

Research Article

Effect of Halal Products Awareness and Attitude towards Halal Products on Halal Products Purchase Intention in Kano Metropolitan, Nigeria: The Moderating Role of Trust in Halal Industry

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Abstract: Globally, the halal industry is growing at a faster rate due to the high recurrent demand for ethical consumables. This growing trend has necessitated that nations legislate and provide a standard certification mechanism for producers and importers alike to facilitate seamless consumers' distinction between halal and non-halal products. However, despite the global recognition of the halal industry, Nigeria lacks pertinent legislative backing for it, thereby causing Nigerians to purchase goods without knowing their definitive halal status. In view of the above, this study explores how Halal Product Awareness (HPA) and Attitude Toward Halal Products (ATHP) influence the intention to purchase Halal products (HPPI) among Nigerians, with Trust in the Halal Industry (THI) acting as a moderating factor. The objectives include examining the impact of HPA and ATPH on HPPI and investigating how THI moderates the relationships between HPA, ATPH, and HPPI in Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used, targeting adult Muslims (both male and female) living in Kano, Nigeria, who have a steady income. A sample of 287 respondents participated, with data collected through adapted instruments and analyzed via SmartPLS4. Results show that both HPA and ATPH significantly influence HPPI, and the moderating effect of THI on these relationships was also significant. Based on these findings, the study recommends creating a dedicated regulatory body for the halal industry and implementing halal certifications for eligible organizations to enhance trust among Nigerians.

Keywords: Attitude towards Halal Products; Halal Industry; Halal Products Awareness; Halal Products Purchase Intention; Halal Products Trust.

1. Introduction

Islam provides a set of sacred norms and values that guide individuals and societies in all aspects of life. These norms form a universal and comprehensive system that classifies actions as halal (permissible) or haram (forbidden) under Shariah law. Hence, based on Islamic teaching, the authority to declare something as Haram or Halal is derived from Islamic law (Shariah), which is grounded in the Quran, Hadith, and juristic interpretations, and is implemented through religious institutions and scholarly rulings (Al-Teinaz, 2020; Butt, 2020; Selvakumar et al., 2025). As a result, Muslims must ensure their consumption meets halal standards defined by Islam (Alqudsi, 2014). This ruling on halal and haram led to the emergence of the halal industry as a contemporary field of study. Hence, to ensure compliance with Shariah in the halal industry ecosystem, manufacturers implement halal assurance systems to verify that products meet Islamic dietary and ethical standards. Violations of these systems can result in legal and moral consequences (M. Ali, 2016; Fari & Nikzaad, 2025). Consequently, it is argued that for Muslims, consuming halal products is both a right and a fulfillment of their religious obligation.

According to Krisna et al. (2023) the halal industry is associated with the production of goods and services that adhere to Shariah principles. It includes the banking, travel, services, and food sectors (Bashir, 2019). The halal industry is among the fastest-growing sectors due to

Received: December 25, 2025
Revised: February 26, 2026
Accepted: April 29, 2026
Published: June 30, 2026
Curr. Ver.: June 30, 2026



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the increased demand for ethical consumables. According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report, Muslims worldwide expended about US\$2.43 trillion in 2023 alone on travel, modest fashion, food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and media. This is anticipated to surge to US\$3.36 trillion by 2028, with a 5.3% compound yearly upsurge over five years (DinarStandard, 2025). Therefore, producer certification is required as the halal industry grows to keep non-halal products and services out of the market during trade liberalization (Masood, 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2025).

However, despite these growing trends and the halal industry's global acceptance, Nigeria has yet to leverage its huge potential, driven by its high population, to become a frontrunner in this noble industry. The country has an estimated 240.5 million people (Statista, 2026), with more than 50% being Muslims (N. Bello & Jaiyeoba, 2021) and ranks as the fifth most populous Muslim nation (Statista, 2026; World Population Review, 2026). Still, Nigeria's global competitiveness in the halal sector and the wider Islamic economy remains limited. The nation was absent from the top ten of the Global Islamic Economy indicator ranking in the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2024/25 (DinarStandard, 2025). Hence, it is argued that this setback in the development of Nigeria's halal industry is the product of institutional, operational, and structural challenges. Institutionally, the industry lacks legislative or regulatory backing. To date, Nigeria recognizes the halal concept only in finance (Muhammad & Bin Ngah, 2020). These inadequacies in legal and institutional frameworks create gaps in supervisory mechanisms and prevent standardized halal accreditation (A. Bello & Abubakar, 2014; Norazmi & Lim, 2015). These gaps create inconsistencies in compliance with halal standards, which are critical for consumer trust and market expansion. Operationally, studies have shown that when supply chain management struggles to ensure halal compliance throughout production and distribution, it creates barriers that limit the development of the halal industry (Almunawar et al., 2025; Amuda, 2026; Karim & Dzikrulloh, 2025). Moreover, there is a lack of awareness of halal principles among producers and consumers in Nigeria. Furthermore, an insufficient workforce knowledgeable about halal standards and Shariah compliance hinders innovation and the ability to meet growing demand for halal products (A. Bello & Abubakar, 2014). Similarly, ensuring product integrity and overcoming financial barriers remain challenges. Misconceptions and fraudulent practices, such as mislabeling, undermine consumer confidence and industry credibility (Dwi Mulyaningsih et al., 2023; Idris et al., 2025). Limited investment and poor access to Islamic banking and finance also restrict the industry's ability to scale and modernize (Almunawar et al., 2025; Amuda, 2026).

Hence, Nigeria lacks legal policies governing halal production, allowing the production and importation of goods without halal certification (Annabi & Wada, 2016). While the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) covers foods and pharmaceuticals and often steps in to regulate related products, its mandate and processes do not align with the formal halal certification frameworks used in many other countries, so halal compliance may not be fully ensured. To this end, Oyelakin and Yusuf (2018) contend that, given the absence of definitive legal and regulatory bodies, the rights and interests of Muslim consumers in Nigeria are not adequately protected regarding the certification and standardization of halal products. The nonexistence of regulatory entities for halal products has had a considerable effect on Muslim consumers' purchase intention, particularly in non-Muslim-dominated states. Consequently, this facet of the Nigerian halal industry requires a proactive approach from producers and the Muslim population alike, given Nigeria's pluralism. This move is necessary because, for Muslims residing in multicultural communities, distinguishing between lawful and prohibited consumable items is essential (Prasetyo et al., 2025; Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), is widely applied to explain consumers' behavioral intentions and actual behaviors across a variety of contexts, including the consumption of halal products. This model serves as the underpinning theory for the current study. According to the theory, behavioral intention is the most immediate precursor of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). It is the depiction of an individual's willingness and commitment to perform a particular behavior, and it serves as the best indicator of actual behavior. Furthermore, the theory proposes that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively shape intentions. On the other hand, the translation of intentions into behavior is contingent upon the availability of the resources and opportunities required to carry out the action. As a consequence of this,

individuals are more likely to engage in a specific conduct when they possess both the motivation and the capacity to engage in that aforementioned behavior (Chang & Yu, 2025; Dong & Chang, 2024). Because of its adaptability, TPB has been widely extended by incorporating context-specific variables in order to enhance its explanatory power in consumer decision-making research.

