policy makers to use these insights to support inclusive tourism policies.

Keywords: Halal Chinese Food, Event Management, Festival, Local Events, Halal Food

INTRODUCTION

The last few years have seen a significant rise in food tourism, as culinary tourism has quickly turned into one of the most popular forms of tourism. Food and beverage tourism has developed into a formidable force in the tourism industry, as culinary experiences have now taken centre stage in tourism motivation. This development is evident in the increasing number of travellers who travel for food experiences and associated cultures (Taheri & Gannon, 2021). In Malaysia, with its multiracial make-up, food is celebrated as part of cultural identity as well as being promoted as tourist bait. One of the many traditional food products, Halal Chinese food, which is a fusion of Chinese cooking methods and Islamic dietary rules, has become popular. Tourists seeking authentic, Halal cuisine is available here as the food is significant to Muslims and a reflection of cultural amalgamation. Gastronomy tourism is on the rise rather rapidly. Tourist spots generally see one third of the expenses made by tourists spent on food and drink (Ovcharenko et al., 2021).

Cultural festivals in Malaysia represent important tourism platforms through which domestic tourists could be exposed to different kind of food-ethnic and Halal foods. Nyonya food, which is a mix of Malay and Chinese cuisine, is well known in Malacca also. Halal-certified Nyonya fare for the Muslim tourists A wider trend in Malaysia's tourism industry, the Nyonya cuisine serves as another example for the preceding point. As a result, attention is being given to making Nyonya food-items Halal-certified to attract Muslim visitors to Malaysia (Yusof et al., 2024). The entertainment value is combined with the promotional potential of halal Chinese fare to introduce to the larger masses in cultural events celebrated throughout the year. Malaysia is a melting pot of races with a huge variety of cultures and cuisines. They are Malay, Chinese and Indian, all with distinct tastes and methods of cooking food. Such cultural diversity is one of the main reasons tourists choose authentic food experience when they travel (Rahim et al., 2020). Despite the recent attention towards Halal food, limited studies have been conducted that specifically examine what influences local tourists' choice of Halal Chinese cuisine in cultural festivals. Understanding these factors is important for food vendors, event planners, and policymakers

who seek to enhance the food experience and ensure available foods meet the dietary needs of all attendees. Although the discussion is on Halal food, it would be necessary to look at culinary tourism as a whole and understand the variation of tourist tastes. Even tourists who are not Muslims may be interested in Halal food, not only because of its quality but also as part of the culture in non-Islamic places with other tourist attractions (Xiong & Chia, 2024).

This study intends to contribute by investigating the determinants of the intention of local tourists to indulge Halal Chinese food consumption during cultural festivals. This study further underpins the determination of attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioural control in a way that affects the food choice of local tourists during cultural festivals. Using surveys, interviews, and observation, the research explores reasons for food choice decisions and provides suggestions for the marketing of Halal Chinese cuisine at the local festivals. Eventually, this study hopes to be able to contribute to a clearer appreciation of the relationship between food, culture and tourism in the Malaysian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal Food Consumption and Tourist Behavior: The connection between halal food consumption and tourist behaviour Halal food consumption has a significant impact on tourist behavior, which is especially important among Muslim tourists, because they are more likely to look for halal food due to religious constraints (Lieneter A. (2006). The ease of obtaining and the quality of halal food may influence a tourist towards satisfaction and revisit, so this phenomenon is not only observable in a Muslim-majority country but also appears to be emerging in a non-Muslim destination. Religiosity, cultural identity, and perceived quality and safety are some of the factors that have been influencing the growing demand for halal food products in tourism. All these factors indeed have an impact the decision-making and travel experiences of Muslim travellers, as well as on the destination and culinary experiences they select. Cultural identity as well as level of religiosity play a significant role in Muslim travellers' halal food consumption. Research confirms that religious importance, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control are significant predictors of attitudes and intentions to consume halal food in Muslim tourists, especially those visiting non-Muslim destinations (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2021). The value of halal food as a signal of cleanliness and proper hygiene is the key determinant of tourists' satisfaction and purchase intention. A favourable halal food image could enhance tourists' satisfaction and repeat visits to the destination and is therefore an important element for tourism destinations that want to attract Muslim travellers (Abhari et al., 2022). The availability and quality of halal food (i.e., health and nutrition, accreditation, hygiene), among other things, is important for the development of trust and attachment towards the destination. This has a considerable effect on the Muslim travellers' staying in non-Islamic countries (Han et al., 2021).

