

WHAT DRIVES URBAN MUSLIM MILLENNIALS TO VIRAL CONCEPT RESTAURANTS?

^{1*} Azreen Jihan Che Mohd Hashim, ² Nor Asiah Omar, ¹ Nur Shuhada Kamarudin, ³ N. Alia Fahada W. Ab Rahman, ¹ Muhamad Azrin Nazri, ⁴ Muhammad Majid, ⁵ Popon Srisusilawati

¹ Faculty of Economics and Muamalat Kampus Nilai, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

² Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

³ Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia

⁴ Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia.

⁵ Faculty of Sharia, Sharia Banking Study Program, Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia.

*Correspondence:

Azreen Jihan Che Mohd Hashim,
e-mail:
azreenjihan@usim.edu.my

History:

Received : 12.08.2025
Revised : 6.7.2026
Accepted : 8.7.2026
Published: 30.9.2026

Cite as:

Che Mohd Hashim, A. J., Omar, N. A., Kamarudin, N. S., W. Ab Rahman, N. A. F., Nazri, M. A., Majid, M., & Srisusilawati, P. (2026). What drives urban Muslim millennials to viral concept restaurants? *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research*, 31(3), 134–157.
<https://doi.org/10.33102/jfatwa.vol.31no3.743>

Funding

No funding was received for this study.

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the predictors of intention for a concept restaurant among Muslim millennials in urban areas that are energized with culinary energy. The rapid development of hype restaurants in this urban hotspot is not just coincidental; it reflects changing consumer behavior, urban millennial tastes, and Malaysia's developing food culture. Quantitatively examining intention predictors based on an extended TPB is done using PLS-SEM. The survey was conducted with 205 local travelers who are Muslim millennials living in urban areas. This paper emphasizes the structural measurement of the overall finding. The intention to visit a concept restaurant outlet in Malaysia is positively correlated with the spiritual values variables, SQ and SC.

Keywords: *Concept restaurant, millennial, dining experience, intention, tourism and hospitality.*



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INTRODUCTION

The projected growth of foodservice industry in Malaysia is from USD 14.75 billion in 2025 to USD 27.5 billion by 2030, driven largely by concept restaurants offering themed, immersive, and experiential dining (Mordor Intelligence, 2025). With over 26 million social media users and 84.2% internet penetration, viral dining culture has accelerated demand for distinctive restaurant experiences, particularly among urban Muslim millennials who seek venues that blend ambiance, novelty, and halal assurance (Jihan et al., 2024).

Concept restaurants extend beyond the menu; they communicate identity through aesthetics, atmosphere, and narrative, distinguishing themselves in a competitive market (Alfiani & Priantina, 2024; Walker, 2021). For Muslim diners, however, experiential appeal must be accompanied by credible halal compliance. Prior studies confirm that halal-certified establishments significantly increase visit intention among Muslim travellers, while restaurant owners recognise halal certification as a strategic differentiator (Koufie & Kesa, 2020; Marzuki et al., 2012). Yet research also reveals inconsistency in how halal standards are prioritised across different restaurant types, with local establishments often undervaluing halal-ness relative to chain restaurants (Andrianto, 2017). As Malaysia positions itself as a global leader in Muslim-friendly tourism, bridging this gap within the concept restaurant segment becomes increasingly relevant (Mannaa, 2020).

Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this study examines the predictors of visit intention among urban Muslim millennials toward concept restaurants in Malaysia. Specifically, it investigates the influence of spiritual intelligence (SQ), spiritual congruence (SC), perceived price (PP), halal food quality (HFQ), and restaurant facilities and physical environment (FPE) on visit intention, with the aim of informing operators on how to develop concept dining experiences that are both experientially compelling and spiritually aligned.

Halal and Hip ‘The Urban Muslim Millennial’ Experience

The typical age range is between 28–45 years (born between 1980–1997). Most of them are in their early to mid-career stages, where they are becoming more financially independent. Their residences are in major urban centers in Klang Valley such as Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Petaling Jaya. Global trends, digital platforms, and multicultural environments expose them to a balance between modern lifestyles and religious values. Furthermore, they are highly digitally skilled and devoted to social media. They utilize technology to engage with religion, such as prayer apps, halal finders, and Islamic finance tools, and are more influenced by peer reviews and brand authenticity than traditional advertising (Rahim, Khir et al. (2022)). The popularity of halal food hunts is being driven by millennial local travellers, who often use Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to curate them. Halal food tours, cooking classes, and influence-led experiences have become tourist attractions due to this. Muslim-friendly hospitality has been incorporated with the phenomenon.