Within the halal consumption literature, scholars have enriched the TPB framework by incorporating additional predictors of purchase intention, including halal awareness, halal certification, religiosity, product quality, branding, and marketing activities (Aziz & Chok, 2013; Bashir, 2019; Kurniawati & Savitri, 2020; Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020). Among these factors, halal awareness has garnered significant attention because it represents the first step in the decision-making process for consumers. A consumer who is not familiar with a product or service can acquire knowledge about its characteristics through awareness, which then allows them to develop behavioral responses toward it (Bashir, 2019). When applied to the halal industry, awareness refers to the extent to which consumers understand halal principles, certification standards, and product availability, which, in turn, makes it easier for them to make informed purchasing decisions. Yusoff and Adzharuddin argued that halal awareness encourages Muslim consumers to actively seek information about the halal status of products before making purchasing decisions (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017).

The conceptualization of halal awareness in this study is informed by prior empirical findings. Existing evidence suggests that religious commitment, product exposure, and halal certification logos are important antecedents of halal awareness among Muslim consumers (Ishak et al., 2016). Similarly, Awan et al. (2015) reported that halal marketing activities, social influences, religious values, certification mechanisms, and branding strategies significantly enhance consumers' awareness of halal products. Kurniawati and Savitri (2020) further identified religiosity, health considerations, certification logos, and product exposure as critical determinants of halal awareness. Additionally, Nurhayati and Hendar (2020) showed that a person's level of intrinsic religiosity affects their halal knowledge, awareness, and intention to buy. In light of these findings, the current study views halal awareness as a multi-faceted concept that includes halal knowledge, halal certification/accreditation, and halal advertising. Knowledge derived from religious teachings strengthens consumers' understanding of halal principles, certification provides assurance regarding product compliance, while marketing activities increase product visibility and familiarity. Collectively, these dimensions contribute to greater consumer confidence and recognition of halal products, thereby enhancing purchase intention (Chakraborty & Singh, 2026).

Another key component of TPB is attitude, which, along with awareness, has long been labeled as a powerful predictor of behavioral intent. The term "attitude" is used to describe a person's general feelings, thoughts, and actions toward a certain thing or person (Belanche et al., 2020). As it relates to halal consumption, consumers' views about the halal certification, product quality, and conformity shape their attitudes. In turn, these views impact positive or negative assessments, which in turn impact consumer choices. Positive attitudes toward halal products are found to significantly increase consumers' intention to purchase (Khalid et al., 2020; Nawaz et al., 2024; Pratama et al., 2023; Tandon et al., 2021). According to Aziz and Chok (2013) consumers are more likely to have positive opinions and stronger purchase intentions when they believe products are truly halal. Consequently, attitude is one of the most influential factors determining halal purchase intention.

While awareness and attitude contribute significantly to purchase intention, trust remains a critical mechanism through which consumers evaluate product claims and reduce uncertainty. Trust is generally understood as a psychological state characterized by positive expectations regarding another party's motives, actions, and reliability in situations involving risk and vulnerability (Castaldo et al., 2009; Searle et al., 2018). It indicates a person's readiness to depend on another entity, influenced by assessments of competence, integrity, benevolence, and goodwill (David Schoorman et al., 2016; Rouziou et al., 2020). Accordingly, trust is often assessed through evaluations of a trustee's ability to perform effectively, honesty in communication, commitment to stakeholders' interests, and positive intentions toward others (Castelfranchi & Rino Falcone, 2017; White & Johnson, 2010).

Trust in the halal industry is a reflection of customers' faith in the veracity of claims that products are halal and in the products themselves as meeting Islamic dietary requirements. Upholding this level of trust necessitates transparency in the halal supply chain, with specific details about where the ingredients come from, how they are made, whether they are certified, and whether they are in compliance with regulations. Consumers' faith in these procedures is crucial to the halal supply chain's legitimacy and longevity (Pratikto, 2020). As a result, trust is vital in turning knowledge and positive attitudes into concrete plans to buy.

The importance of trust becomes particularly evident when considering the concept of purchase intention. Intention represents the culmination of practical reasoning about future actions, transforming abstract preferences into concrete behavioral plans (Sinnott-Armstrong & Nadel, 2010). In consumer settings, purchase intention emerges when individuals develop an interest in a product or service and become motivated to acquire it (Rahmawaty et al., 2021). Purchasing decisions are often influenced by product attributes that align with consumers' needs and motivations (D. Liu et al., 2021). However, for Muslim consumers, purchasing decisions extend beyond conventional considerations of quality and utility, as products must also satisfy religious requirements by being halal (Saputro et al., 2021). Consequently, consumers' willingness to purchase halal products depends not only on product quality but also on the degree of trust they place in halal claims and certification systems. Supporting this argument, Yu found that although consumers may tolerate higher prices for halal products, trust and perceived product quality remain significant determinants of purchase intention (Yu, 2023). Furthermore, previous studies indicate that greater product knowledge and perceived value enhance purchase intentions, particularly when consumers regard products as credible and beneficial (Fu & Elliott, 2013; Xie et al., 2019). This suggests that awareness, attitude, and trust operate jointly in shaping consumers' purchase intentions.

Nevertheless, despite substantial empirical evidence supporting the imperatives of halal awareness, attitude, and trust in prompting purchase intention, studies within the Nigerian context remain limited. Existing Nigerian studies have primarily focused on halal beef handling, (Annabi & Ahmed, 2015) awareness of halal pharmaceuticals, (Annabi & Wada, 2016) and the contribution of Islamic finance to halal industry development (N. Bello & Jaiyeoba, 2021; Muhammad & Bin Ngah, 2020). Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how halal awareness and attitudes influence consumers' intention to purchase halal products. This gap is particularly striking given that Nigeria possesses the largest Muslim population in Africa and ranks among the most populous Muslim nations globally (Statista, 2026). Furthermore, while the halal concept has received regulatory recognition within the financial sector, other segments of the halal industry remain largely unregulated (Annabi & Wada, 2016; Muhammad & Bin Ngah, 2020). Consequently, many Muslim consumers continue to purchase locally manufactured and imported products without adequate information regarding their halal status, thereby limiting the growth potential of Nigeria's halal market. Given this context, this study contributes to the TPB by incorporating halal knowledge, attitude, and trust to provide a more comprehensive analysis of Nigerian consumers' intentions to purchase halal products.