Attitudes Towards Halal Chinese Food: Perceptions towards Halal Chinese Food: Positive perceptions reflect cultural acceptance and compliance with Islamic dietary laws; negative perceptions prevent consumption. The literature shows that several factors such as the level of religiosity, social influence, and perceived behavioural control are critical in the development of these attitudes. These dynamics must be understood and leveraged if we are to advance Halal Chinese food. [citation needed] Tourism The tourists are also attracted to Halal Nyonya food for its unique combination of flavours that provide an exclusive culinary experience under the states of Halal. This can increase positive feelings and consumption intentions (Yusof et al., 2024). High religiosity and Halal knowledge are the significant drivers that affect the attitude of the respondents toward Halal Chinese food. These variables affect intention to eat Halal food among Muslim tourists and Muslim citizens (Setiawati et al., 2019). Peer and family communication about the consumption of Halal food should have emerged as a significant factor influencing the development of positive attitudes toward Halal food. This is particularly powerful in a communitarian society where the opinion of the majority carries considerable weight and can have an impact in making a personal decision. Halal Chinese food could become a thing to prospective diners with tourism players promoting it in social media and word-of-mouth. This method not only can be used contribute to enrich our common knowledge of Halal culinary heritage, but also gives the inclusiveness and acceptance on various costumer. These findings may allow those working in the Halal Chinese food industry to understand the relationship between cultural appreciation and religious belief to better formulate marketing strategies, leading to increased levels of acceptance and consumption among various types of tourists. Such understanding can result in more adept marketing, emphasizing the cultural importance and culinary exceptionality of Halal Chinese food to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists. Moreover, it could also create cross-cultural communication in

order to help non-Muslim people to understand Muslim culture, which leads to its attraction from non-Muslim consumers.

H¹: The attitudes of local tourists will affect the intention to attend the local festival and consume Halal Chinese cuisine.

Subjective Norms and Social Influence: Subjective norms are social influences that influence an individual's behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and referring to how people close to us expect us to behave, it plays a major role in our decision to eat, especially when it comes to Halal Chinese food. These norms are grounded in culture and community expectations, and they shape not only personal preferences but also community attitudes towards cultural food heritage at a societal level. The intersection of acceptance of food and societal sentiments about halal dietary practices is illustrative of a more convoluted set of norms. This response will consider the function of subjective norms and friends and peers in consumption behavior, in connection to social relations, cultural identity, and the significance for maintaining the cultural food tradition. The social environment heavily influences eating behavior, and people frequently mimic the eating of their social contacts. Such conformity is the result of the time and situations were paying attention to (and following) social norms, created by cultural expectancy and situational cueing, produces predictably rewarding and adaptive outcomes (Higgs & Thomas, 2016). Perceived norms, particularly those concerning consumption of halal food, are important predictors of purchasing intentions. In Makassar, opinions and subjective norms are components regarding the interest and willingness of consumers in purchasing halal product (Arief et al., 2020). Social norms are key in consumers' decisions, because people tend to think about others' expectations or behaviours when they are looking for an appropriate behavior. This influence also applies to likes and dislikes and behaviours, revealing the strong influence of social norms on what is eaten (Melnyk, 2011).

H²: There is an association between subjective norms (social pressure) and local tourists' intention toward consuming Halal Chinese food in local festivals.

Perceived Control Over Food Consumption: Perceived control is the important factors in influencing food consumption behavior, specifically in the selection of the Halal Nyonya food. What is perceived behavioural control, and it matters --- Perceived behavioural control (PBC) is one of the primary antecedents of intention (and behavior) in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) — it is the belief that someone has of how easy or difficult it is for them to perform a specific action. Theoretical explanations for both constructs (attitude–intention and subjective norm–intention) were considered, as PBC (Behavioural control) is a determinant of both behavioural intention and behavior according to the TPB. This is consistent with other studies, several of which have reported a positive association between PBC and purchase intention for halal food (Putra & Nurdin, 2018). BEC is commonly associated with the ease with which health consumers could access and consume halal foods. This is particularly critical in tourists as they may not be familiar with the food offerings and consequently depend on perceived control in choosing healthful foods (Istiasih et al., 2022).

H³: Perceived behavioural control (the tourists' confidence regarding their ability to purchase Halal Chinese food) on the intention to purchase Halal Chinese food in the local festival.