In terms of their self-development, and purposeful living are the key to this group to emphasize a strong religious identity, but their interpretations and expressions are diverse and personalized. They support ethical consumption, which includes products that are halal, sustainable, and socially responsible (Bakar et al., 2024). The women from this group tend to have higher levels of tertiary education. Increasingly, women are joining the workforce, changing traditional gender roles, and expecting egalitarian relationships and shared decision-making in family life (Namin et al., 2020). Their priorities include halal assurance, quality, and

brand transparency. They have a strong sense of loyalty towards brands that align with their faith-based values and urban aesthetics. Additionally, the value of authenticity and their peer networks is more than celebrity or influencer endorsements (Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2020).

The inclusion of halal dining place, worship facilities, and Muslim-friendly accommodations in tourism packages has led to a seamless experience for faith-based travellers. The growing market segment of Muslim travellers has distinct needs and preferences. It has been found that local Muslim leisure tourists are motivated by strengthening social bonds, learning, relaxation, and access to Islamic facilities (Krishnapillai & Kwok, 2020). When traveling, Muslims prioritize prayer spaces and halal food options, followed by Muslim-friendly accommodations and public facilities (Arisanti, 2022). Adham et al. (2024) conducted a study in the Maldives that revealed additional attributes specific to island destinations, including safety, privacy, and value for money. The tourism industry is addressing this market by modifying services and facilities to fulfill Muslim travellers' needs. To tap into this growing market segment, destinations must understand and accommodate the needs of Muslim travellers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept Restaurant in Muslim Friendly Hospitality Tourism (MFHT)

The rapid growth of concept restaurants among millennials in Malaysia is driven by a fascinating blend of cultural identity, lifestyle trends, and digital influence (Rahim, et al., 2024; Azam, 2024; Kamarulzaman et al., 2020). This trend is booming because of the cultural and religious identity happened in Malaysia. We can see millennials in Malaysia, especially urban Muslim millennials today they are deeply connected to their faith and values. halal dining is not just about food; it is about SC and aligning lifestyle choices with religious principles. This makes halal-certified restaurants a natural preference.

Besides, the roles of social media as well as digital influence millennials who are digital natives. They make extensive use of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to explore trendy eateries (Rahim, et al., 2024). Viral content, influencer reviews, and geotagged food hunts have turned halal restaurants into lifestyle destinations. Starting from 2018, the rise of concept dining getting hype, the restaurants today are not just serving food they are offering experiential dining (Azam, 2024). Think of hipster cafes, themed interiors, and Instagrammable dishes, these appeal to millennials' desire for aesthetic, shareable experiences that go beyond taste.

Halal tourism and dining have been supported by Malaysia's strong position as a global halal hub, along with initiatives that promote Muslim-friendly hospitality services. Halal food and beverages are frequently associated with cleanness, ethical sourcing, and quality assurance. Millennials, who are increasingly conscious of their health and social well-being, are drawn to these values (Fitria et al., 2019). However international tourism is often the focus, research on local or domestic tourists, especially in Malaysia, is not as prominent. However, some recent work is beginning to fill the gap. In 2023, Rozekhi et al. (2023) conducted a study that examined the influence of post-COVID-19 norms like social distancing and SOPs on local travellers' travel intentions in Malaysia's hospitality sector. Besides, a study was conducted in Ranau, Sabah, to analyse the impact of heritage tourism on local communities, emphasizing the significance of local engagement and cultural preservation. Research has empirically examined the relationship between service innovation and tourist satisfaction, with a particular focus on how domestic tourists perceive the destination image (Liat et al., 2020). Over recent

years, the focus has shifted from international markets to domestic tourism research in Malaysia.

According to Mohamed (2005), there are three distinct categories of Malaysian domestic travellers who have varying expectations for products and travel behaviors. Examined the distinct preferences of Malay Muslim women tourists, pointing out how social factors like nationality, race, culture, and religion impact their perception of the world as tourists. Oppermann (1992) studied intranational travel flows in Malaysia and found that there was an emphasis on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia and significant differences between market segments. The need to redefine rural tourism in Malaysia was highlighted by Nair et al. (2015), as the current definition is limited and mostly focused on homestay programs. The growing recognition of domestic tourism in Malaysia and the need for a more comprehensive understanding of local tourists' preferences and behaviors to develop targeted strategies and products are supported by these studies.