2. Literature Review

Theory of Planned Behavior

The present study draws on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain how halal awareness and consumer attitudes shape intentions to purchase halal products. According to Ajzen (1991), behavioral intention constitutes the immediate antecedent of actual behavior. Intention reflects an individual's readiness and commitment to perform a particular action, as well as the extent of effort they are prepared to exert in achieving that behavior. In this regard, intention serves as a motivational construct that guides human action. Ajzen (1991) further acknowledged that the translation of intention into behavior is not determined solely by motivation. Behavioral performance is often influenced by external conditions such as time availability, financial resources, skills, opportunities, and support from others. These conditions collectively represent actual behavioral control. Consequently, individuals are more likely to engage in a behavior when they possess both a strong intention and sufficient control over the resources and circumstances required to perform it.

The TPB posits that behavioral intentions are shaped by three principal determinants: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These determinants are, in turn, rooted in underlying beliefs regarding the behavior in question (Akin & Okumuş, 2021). Ajzen (1991) argued that applying the TPB within specific contexts can provide valuable insights into behavioral prediction and intervention. Among the TPB components, attitude has consistently emerged as one of the strongest predictors of consumer intentions and behaviors across various consumption settings (Akin & Okumuş, 2021). In the context of halal consumption, attitude is particularly relevant because it stems from consumers' beliefs about the permissibility and desirability of halal products. When individuals believe that a product complies with Islamic principles, they are more likely to form favorable evaluations, which in turn increase their intention to purchase such products (Aziz & Chok, 2013). Empirical evidence further supports the central role of attitude, with studies demonstrating that it significantly predicts consumers' intentions to purchase halal-certified products (Khalid et al., 2020; Nawaz et al., 2024). Building on these theoretical and empirical insights, the present study extends the TPB framework by incorporating halal awareness, attitude, and trust as key determinants of halal product purchase intention. Furthermore, attitude is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

Purchase Intention

Behavioral intentions represent motivational dispositions that influence individuals' actions and indicate the level of effort they are willing to invest in achieving a particular objective (Ajzen, 1991). Existing literature suggests that knowledge plays an important role in shaping intentions, implying that individuals with greater knowledge are more likely to develop stronger intentions toward a behavior (Fu & Elliott, 2013; Xie et al., 2019). From a practical reasoning perspective, intention represents the final stage through which general goals are transformed into concrete plans for action (Sinnott-Armstrong & Nadel, 2010).

In a marketing context, purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness and inclination to acquire a particular product or service (Rahmawaty et al., 2021). Consumers typically base their purchase decisions on product and brand characteristics that correspond with their personal motives and preferences (X. Liu & Zheng, 2024). For Muslim consumers, however, purchasing decisions extend beyond conventional product attributes to include compliance with Islamic dietary and consumption requirements. Consequently, the halal status of a product becomes a critical consideration during the decision-making process (Saputro et al., 2021).

Purchase intention has been widely recognized as a reliable predictor of actual buying behavior (Jaafar, 2012). Consumers who express a strong intention to purchase a product generally perceive that product as capable of satisfying a particular need or expectation. Moreover, purchase intention often reflects a consumer's willingness to repurchase a product after evaluating its benefits and confirming its value. Within the halal marketplace, purchase intention therefore represents consumers' willingness to acquire halal-certified products. According to Chaniotakis et al. (2010) purchase intentions are influenced by both consumer attitudes and external and internal product-related factors. External influences include variables such as price perceptions, packaging design, retail image, and promotional activities, whereas internal influences encompass perceived quality, value, and risk. These factors collectively align with the broader concept of consumer awareness and its role in shaping purchasing decisions.

Concepts of Halal and the Halal Industry

The term *halal* denotes anything that is lawful and permissible under Islamic law (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). Halal products are not only religiously permissible but are also expected to be wholesome, hygienic, safe, and produced under conditions that comply with Islamic ethical standards (Moghaddam et al., 2022). Islamic teachings maintain that only those items explicitly prohibited in the Holy Quran or the authentic traditions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) are considered unlawful. Consequently, the authority to classify products and practices as halal or haram rests exclusively within the framework of Shariah. Consequently, for Muslim consumers, halal food and beverages must satisfy Islamic legal requirements and be produced under comprehensive halal assurance systems that guarantee cleanliness, safety, and quality throughout the production process (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). As a result, halal certification has increasingly come to be associated not only with religious compliance but also with broader standards of quality assurance, hygiene, and consumer safety.

Growing concerns about the permissibility of products and services have contributed to the emergence of the halal industry as an important field of study and economic activity. The primary objective of this industry is to address uncertainties regarding halal and haram consumption and to ensure compliance with Islamic principles across various sectors (Busari & Sitiris, 2021). Today, the halal industry extends beyond food production to encompass sectors such as finance, tourism, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and other service industries (Bashir, 2019). The industry has evolved into a global phenomenon with substantial economic potential, attracting interest from both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers (Sukesti et al., 2024). The rapid growth of the Muslim population worldwide, coupled with increasing demand for halal-certified products, has accelerated the expansion of halal certification services across both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim countries. This trend has been further strengthened by economic liberalization, integration into international trade, and technological advancements that facilitate access to global markets (Masood, 2022).

Halal Product Awareness

Awareness generally refers to an individual's level of understanding, recognition, or consciousness regarding a particular issue, situation, or phenomenon (Muhammad & Bin Ngah, 2020). It reflects an individual's capacity to perceive, comprehend, and appreciate the significance of information and experiences related to a specific subject (Gafoor, 2012). In the halal context, awareness refers to consumers' knowledge and understanding of halal principles governing food, beverages, and other consumer products. It also encompasses educational efforts to enhance Muslims' understanding of what is permissible under Islamic teachings (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). Halal awareness is considered a crucial determinant of consumption behavior because it influences how consumers interpret and apply halal principles in their purchasing decisions (Akın & Okumuş, 2021). A sound understanding of halal concepts, therefore, serves as a foundation for making informed choices regarding halal products (Sukesti et al., 2024).