Research Framework

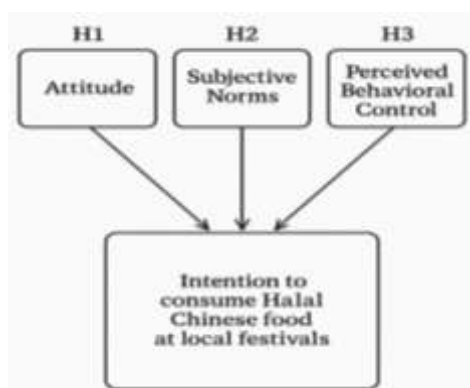


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Factors Influencing Local Tourists' Decision to Consume Halal Chinese Food at Local Festivals

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This paper uses a quantitative research design to explore what triggers local tourists to consume Halal Chinese food at the local festivals. We incorporate the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which states that people's behavior is determined by three main factors, namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of these factors on local tourists' intention to consume Halal Chinese food at local festivals.

Population and Sample: The research is confined to local tourists who have visited local festivals in Malaysia and has prior knowledge about Halal-Chinese cuisine. Purposeful sampling is used to select those people who have experienced Halal Chinese in the food-related decision-making process at such festivals. A total of 214 respondents of different profiles were interviewed.

Demographics of the Sample:

1. **Gender:** 21.55% male, 78.45% female
2. **Age:** 70.1% were between 18 and 30 years, 12.0% were between 31 and 39 years, 14.0% were between 40 and 59 years, and the remaining 3.9% were 60 and above.
3. **Occupation:** 70.09% were students, while the rest were employed or unemployed.
4. **Income Level:** The majority (60.3%) of students earn below RM1,500, which is typical for students who may rely on allowances, part-time jobs, or family support.

RESULTS

A self-administered questionnaire consisting of closed-ended and Likert scale items was employed to collect data. The questionnaire was designed based on TPB to measure attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and intention to consume Halal Industrialized Chinese food. This survey was completed by tourists at different local festivals in Malaysia during 2025.

The questions focused on the following:

1. **Attitudes:** Assessing personal preferences, cultural openness, and beliefs towards Halal Chinese food.
2. **Subjective Norms:** Evaluating the influence of social circles (friends, family, peers) on the decision to consume Halal Chinese food.
3. **Perceived Behavioural Control:** Understanding tourists' belief in their ability to access and consume Halal Chinese food.
4. **Intention to Consume Halal Chinese Food:** Evaluating the likelihood of local tourists choosing Halal Chinese food at local festivals.

Data collection took place at popular local festival sites known for their Halal food offerings. The survey was reinforced by direct observations on locations and interviews to deep need now what are the elements that drive tourists to select food on festivals.

Data Analysis: The collected data was analysed using statistical tool SPSS (Version 29.0).

Reliability Testing: Measuring the level of consistency of the measurement items with Cronbach's alpha, for the purpose of estimating reliability of the constructs. The results in the above table are consistent with Raharjanti et al. (2022) study, providing evidence of reliability and validity of the measurement items employed in this study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), a Cronbach's alpha above 0.6 is acceptable for reliability. Reliability coefficients for the main variables in the study are as follows based on the results:

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude	0.63
Subjective Norms	0.66
Perceived Behavioural Control	0.72
Intention to Consume	0.61

Attitude ($\alpha = 0.63$): This is not far from the minimally acceptable level of 0.6. It appears that the components of attitude toward Halal Chinese food showed fair reliability. **Subjective Norms ($\alpha = 0.66$):** The Cronbach's alpha of 0.66 was deemed adequate, indicating that items measuring social pressure or social expectation affecting Halal Chinese food consumption are fairly consistent. **- Perceived Behavioural Control ($\alpha = 0.72$):** This latter is a good reliability coefficient over the 0.7. This demonstrates good internal consistency and that the items measuring perceived control over food consumption behavior are reliable. **Intention to Consume ($\alpha = 0.61$):** This variable demonstrates satisfactory reliability (0.61), which implies that the measurement items for intention to consume Halal Chinese food are respondents' perceptions of the internal consistency of the items themselves. Overall, the reliability analysis shows that the measurement items for all constructs are moderately to highly consistent, making them suitable for further analysis in understanding local tourists' intentions to consume Halal Chinese food.