Concept Restaurant Adoption Intention

Spiritual Intelligence, Spiritual Congruence, and Visit Intention

H1: SQ positively influences visit intention

H2: SC positively influences visit intention

SQ refers to the ability to incorporate spiritual values such as compassion, purpose, and inner peace into daily decision-making, aligning actions with deeper beliefs (Kumar & Pathak, 2019). SC, meanwhile, reflects the harmony between one's inner convictions and outward behaviour (Santoso, 2019). Together, they create a faith-driven lens through which Muslim millennials evaluate dining choices. In the Malaysian context, restaurants that reflect Islamic values through ambiance, food, and service resonate strongly with this group, as spiritual alignment strengthens visit intention beyond surface-level influences such as trends or peer pressure (Juliana et al., 2021; Hairon et al., 2017). SQ has also been shown to positively influence attitude toward halal product purchasing (Jihan et al., 2016), supporting its relevance as a predictor in this study.

Perceived Price and Visit Intention

H3: PP positively influences visit intention

Perceived Price (PP) refers to the subjective assessments of customers towards price whether it is fair, reasonable, or reflective of value, rather than its objective cost (Walia, 2022). For Muslim millennials, affordability matters but is secondary to value alignment; they are willing to pay more for quality, ethical sourcing, and halal assurance (Putri, 2025). Research confirms that price fairness positively influences purchase and revisit intentions in restaurant settings (Vardhani & Octafian, 2024; Han & Kim, 2009). In halal dining specifically, a higher price can signal trust, cleanliness, and strict compliance, thereby reinforcing rather than deterring intention to visit (Mursid, 2023).

Halal Food and Beverages and Visit Intention

H4: Halal food and beverages positively influence visit intention

Halal food and beverages (HFB) represent a non-negotiable consideration for Muslim consumers, connecting religious obligation with trust, lifestyle identity, and perceived quality (Hassan, 2020; Bonne & Verbeke, 2008). Malaysia's robust halal certification system,

recognised globally through ten consecutive GIEI rankings, reinforces consumer confidence in halal-certified establishments (Matrade, 2025). For urban Muslim millennials, halal certification serves as a key driver of visit intention, as it assures spiritual comfort, ethical sourcing, and food safety (Khomsatun et al., 2024; Halimi et al., 2022). When combined with experiential dining elements, halal F&B significantly enhances the overall appeal of concept restaurants and encourages repeat visits (Jihan et al., 2024).

Facilities and Physical Environment and Visit Intention

H5: Facilities and Physical environment positively influence visit intention

The physical environment encompasses all sensory and spatial elements of a dining space, including lighting, décor, cleanliness, layout, music, and temperature, which collectively shape a customer's emotional experience and perception of quality (Ngah et al., 2022). In concept restaurants, these elements are especially critical as they reinforce thematic identity and brand values. For Muslim millennials, prayer facilities such as a surau signal cultural sensitivity and spiritual alignment, deepening emotional connection to the venue (Kurniawan, 2024). Studies confirm that ambiance, facility aesthetics, and comfort significantly influence customer satisfaction and visit intention, particularly in competitive urban markets (Chong, 2018; Jihan et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

Measures

The growing importance of halal concepts in the restaurant and tourism sectors has been highlighted by recent studies. In recent years, halal tourism and hospitality have received a lot of attention, especially in countries with a Muslim population like Indonesia and Malaysia (Battour et al., 2024). Restaurants that provide halal food are essential for Muslim travellers, as they focus on quality of food, service quality, as well as physical environment (Addina et al., 2020). The tourism sector is embracing Islamic principles through halal tourism villages that integrate halal and thoyyib values to support local economies (Adinugraha, 2018).

The presence of halal-friendly attributes, such as food quality, service quality, and physical environment, has a significant influence on revisit intention (Polas et al., 2022; Addina et al., 2020). In addition, the presence of halal-friendly attributes affects perceived value and destination trust, which consequently influences visit intention in non-Islamic countries (Sodawan & Hsu, 2022). In order to attract Muslim travellers, it is crucial to develop halal food in restaurants and as souvenirs, with a focus on symbols, utilities, and sensory aspects (Addina et al., 2020). The standardization of halal certificates for restaurants is a consequence of Indonesia's development of halal tourism (Andrianto, 2019).