Several studies have identified factors that contribute significantly to halal awareness. Ambali and Bakar (2014) identified religious commitment, halal certification, logos, product knowledge, and health considerations as major determinants. Similarly, Awan et al. (2015) emphasized the roles of halal marketing practices, societal influences, certification systems, religious values, and branding strategies in shaping awareness. Kurniawati and Savitri (2020) further highlighted the importance of religious beliefs, health concerns, certification labels, and consumer exposure. Likewise, Nurhayati and Hendar (2020) reported that religiosity and knowledge significantly contribute to halal awareness and, in turn, influence purchase intentions. Collectively, these findings indicate that halal awareness is shaped by multiple interrelated factors. Moreover, individuals with higher levels of halal awareness tend to ensure that the products they consume, including ingredients and additives, comply with halal requirements (Awan et al., 2015). Based on the above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Ho1: Halal product awareness has no significant effect on halal product purchase intention among Nigerians.

Attitude Toward Halal Products

Attitude refers to an individual's beliefs, feelings, and evaluative responses toward a particular object, event, phenomenon, or person (Logan & Hodges, 2012). Within social psychology, attitude is commonly understood as a person's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a specific object or behavior (Ajzen, 1991). It represents a learned predisposition that influences how individuals respond to people, situations, products, or events (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). Consumer attitudes are developed through the accumulation and processing of information about products and services. As consumers acquire knowledge and form beliefs, these cognitive evaluations shape their intentions and subsequent behaviors (Xiao et al., 2019). Consequently, attitudes toward products, brands, or organizations often influence whether consumers engage in positive or negative behavioral responses (Belanche et al., 2020). In the halal consumption domain, attitudes are largely influenced by consumers' perceptions of products' halal status. Positive beliefs about halal compliance can generate favorable emotions and strengthen consumers' willingness to purchase halal products (Moghaddam et al., 2022). Conversely, insufficient understanding of halal principles may weaken consumer confidence and reduce purchase intentions.

Research suggests that attitudes toward halal products are influenced more strongly by behavioral tendencies and psychological considerations than by purely cognitive evaluations (Akin & Okumuş, 2021). Such attitudes determine whether consumers are inclined to approach or avoid products based on their compliance with halal principles. Favorable attitudes are generally associated with positive expectations regarding the consumption of halal products. To this end, Akin and Okumuş (2021) challenged the traditional unidimensional conceptualization of attitude and advocated a multidimensional perspective based on the tripartite attitude model. This model comprises three interrelated dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive component reflects beliefs and perceptions regarding the attitude object, the affective component encompasses emotional responses, and the behavioral component captures behavioral tendencies and intentions (Bizer et al., 2006; Olson & Kendrick, 2012). Adopting this multidimensional framework provides a richer understanding of how attitudes influence purchase intentions, particularly within food consumption contexts (Tandon et al., 2021). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Ho2: Attitude toward halal products has no significant effect on halal product purchase intention among Nigerians.

Trust in the Halal Industry

Trust occupies a central position in marketing literature and is widely recognized as a critical determinant of customer loyalty and long-term business success (Miftahuddin et al., 2022). Transparency plays an important role in fostering trust because it enhances credibility and reduces consumer uncertainty. For example, transparent communication regarding organizational practices and social responsibility initiatives has been shown to strengthen consumer trust and loyalty (Hustvedt & Kang, 2013). Within the halal industry, trust refers to consumers' confidence that products comply with Islamic requirements and halal standards. Giada and Riccardo (2018) argued that halal trust is developed through consumers' perceptions of producers' competence, benevolence, and integrity, all of which should reflect Islamic ethical values. Empirical evidence indicates that trust positively influences consumers' willingness to purchase halal products (Miftahuddin et al., 2022; Nurrachmi, 2018). Consequently, maintaining consumer trust requires transparent communication regarding product ingredients, sourcing, production processes, and certification status.

In the present study, trust in the halal industry is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of institutional trust, product integrity trust, and brand trust. This multidimensional perspective is appropriate because halal products are generally classified as credence goods, meaning that consumers cannot independently verify compliance with Islamic principles and therefore rely on various external sources of assurance (Sucipto et al., 2026; Yoga et al., 2025). Institutional trust refers to confidence in halal certification bodies, regulatory authorities, and governance systems responsible for ensuring halal compliance. This dimension aligns with the institutional control mechanisms discussed by Tieman et al. (2012). Product integrity trust reflects consumers' confidence in the authenticity and religious compliance of halal products (Bonne & Verbeke, 2007). Brand trust, meanwhile, relates to consumers' belief in a brand's reliability and credibility in consistently delivering halal-compliant products (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive explanation of trust formation within halal consumption settings by capturing trust at institutional, product, and brand levels.

Voak et al. (2023) emphasized that preserving consumer trust requires rigorous compliance with halal standards throughout the supply chain. Such compliance includes maintaining cleanliness and hygiene standards and preventing contamination with non-halal substances during sourcing, production, processing, transportation, and storage. Similarly, Kadir et al. (2016) stressed that ensuring halal integrity at every stage of production is essential for safeguarding consumer confidence and preserving halal status. Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Ho3: Trust in the halal industry has no significant interaction effect on the relationship between halal product awareness and halal product purchase intention among Nigerians.

Ho4: Trust in the halal industry has no significant interaction effect on the relationship between attitude toward halal products and halal product purchase intention among Nigerians.

3. Proposed Method

This study utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey to empirically examine the relationship among halal product awareness, attitudes toward halal products, trust in the halal industry, and purchase intention among consumers in Kano metropolis, Nigeria. The study population consists of adult Muslims (male and female) with a consistent source of income. This population is deemed appropriate because individuals with stable income are more likely to make independent consumption decisions and thus provide meaningful insights into purchase intentions for halal products. This study used a multistage sampling design to select respondents from the Kano metropolitan area, Nigeria. This approach was chosen because of the large population and the study area's geographical spread, which made it impractical to compile a complete sampling frame of all eligible respondents. In the first stage, the eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) comprising Kano metropolis were identified as the primary sampling units. In the second stage, strategic locations with high concentrations of consumers, such as markets and commercial centres, were selected within the identified LGAs. In the final stage, respondents were screened against predefined eligibility criteria, including being Muslim and at least 18 years of age. Questionnaires were then administered to eligible participants. Data was collected through face-to-face (person-to-person) administration of a questionnaire. The instrument was a 5-point Likert multi-item structured and adapted scale.