Correlation Analysis: Using Pearson's correlation coefficient to analyse the relationship between the independent variables (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control) and the dependent variable (intention to consume Halal Chinese food). Significant positive correlations were observed:

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Correlation (r)	p-value
Attitude → Intention to Consume	0.661	$p < 0.000$
Subjective Norms → Intention to Consume	0.635	$p < 0.000$
Perceived Behavioural Control → Intention to Consume	0.665	$p < 0.000$

The table presents the correlation coefficients (r) and p-values for the relationships between three independent variables, which are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, and the dependent variable, intention to consume halal Chinese food. Here's the way to read the results:

Regression analysis was used to analyse the predictive relationships between the independent variables (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control) and the intention to consume halal Chinese food. The result of the regression model showed that the three drivers were found to be significantly and positively associated with tourists' intention to consume Halal Chinese food in the future.

Attitude → Intention to Consume ($r = 0.661, p < 0.000$)

Degree of Association: The value of Pearson correlation as 0.661 is indicative of a moderate to strong positive relationship between attitude and intention towards consuming Halal Chinese food. In other words, to the extent that tourists' attitude toward Halal Chinese food is favourable, their intention to consume it becomes stronger.

Significance: The significance is less than 0.000 ($p < 0.000$) which validates the significance of the relationship.

Therefore, attitude significantly predicts intention to consume halal Chinese food and this correlation is not coincidental.

Subjective Norms → Intention to Consume ($r = 0.635$, $p < 0.000$)

Relationship between the Concepts: The correlation coefficient value of 0.635 also means that there is a moderate positive relationship exists between subjective norms and the intention to consume. This may imply that tourists are inclined to consume Halal Chinese food if they perceive certain levels of social pressure/influence from their social network (family, friends, peers) to do so.

Implications: This relationship is statistically significant with a p -value less than 0.000, providing support for social influences as an important determinant in shaping tourists' intentions to consume Halal Chinese food. The finding strongly supports the view that subjective norms play a critical role in food choice.

Perceived Behavioural Control → Intended to use ($r = 0.665$, $p < 0.000$). How much of a relationship? With a correlation coefficient of 0.665, the relationship between perceived behaviour control and the intention of consuming is moderate to strong. This implies that tourists are more inclined to perceived control for selecting Halal Chinese in tourist destination if they feel are capable and have the resources to do so, for example, access or ease of having Halal-certificated food.

Significance: The P -value < 0.000 indicates that this result is statistically significant and shows the perceived behavioural control important predictor of consumption intention. Tourist who are independent or self-supported in terms of eating Halal Chinese food are more likely to have intention to do so.

Hypotheses Analysis The research develops three hypotheses, each pertaining to a critical aspect of the local tourists' behavioural intention to consume Halal Chinese food during local festivals. Below is an assessment of each hypothesis:

H¹: There is a positive influence of local tourists' attitudes on intention to consume Halal Chinese food at local festivals.

Interpretation: The local tourists' attitude toward Halal Chinese food has a major influence on their intentions to purchase and consume it at local festivals. Attitude is a measure of what a person was thinking or feeling about, how good or bad Halal Chinese food is for them, and it might be more activated by personal belief, cultural acceptance, and previous experience of Halal food (Leng et al., 2015), a positive attitude toward Halal Chinese food may hold a strong positive impact on intention. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings, guided by the theory of planned behavior (TPB) indicate that food attitudes, influenced by culture and religiosity, play an important role in consumer behaviour. The last hypothesis might be supported if there is evidence of strong positive inter-relationship between attitude and intention towards consuming Halal Chinese food.

H²: Subjective norms (social pressure) is positively associated to the intention of local tourists to consume Halal Chinese food during local festivals.

Examination: This model is based on the subjective norm in which is considered to be subjective towards the social influences such family, peers or society norms. It assumes that some local tourists will feel obliged or be inspired to eat Halal Chinese food by their friends or family, particularly at times of cultural festivals when people eat together.

In collectivist cultures, social influences are strong, and thus, individuals' consumption choices are often shaped by the preferences and behaviours of those around them. The correlation between subjective norms and intention to consume is expected to be significant, confirming that social factors indeed impact food consumption behavior in a festival setting.

H³: Perceived behavioural control (the tourists' belief in their ability to consume Halal Chinese food) influences their intention to consume Halal Chinese food at local festivals.

Analysis: Perceived behavioural control (PBC) is a critical concept in TPB, reflecting an individual's belief in their ability to execute a behavior, in this case, consuming Halal Chinese food. If tourists perceive that they have easy access to Halal Chinese food or feel confident in their ability to find it at the festival, they are more likely to intend to consume it. The hypothesis posits that the availability and accessibility of Halal food options will positively influence the intention to consume them. Given that accessibility and convenience are often pivotal in food choice decisions, this hypothesis is expected to hold true, particularly in a festival context where food availability and ease of access are key factors.