Sampling and Data Collection

The survey was conducted over approximately 12 weeks, from early September to mid-November 2024, targeting urban Muslim millennials in Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Petaling Jaya, and Klang. These four areas were deliberately selected as they represent Malaysia's most closely populated and economically active urban corridors, falling under federal and municipal authority classifications of urban districts. As the country's commercial, administrative, and

cultural epicentres, they host the highest concentration of concept restaurants, shopping complexes, and experiential dining venues in Malaysia, making them the most relevant settings for studying dining behaviour among urban Muslim millennials (Jihan et al., 2024; Alfiani & Priantina, 2024).

Furthermore, these areas are home to a large and diverse Muslim millennial population that is digitally connected, socially active, and regularly exposed to dining trends, thus closely reflecting the target demographic of this research. Overall, 182 respondents were recruited, all of participants had prior experience visiting a concept restaurant. Since no sampling frame existed for this population, a convenience sampling technique was employed. Convenience sampling was adopted in this study owing to the lack of a comprehensive sampling frame for urban Muslim millennials who have visited concept restaurants in the Klang Valley. Since no official registry or population list exists for this specific group, probability sampling methods were not feasible. Besides, the convenience sampling allowed the research team to efficiently reach respondents who met the study criteria within practical time and resource constraints, which is consistent with its widespread application in consumer behaviour and tourism research (Hong, 2024). To partially compensate for its inherent limitations, data collection was diversified through both offline surveys and bilingual instruments in Malay and English, following Kock's (2021) recommendations to minimise common method bias.

Notwithstanding its valuable contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of convenience sampling limits the generalisability of findings beyond the sampled population, as respondents may not be fully representative of all urban Muslim millennials in Malaysia. Second, the sample size of 182, while adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, remains relatively modest and concentrated within four urban districts, restricting broader geographical inference. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the data measures respondents' intentions at a specific point in time, potentially overlooking changes in behaviour or attitude of people over time. Fourth, self-reported survey data is inherently susceptible to social desirability bias, particularly when respondents answer questions related to religious practices and spiritual values. Future studies should consider probability-based sampling, larger and more geographically diverse samples, and longitudinal designs to bolster the robustness and transferability of findings. This keeps the discussion focused, acknowledges methodological trade-offs honestly, and connects limitations directly to recommendations for future research. Besides, to minimise common method bias, the study followed Kock's (2021) recommendations by diversifying data collection through both offline surveys and bilingual instruments administered in Malay and English.

Data Analysis

Hypotheses are tested by the study through PLS-SEM and SPSS. For the evaluation of complex models used in tourism and hospitality research, PLS-SEM is suitable (Abou-Shouk et al., 2026). The scale's construct validity is assessed by evaluating AVEs below 0.50 (Hair et al., 2021). The reliability is guaranteed by estimating ≥ 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents Profile

The sample comprised predominantly female respondents (64.3%), with males accounting for 35.7%. The largest age group was 30–34 years (30%), while the 40–44 age

group was least represented (18%). Most respondents were married (71.5%) and held a bachelor's degree (63.8%), followed by Master/PhD and Diploma holders (14.6% each) and SPM graduates (6.2%). In terms of employment, the majority were salaried employees (56%), followed by self-employed individuals (26.4%) and students (17.6%). Monthly income was most commonly in the RM3,001–RM5,000 range (36.8%), with those earning above RM10,001 forming the smallest income group. Geographically, the largest proportion of respondents resided in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (39.5%), with a small proportion (6%) from outside the Klang Valley, including Penang and Johor. As shown in Table 1, mean scores for all constructs exceeded 4.0, indicating that respondents held consistently positive perceptions across all measured variables, with Perceived Price recording the highest mean (6.02) and Visit Intention the lowest (5.58).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the research variables

Scales	RESULT	
	Mean	SD
SQ	6.00	0.68
SC	5.91	0.73
PP	6.02	0.67
Halal Food & Beverage	5.86	0.70
Facilities and Physical environment	5.88	0.73
Visit Intention to concept restaurant outlet	5.58	0.86

As shown in Table 1, urban Muslim Millennial agree with the constructs' statements and have positive intentions towards visit intention to Concept restaurant as the mean values > 4 for all constructs.