All the constructs in the study were conceptualized as multidimensional and reflective. The construct of halal awareness comprises three subconstructs: knowledge, certification, and halal marketing. The subconstructs of halal Knowledge, Certification/Logo, and halal Marketing were adapted from Abd Rahman et al., Kurniawati and Savitri, and Aziz and Chok, respectively (Abd Rahman et al., 2015; Aziz & Chok, 2013; Kurniawati & Savitri, 2020). Attitude towards halal products consists of cognitive, affective, and behavioral subconstructs. The subconstructs were conceptually synthesized from prior literature. Specifically, Cognitive attitude items were adapted from the belief-oriented operationalization of attitude by Lada et al (Lada et al., 2009). Affective attitude items were adapted from the emotional and evaluative orientations described by Shah Alam and Sayuti (Shah Alam & Sayuti, 2011) while behavioral attitude items were adapted from the behavioral predisposition assumptions of Ajzen's, (1991) TPB. Purchase intention has Personal Purchase Intention, Repurchase Intention, and Recommendation Intention as subdimensions. Personal purchase intention was conceptually adapted from the TPB proposed by Ajzen (Ajzen, 1991). Repurchase and recommendation intentions were adapted from the behavioral intentions framework developed by Zeithaml et al (1996). Lastly, trust in the halal industry comprises of institutional trust, product integrity trust, and brand trust. The subconstructs of institutional trust and product integrity trust were conceptually adapted from Tieman et al. (Tieman et al., 2012) and Bonne and Verbeke, (2007) respectively, while brand trust was adapted from Delgado-Ballester (2004).

Using SmartPLS 4, we ran a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) on the dataset. Given the complexity of the research framework, this analytical technique was chosen for its ability to examine predictive relationships among multiple latent variables. In order to simulate the component hierarchy, the research used a separate two-stage procedure. According to Sarstedt et al. (2019) this method consists of two stages: first, estimating the LOCs, and second, using the scores of their latent variables to indicate the corresponding HOCs.

Hence, the lower-order dimensions were the sole focus of the initial stage of the measurement model assessment. The higher-order constructs were operationalized in the subsequent stage using the latent scores generated from the lower-order dimensions. Throughout both phases, the measurement model's sufficiency was assessed using several well-established quality criteria, including discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability. We used composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients to assess internal consistency, and we examined the outer loadings to assess indicator reliability. Using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, we establish discriminant validity, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to establish convergent validity. Computed results show that all constructs meet the recommended criteria established by Hair et al (2022). The computed metrics include outer loadings above 0.708, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding 0.70, AVE greater than 0.50, and HTMT values below 0.90.

Following the confirmation of the reliability and validity of both the LOC and HOC, the structural model was assessed to examine the projected hypotheses. The assessment of the structural model encompassed tests for collinearity, estimation of path coefficients, evaluation of the coefficient of determination (R2), effect size (f2), and predictive relevance (Q2). This assessment was conducted in accordance with the directives established by Hair et al. (2022). The bootstrapping technique, employing 5,000 resamples, was utilized to determine the statistical significance of the proposed relationships.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Participant Demographic Information

Demographic Data	Frequency (%)
Gender:	
Male	240 (83.6)
Female	47 (16.4)
Total	287 (100)
Age (years):	
18 to 30	97 (33.8)
31 to 50	172 (59.9)
51 and above	18 (6.3)
Total	287 (100)
Highest Educational Qualification:	
SSCE	85 (29.6)
ND/NCE	63 (22.0)
HND/B.Sc.	103 (35.9)
PGD	36 (12.5)
Total	287 (100)

A total of 287 respondents were used in the study. Table 1 provides the breakdown of their demographic information, namely gender, age, and highest educational qualification. From Table 1, it can be observed that the majority of respondents were male (83.6% of the study sample), while respondents aged 31 to 50 were predominantly represented (59.9% of the sample). About educational qualifications, holders of Higher National Diploma/Bachelor's degree were the majority, representing 35.9% of the sample, followed by SSCE holders, National Diploma/Nigeria Certificate in Education, and Postgraduate degree holders, representing 29.6%, 22.0%, and 12.5% of the study sample, respectively.

Table 2. A Descriptive Analysis

Study Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Halal Products Awareness (HPA)	287	4.46	.311
Attitude towards Halal Products (ATHP)	287	4.45	.298
Halal Products Trust (HPT)	287	4.37	.402
Halal Products Purchase Intention (HPPI)	287	4.33	.368

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics of the study variables. From Table 2, HPA has an average score of M=4.46, SD=.311; ATHP has an average score of M=4.45, SD=.298; HPT has an average score of M=4.37, SD=.402; and HPPI has an average score of M=4.33, SD=.368. HPA and ATHP are the independent variables in the study; HPT is the moderating variable; HPPI is the dependent variable.

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 3. Item Outer Loadings (Lower Order Constructs)

Constructs	Subconstruct	Loadings
Halal Products Awareness (HPA)	Halal Knowledge (HK)	≈ 0.801 to 0.818
	Halal Certification (HC)	≈ 0.799 to 0.873
	Halal Marketing (HM)	≈ 0.811 to 0.842
Attitude towards Halal Products (ATHP)	Cognitive (AC)	≈ 0.814 to 0.873
	Affective (AA)	≈ 0.837 to 0.848
	Behavioral (AB)	≈ 0.820 to 0.854
Trust in Halal Industry (THI)	Institutional Trust (TI)	≈ 0.796 to 0.886
	Product Integrity Trust (TP)	≈ 0.831 to 0.876
	Brand Trust (TB)	≈ 0.853 to 0.877
Halal Products Purchase Intention (HPPI)	Personal Purchase Intention (PI)	≈ 0.797 to 0.844
	Repurchase Intention (PR)	≈ 0.804 to 0.867
	Recommendation Intention (PW)	≈ 0.767 to 0.854

The assessment of the measurement model commenced with the evaluation of the lower-order constructs (LOCs) following the disjoint two-stage procedure. Under this method, the appropriateness of the LOCs must first be established, as their latent variable scores serve as indicators of the HOCs in the subsequent stage of analysis. Indicator reliability was examined by analyzing the outer loading of the measurement items for each sub-construct. In accordance with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2022), indicators with a loading of at least 0.708 were considered reliable and therefore retained for further analysis. As presented in the table, all measurement items across the respective sub-constructs exceeded the prescribed threshold, indicating satisfactory indicator reliability.