General Discussion of the Hypotheses: The three hypotheses collectively address key aspects of consumer behavior, as outlined by the **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**:

1. **Attitude:** Reflects how a tourist's personal views and experiences with Halal food influence their intention to consume it.
2. **Subjective Norms:** Highlights the importance of social influences and how tourists' food choices are shaped by societal and peer expectations.
3. **Perceived Behavioural Control:** Focuses on the role of access and convenience in shaping food choices, particularly in the context of a public event like a festival.

The study hypothesizes that all three factors significantly contribute to the intention to consume Halal Chinese food and based on the strong correlations and statistical significance observed in the data, it is likely that these hypotheses will be supported. The study emphasizes the importance of promoting Halal food options at cultural festivals, leveraging positive attitudes and social influences, and ensuring easy access to Halal-certified food to increase consumption and improve the overall tourist experience. These insights can inform marketing strategies, food vendor offerings, and event planning to cater to the growing demand for Halal food and enhance the cultural experience at local festivals.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the customers' age groups concur with H1 (the different customer age groups experience mobile network operators differently) and are compatible with the study conducted by (Amoah, Radder, & van Eyk, 2018; Jonas, Radder, & van Eyk, 2019; and Radder & Han, 2015). Respondents aged between 19 and 30 constituted the higher number of customers that experienced network operators differently. About experienced the operators similarly.

Managerial Implications and Recommendations

The results of the current study would provide valuable implications for festival organizers, food vendors, and tourism stakeholders who wish to lure local tourists to participate in halal Chinese cuisine local festivals. An important point is the possible enhancement of cultural ties by halal products. Incorporating halal-certified Chinese food can enable Chinese festivals to better promote cross-cultural awareness and cater to the dietary needs of Muslim practitioners. The organizers should co-organize with established vendors selling a variety of authentic Halal Chinese dishes and should promote the cultural stories around the meals to give tourists a better experience. Trust and confidence are important for travellers in choosing food- halal certification. Visual proof and adhering to the regulations and halal standards used for preparing this food are critical in creating confidence in the consumer. Vendors must be trained and show certifications for transparency. What's more, tourists are worried concerning food safety and hygiene. Training hygiene inspectors to assess and cleanliness might improve food quality and increase visitor satisfaction. Food consumption behaviour is significantly influenced by marketing. Social media platforms can also be utilized to market halal Chinese food, where bloggers and influencers can collaborate in sharing authentic reviews and creating awareness. It's a digital version of the above, except with one major difference: it increases visibility and credibility through word-of-mouth. Price is another factor that should be considered. Given that local travellers also tend to be budget-conscious, the appeal of cheap meals or bargains might spark interest and influence spending. Clear, transparent pricing can help build trust with customers. Further, the geographical dispersion of the halal food festival vendors impacts their

accessibility and visibility. Organizers would also need to be intentional to place these vendors nearby prayer areas or family zones and be able to direct guests with signage and maps. Finally, collaboration with private sector tourism operators is likely to enhance the impact of these initiatives. Integration of a halal Chinese menu in promotional materials and official tourism campaign helps organizers to present festivals as inclusive, diverse and culturally invigorating for all visitors.

CONCLUSION

The contribution of this research in idea has been underpinning knowledge towards understanding the determinants of intention of local tourists to consume Halal Chinese food during local festival. The results reveal that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control have an effect on tourists' intention towards this culinary option. A positive and significant effect of attitude on Halal Chinese food consumption intention was observed. This suggests that tourists who have positive attitude towards Halal Chinese cuisine are more likely to choose Halal cuisine if available. Another factor was subjective norms, i.e. social pressure from friends, family and peers predicted the intention to consume. The more tourists feel that others are approving the eating of Halal Chinese food, the more likely they are to engage in eating that food. Finally, perceived behavioural control, defined as the degree to which the tourists believe that they can access and consume Halal Chinese food, also has a significant effect on their intention. Travellers are more likely to try Halal if they know that there are halal eateries available and accessible. It is essential to increase the promotion of Halal Chinese food, use of social influence, and providing the access to Halal certified food at local events. By understanding these factors, tourism and culinary stakeholders can improved the attractiveness of Halal Chinese food and stimulate the participation of tourists. The results suggest that targeted market development efforts and efforts to cultivate an enabling social environment can promote interest in this unique culinary history.

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