Measurement Model

Table 2 presents the square root of AVE values along the diagonal, all of which exceed their corresponding inter-construct correlations, confirming discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. All AVE values surpassed the 0.50 threshold, establishing convergent validity, while HTMT ratios remained below 0.90 (Table 3), providing further evidence of discriminant validity. VIF values for all constructs fell below 5.0, ruling out multicollinearity concerns, and all reliability coefficients exceeded 0.70, confirming scale reliability.

Table 2: The square root of AVEs and inter-variables correlations

Variable	SQ	SC	PP	HFB	FPE	VI
SQ	0.826					
SC	0.512	0.814				
PP	0.413	0.478	0.943			
HFB	0.468	0.432	0.512	0.814		
FPE	0.426	0.481	0.424	0.573	0.807	
VI	0.572	0.486	0.588	0.418	0.463	0.835

Table 3: HTMT ratios

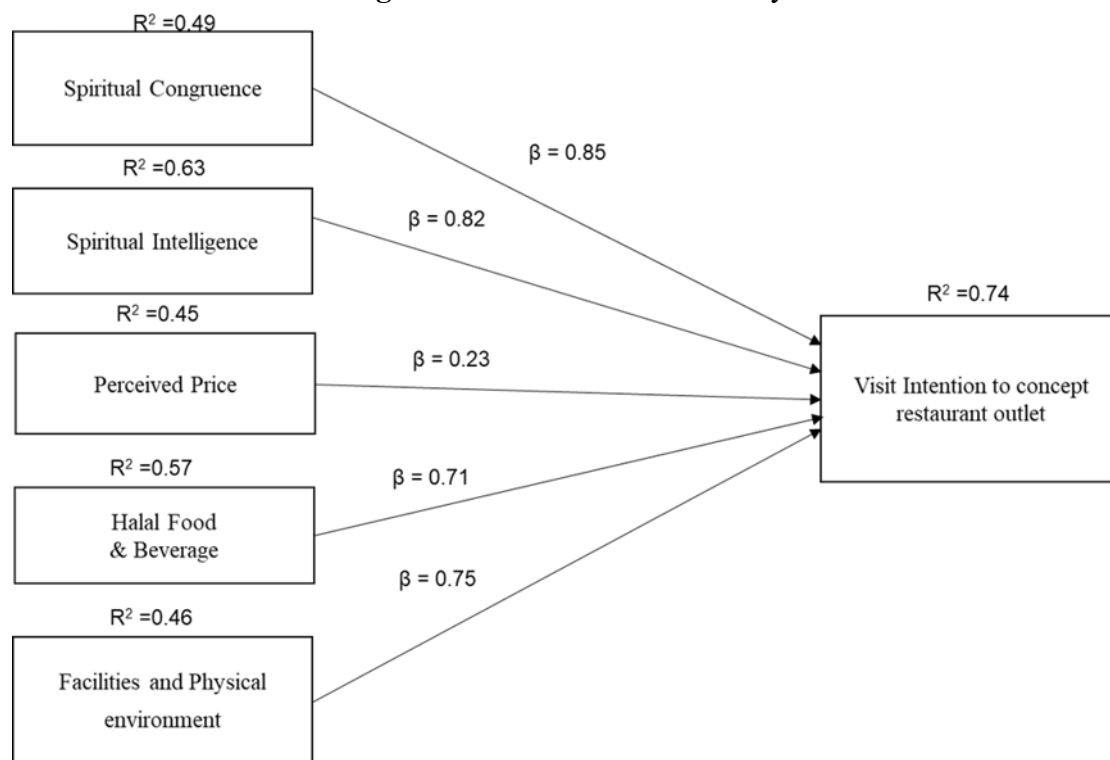
Variable	Mean	SD
SQ	4.298	0.596
SC	4.249	0.626
PP	4.313	0.590
HFB	4.364	0.567

FPE	4.295	0.610
VI	4.366	0.568

Structural Model

The structural model results, illustrated in Figure 1, indicate that all five hypotheses were supported. SQ emerged as the strongest predictor of visit intention ($\beta = 0.85$), followed by SC ($\beta = 0.82$), FPE ($\beta = 0.75$), HFB ($\beta = 0.71$), and PP ($\beta = 0.23$). These findings extend TPB by demonstrating that spiritual and environmental constructs, alongside halal food quality and price perception, meaningfully predict visit intention among urban Muslim millennials. Notably, while PP was statistically accepted, its comparatively modest effect size suggests that price is comparatively less important role in this context, consistent with the view that halal compliance and spiritual alignment take precedence over economic considerations in this demographic's dining decisions (Andrianto, 2019). The results collectively affirm the relevance of integrating faith-based constructs into behavioural intention frameworks, with implications for both halal tourism development and concept restaurant positioning in urban Malaysia.