Table 4. Reliability and Convergent Validity (LOC)

	Subconstructs	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Halal Products Awareness (HPA)	Halal Knowledge	0.867	0.904	0.652
	Certification	0.888	0.918	0.691
	Halal Marketing	0.883	0.914	0.680
Attitude towards Halal Products (ATHP)	Cognitive	0.864	0.907	0.710
	Affective	0.863	0.907	0.709
	Behavioral	0.861	0.905	0.705
Trust in Halal Industry (THI)	Institutional Trust	0.869	0.909	0.715
	Integrity Trust	0.878	0.915	0.729
	Brand Trust	0.884	0.920	0.742
Halal Products Purchase Intention	Personal Purchase Intention	0.847	0.897	0.686
	Repurchase Intention	0.846	0.896	0.684
	Recommendation Intention	0.842	0.894	0.679

Assessments of convergent validity and internal consistency reliability were conducted on the lower-order constructs (LOCs) using CA and AVE. The computed results show that all LOCs had CR and CA coefficients exceeding the suggested threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). This indicates that the measurement items are sufficiently reliable and consistent. Additionally, all sub-construct AVE values exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.50, indicating that the constructs account for a significant proportion of the variation in their corresponding indicators. These findings support the conclusion that the convergent validity meets the criteria put forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 5. Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criterion)

	A	A	A	H	H	H	P	P	P	T	T
	A	B	C	C	K	M	I	R	W	B	I P
A											
	0.										
B	872										
	0.	0.									
C	860	809									
	0.	0.	0.								
C	061	061	052								
	0.	0.	0.	0.							
K	052	057	060	854							
	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.						
M	100	074	100	847	850						
	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.					
I	286	327	299	591	530	570					
	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.				
R	311	366	320	518	515	525	827				
	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.			
W	439	395	378	498	431	427	813	854			
	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.		
B	061	068	041	066	062	052	272	216	284		
	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	
I	061	082	055	117	069	111	331	227	308	894	
	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
P	078	086	057	074	063	053	260	179	246	890	874

Using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), discriminant validity was assessed to ensure that the sub-dimensions under investigation measured distinct concepts in this study. Hisseler et al. (2015) state that HTMT provides a more accurate indication of the degree to which constructs differ from one another, making it a stringent and reliable approach for assessing discriminant validity. Based on the results obtained, none of the HTMT coefficients between the pairs of constructs exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.90. Accordingly, this confirms that the constructs are sufficiently different and have good discriminant validity at the LOC level (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2015).

Higher-Order Construct (HOC) Assessment

Following the two-stage approach, the first stage of analysis used the latent variable scores from the LOCs to evaluate the HOCs. In particular, the LOCs were tested to ensure the measurement model was reliable and valid. Then, the latent scores of the LOCs were taken and used to indicate the corresponding HOCs. This procedure facilitates a more parsimonious representation of multidimensional constructs while minimizing model complexity and ensuring accurate estimation of the higher-order measurement model.

Table 6. Factor Loading (HOC)

Sub Constructs	ATHP	HPA	HPPI	THI
AA	0.918			
AB	0.907			
AC	0.893			
HC		0.918		
HK		0.908		
HM		0.910		
PI			0.894	
PR			0.897	
PW			0.895	
TB				0.927
TI				0.932
TP				0.910

Based on the results displayed above, the lower-order constructs demonstrate strong associations with their respective higher-order constructs, as evidenced by loading coefficients that exceed the accepted minimum criterion of 0.708. This provides support for the reliability of the measurement model and indicates that the LOCs serve as effective building blocks of the higher-order constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 7. Reliability and Convergent Validity (HOC)

Constructs	CR	CR	AVE
ATHP	0.891	0.932	0.821
HPA	0.899	0.937	0.832
HPPI	0.876	0.924	0.802
THI	0.913	0.945	0.852

Based on the reliability statistics, the measurement scales are consistent. CR and CR estimates exceeded the benchmark value of 0.70. Moreover, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), and Hair et al. (2022) AVE values greater than 0.50 indicate that a construct accounts for over 50% of the variation in its indicators. Hence, the obtained values provide further evidence of convergent validity.

Table 8. Hetrotrait Mono Trait Ratio (HOC)

	ATHP	HPA	HPPI	THI
ATHP				
HPA	0.054			
HPPI	0.417	0.611		
THI	0.033	0.061	0.310	

Utilizing the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of correlations, the discriminant validity of the higher-order constructs (HOCs) was checked. Henseler et al. argued that this method's sensitivity to detecting construct redundancy makes it a better criterion for detecting possible discriminant validity deficiencies (Henseler et al., 2015). Results showed that no HTMT estimates were too high, falling between the recommended cutoffs of 0.85 and 0.90, indicating that there were not too many correlations among the HOCs. Hence, the results strongly indicate that the higher-order constructs are distinct from one another and that they each stand for their own conceptual phenomenon in the model.

Structural Model Assessment

Model Fit

Table 9. Model Fit

	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.049
d_ULS	0.186
d_G	0.168
Chi-square	300.692
NFI	0.871

To evaluate how well the proposed model fits the empirical data, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was utilized in the measurement model evaluation. Compared to the suggested cutoff of 0.08, the table's SRMR value of 0.049 is significantly lower. This discovery suggests that there are minor discrepancies between the model's predicted correlations and the observed correlation matrices. Therefore, the model has a good overall fit, so we can be confident in using it for structural model analysis (Hair et al., 2022).

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 10. R Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Halal Products Purchase Intention	0.628	0.622

An endogenous construct's predictive adequacy can be inferred from its coefficient of determination (R^2), which measures the proportion of variance explained by its antecedent variables. In accordance with the suggestions of Sarstedt et al., R^2 values of around 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are typically interpreted as indicating strong, moderate, and relatively low explanatory performance, respectively (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Hence, based on the computed R-squared value of 0.628, 62.8% of the variance in halal product purchase intention is explained by the study's independent variables.

Effect Size (f^2)

Table 11. F Square

	Halal Products Purchase Intention
ATHP	0.412
HPA	0.814
THI	0.187
THI x ATPH	0.115
THI x HPA	0.193

Using the f^2 effect size measure, we further evaluated how each exogenous construct contributed to the structural model's explanatory capacity. An endogenous construct's explained variance can be estimated using this statistic by varying the inclusion or exclusion of a specific predictor. According to the standards set out by Cohen, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are typically taken as signs of small, moderate, and large effects, respectively (Cohen, 1988) This gives us a better idea of how important each predictor is beyond just its statistical significance.

PLSPredict:

Table 12. PLSPredict

	Q ² predict	PLS SEM RMSE	PLS SEM MAE	LM RMSE	LM MAE	IA RMSE	IA MAE
PI	0.511	0.702	0.576	0.766	0.638	1.004	0.870
PR	0.451	0.744	0.599	0.811	0.652	1.004	0.848
PW	0.510	0.703	0.582	0.793	0.639	1.004	0.858

An out-of-sample prediction analysis was carried out using the PLSPredict procedure to evaluate the model's predictive performance beyond its explanatory capability. In terms of prediction error measures, the PLS-SEM model performed better than the benchmark linear model, with lower error estimates for the indicators that were considered. According to Shmueli et al., this discovery further supports the practical usefulness and predictive robustness of the proposed model, as it not only effectively explains the observed relationships but also has strong predictive relevance when applied to new data (Shmueli et al., 2016).

Predictive Relevance (Q²)

An examination of the Stone–Geisser Q² criterion was carried out in order to further evaluate the predictive quality of the model. For the endogenous constructs, the analysis yielded Q² values that were consistently higher than zero. This indicates that the model maintains its predictive relevance and outperforms a naïve benchmark when it comes to forecasting the data that has been observed. As a consequence of this, the findings lend credence to the model's capacity to produce meaningful predictions with respect to the endogenous variables that were incorporated into the research.

Path Coefficient/Hypothesis Testing

Table 13. Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	T statistics	P values
ATHP -> HPPI	0.392	10.356	0.000
HPA -> HPPI	0.551	15.476	0.000
THI x ATHP -> HPPI	0.213	4.988	0.000
THI x HPA -> HPPI	0.284	7.102	0.000

Table 13 provides the evaluation of the proposed relationships utilizing path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values derived from a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The results indicate that attitude toward halal products has a positive and statistically significant influence on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.392$, $t = 10.356$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that individuals with more favorable attitudes exhibit stronger buying intentions. Similarly, awareness of halal products significantly predicts purchase intention ($\beta = 0.551$, $t = 15.476$, $p = 0.000$). Consequently, Nigerian consumers with high awareness and positive attitudes will exhibit a higher intent to purchase halal products.

Beyond direct effects, the study investigated the moderating role of trust in the halal industry. The findings reveal that trust significantly moderates the relationship between attitude and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.213$, $t = 4.988$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that higher consumer confidence in the halal industry strengthens the positive impact of favorable attitudes on buying intent. Furthermore, trust significantly moderates the connection between awareness and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.284$, $t = 7.102$, $p = 0.000$). The positive coefficient demonstrates that the effect of awareness on purchase intention is amplified among consumers who trust the credibility and integrity of the halal industry. Collectively, these findings highlight the critical role of trust in enhancing the impacts of both attitude and awareness on consumer purchase intentions.

Discussion

The focus of this study is to evaluate the relationships between halal product awareness, attitudes toward halal products, and consumers' purchase intentions for halal products within the Nigerian context. Furthermore, the study examines whether trust in the halal industry serves as a moderating mechanism that strengthens or weakens these relationships. The overarching

objective is to provide empirical evidence on the factors that drive consumers' intentions to purchase halal products and to determine the extent to which trust in the halal industry influences these behavioral outcomes. To address these objectives, four null hypotheses were formulated and subjected to statistical testing at the 5% significance level. The interpretation and discussion of the results for each hypothesis are presented below.

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): Direct Effect of Halal Product Awareness on Purchase Intention

Hypothesis 1 (H1) examined the relationship between consumers' halal product awareness and their intention to purchase halal brands. The structural model findings indicate that halal product awareness has a positive and statistically significant impact on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.551$, $t = 15.476$, $p < 0.001$). This outcome suggests that consumers with a greater understanding of halal concepts are more likely to develop stronger buying intentions, thereby providing empirical support for rejecting H1. This result aligns with prior empirical literature, including studies by Awan et al.(2015) and Elseidi,(2018) which demonstrated that consumers with higher levels of halal awareness exhibit greater concern regarding product compliance with Islamic dietary and manufacturing requirements. Furthermore, these findings corroborate the work of Bashir, (2019) who reported that consumer awareness of halal certification, product composition, and manufacturing procedures serves as a primary determinant of purchase intent. Collectively, these insights support the premise that enhancing consumer knowledge and awareness of halal attributes plays a critical role in driving the consumption of halal products.

Taken together, these insights reinforce the argument that expanding consumer knowledge of halal attributes is critical to driving purchasing behavior. Consequently, this result validates established empirical literature on the awareness-intention nexus while cementing the role of awareness as a foundational cognitive mechanism driving halal consumption. Within the Nigerian market—especially among Muslim demographics—elevated awareness directly translates into a higher probability of purchase, as it directly informs consumers about product compliance and the necessity of adhering to strict halal standards. Theoretically, this dynamic aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior,(Ajzen, 1991) wherein knowledge and awareness function as critical antecedents to the behavioral beliefs that shape intent. From this theoretical perspective, enhanced awareness optimizes the consumer's cognitive evaluation of halal offerings, thereby accelerating their intent to purchase.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Direct Effect of Attitude towards Halal Products on Purchase Intention.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) examined the relationship between consumers' attitudes towards halal products and their intentions to purchase halal brands. The structural model findings indicate that attitude towards halal products has a positive and statistically significant impact on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.392$, $t = 10.356$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that consumers with a greater positive attitude towards halal brands are more likely to develop stronger buying intentions, thereby providing empirical support for rejecting H2. Consequently, individuals with more favorable perceptions and evaluations of halal products are more likely to have stronger purchase intentions, as a positive attitude is a significant motivator that encourages consumers to consider and select halal products. The findings corroborate the work of Bashir, (2019) who demonstrated that consumer attitudes serve as a primary determinant of halal purchase intentions. The result also aligns with evidence presented by Akın and Okumuş, (2021) and Tandon et al.(2021) who observed that favorable product evaluations consistently trigger stronger behavioral intentions. Collectively, these studies indicate that positive consumer perceptions directly foster a psychological willingness to purchase and consume target items.

From a theoretical perspective, this result lends further support to the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Icek Ajzen (1991). The theory posits that attitude constitutes one of the key antecedents of behavioral intention, implying that individuals who evaluate a behavior favorably are more likely to form intentions to engage in that behavior. Therefore, the present finding reinforces the proposition that positive attitudes toward halal products are instrumental in fostering consumers' purchase intentions within the Nigerian market. According to the theory, a positive evaluation of halal products, whether grounded in religious compliance, perceived quality, or ethical considerations, would invariably enhance consumers' willingness to purchase. However, it is argued that a positive attitude alone is insufficient to facilitate smooth

halal purchase intention in an environment characterized by institutional uncertainty, such as that in Nigeria. In such contexts, positive attitudes may be weakened by skepticism regarding the presence of an ideal halal industry mechanism.

Hypothesis 3 (H₃): Moderating Effect of Trust in Halal Industry on the Relationship between Awareness towards Halal products and Purchase Intention

Hypothesis 3 (H₃) examined the moderating role of trust in the halal industry on the relationship between awareness towards halal products and halal product purchase intention. The structured model findings indicate that trust in the halal industry has a positive and statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between halal product awareness and the intention to purchase ($\beta = 0.284$, $t = 7.102$, $p < 0.001$). The finding indicated that the influence of awareness on consumers' intention to purchase halal products is not consistent across individuals but rather varies according to the level of trust that individuals have in the halal industry thereby providing empirical support for rejecting H₃. Based on the findings, it appears that mere knowledge and awareness of halal products may not be a sufficient condition to encourage consumers to make a purchase decision. Rather, when consumers have confidence in the dependability of halal certification systems, regulatory institutions, and industry stakeholders responsible for ensuring halal compliance, they are more likely to translate their awareness into actual purchase intentions, thereby highlighting imperatives of halal certification. In other words, trust serves as an enabling mechanism that enhances the effectiveness of awareness in shaping consumer behavioral intentions. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Suki and Suki (2018) and Ali et al. (2018), have highlighted the significance of trust as a key factor that influences consumer decision-making within halal markets. Consequently, based on the present findings and previous empirical evidence, consumers are more likely to act on their knowledge of halal products when they perceive certification authorities and halal governance structures as credible and trustworthy. By increasing consumers' confidence in the authenticity and integrity of halal claims, the current study lends support to the view that institutional trust plays a pivotal role in strengthening the relationship between individuals' awareness of halal products and their intention to make a purchase on those products.

Hence, in the absence of trust, awareness could lead to skepticism rather than purchase intention, as consumers become more accustomed to the broader facets of the halal industry. Although previous studies by Nurrachmi (2018) and Miftahuddin et al. (2022) affirmed that Muslim customers' trust positively affects halal purchase intention, this may not hold in Nigeria, where products are mainly purchased on the assumption that they meet halal requirements. This assumption stems from the absence of certified halal product producers in Nigeria, due to the lack of government regulation of the halal industry. This factor has left Nigerians with haphazard product patronage, without knowing the definitive status of the product as halal or otherwise. The situation is more worrisome given Nigeria's pluralism, with people of diverse faiths living together. Commenting on plural states or nations, Yusoff and Adzharuddin (2017) contend that for Muslims who live side by side with non-Muslims, understanding halal and haram products is significant. Hence, there is a need for halal product legislation in Nigeria to provide the Muslim population with access to a trustworthy halal industry that operates in accordance with the tenets of an ideal halal industry.

Hypothesis 4 (H₄): Moderating Effect of Trust in Halal Industry on the Relationship between Attitude towards Halal products and Purchase Intention

Hypothesis 4 (H₄) evaluated the extent to which trust in the halal industry moderates the correlation between consumers' attitudes toward halal products and their purchasing intention. The results demonstrate that trust in the halal industry has a positive and statistically significant moderating influence on the relationship between attitude and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.213$, $t = 4.988$, $p < 0.001$). This outcome indicates that the influence of positive attitudes on consumers' purchasing intentions is heightened when consumers exhibit increased confidence in the halal industry thereby providing empirical support for rejecting H₄. Specifically, while favorable attitudes toward halal products enhance purchase intentions, the effect is amplified by higher levels of trust. Consumers who hold a favorable view of halal products and trust the institutions, certification bodies, and industry stakeholders that uphold halal standards are more likely to translate their positive assessments into actual purchase intentions. Thus, trust serves as a vital reinforcing mechanism that amplifies the impact of attitude on consumer behavioral intentions,

underscoring its essential role in influencing purchasing decisions in the halal market. This finding corroborates earlier submissions that trust is a critical enhancer of attitudes and behavioral relationships in the consumption of halal products and services (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012; Namin, 2017).

Hence, this finding challenges the attitudinal model's sufficiency for explaining consumer behavior in credence-good markets, such as halal products. While the Ajzen theory of planned behavior posits a direct pathway from attitude to intention, the moderating role of trust observed in this study suggests that this pathway is contingent and potentially fragile in low-trust environments such as Nigeria. Hence, it is argued that attitude alone may be an insufficient predictor of behavioral intention in credence goods markets, where product attributes such as halal compliance cannot be easily verified by consumers even after purchase. This is so because Nigeria is bereft of legal policies on Halal production, thereby allowing the production and importation of goods without the Halal certification processes (Annabi & Wada, 2016) with Islamic finance as the only facet of the Halal concept recognized in Nigeria (Muhammad & Bin Ngah, 2020). Consequently, we posit that in an environment characterized by institutional trust deficits, weak regulatory enforcement, and the proliferation of counterfeit or mislabeled products, trust emerges as a critical boundary condition shaping consumer decision-making. Thus, the moderating role of trust observed in this study indicates that even when consumers hold positive attitudes toward halal products, these attitudes may not translate into purchase intentions unless there is a strong belief in the authenticity and integrity of halal certification processes.

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that awareness and attitude towards halal products had a significant positive effect on Nigerians' intention to purchase them. However, the introduction of trust in the halal industry stressed that the nexus among awareness, attitude, and purchase intention is not automatic but rests on the level of trust consumers accord to the halal industry. Although the Theory of Planned Behavior posits a direct, positive association between attitude and intention, the present study reveals that this pathway weakens significantly in low-trust contexts such as Nigeria. This is because, in a credence-goods market such as the halal products market, where consumers cannot independently verify compliance, trust becomes a decisive mechanism that either activates or suppresses the effect of awareness or favorable attitudes on behavioral intention. Hence, it is argued that in settings characterized by an inadequate regulatory framework, limited standardization, and widespread uncertainty regarding certification processes, trust functions as a critical enabling condition. Thus, this study provided empirical evidence, within the Nigerian context and beyond, that trust is not merely an auxiliary variable but a structural necessity for translating consumer predispositions into actual purchase intentions in the halal industry.

Author Contributions: Auwalu Shuaibu Muhammad conceived the study, developed the research design, conducted the literature review, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, and prepared the manuscript. Andriani Samsuri provided academic supervision throughout the study, offering guidance on the research process, methodology, analysis, and manuscript development.

Funding: "This research received no external funding"

Conflicts of Interest: "The authors declare no conflict of interest."

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