Figure 1: Framework of the study



Discussion

This study enriches the emerging body of research on Muslim-friendly hospitality and tourism (MHTF) by empirically examining the predictors of visit intention among urban Muslim millennials in the context of concept restaurants. The findings support the applicability of TPB in this setting, confirming that SQ, SC, HFB, and FPE are significant positive predictors of visit intention. To our knowledge, this is among the first studies to examine these constructs collectively within the concept restaurant context, addressing a notable gap in the existing literature.

The non-significant effect of PP on visit intention is a key finding that warrants direct interpretation. Contrary to conventional consumer behaviour assumptions, price did not meaningfully drive dining decisions among this group. This is likely attributable to the relatively stable household income profile of the sample and, more fundamentally, to the primacy of halal compliance and spiritual alignment in their decision-making. When religious obligation and value congruence are the dominant considerations, price sensitivity diminishes. This finding reinforces the argument that PP operates differently in faith-driven consumption contexts and should not be assumed as a universal predictor of behavioural intention. While its contribution remains modest, it nonetheless signals that price becomes relevant only as a secondary consideration once halal integrity and spiritual resonance are already satisfied.

All constructs' reliability and validity were assessed prior to hypothesis testing. Table 4 shows all standardised factor loadings were ranging from 0.70 to 0.94, confirming they exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 as adequate indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.882 to 0.951, and Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.747 to 0.873, both exceeding the minimum benchmark of 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency across all constructs. Convergent validity was confirmed as all AVE values surpassed the 0.50 threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), ranging from 0.595 to 0.693, indicating that each construct adequately explained the variance in its indicators.

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were adopted to assess any multicollinearity issue which indicate all of which fell below the threshold of 5.0, ranging from 2.65 to 3.86, suggesting no multicollinearity concern among the constructs (Hair et al., 2021). The R^2 values indicated acceptable explanatory power across the model, with SC recording the highest at 0.77 and Visit Intention at 0.46, which is considered satisfactory in behavioural intention research. Collectively, these results confirm that the measurement model exhibits satisfactory reliability, convergent validity, and structural soundness to proceed with structural model evaluation.

Table 4: Measurement model statistics

Items	Std Regression (Loading)	Composite Reliability	R ²	Average Variance Extracted AVE	VIF	Cronbach's Alpha
SQ		0.951	0.65	0.659	2.65	0.873
1. SQ1	0.72					
2. SQ2	0.87					
3. SQ3	0.75					
4. SQ4	0.81					
5. SQ5	0.75					
6. SQ6	0.86					
7. SQ7	0.83					
8. SQ8	0.88					
9. SQ9	0.78					
10. SQ10	0.85					
SC		0.947	0.77	0.693	2.83	0.853
1. SC1	0.91					
2. SC2	0.93					
3. SC3	0.94					
4. SC4	0.84					
5. SC5	0.87					

6. SC6	0.94					
7. SC7	0.82					
8. SC8	0.80					
Facilities & Physical Environment		0.951	0.64	0.659	3.15	0.774
1. FPE1	0.78					
2. FPE2	0.88					
3. FPE3	0.83					
4. FPE4	0.75					
5. FPE5	0.72					
6. FPE6	0.77					
7. FPE7	0.81					
8. FPE8	0.83					
9. FPE9	0.76					
10. FPE10	0.71					
11. FPE11	0.80					
Halal Food & Beverages		0.925	0.62	0.675	3.45	0.792
1. HFB1	0.80					
2. HFB2	0.86					
3. HFB3	0.83					
4. HFB4	0.88					
5. HFB5	0.73					
6. HFB6	0.82					
Perceived Price		0.898	0.73	0.595	3.86	0.747
1. PP1	0.70					
2. PP2	0.86					
3. PP3	0.72					
4. PP4	0.75					
5. PP5	0.73					
Visit Intention		0.882	0.46	0.601	3.72	0.865
1. VI1	0.85					
2. VI2	0.89					
3. VI3	0.82					
4. VI4	0.83					
5. VI5	0.84					

Table 5: HTMT ratios

Hypothesis Path	Number and Hypothesised	Standardised Coefficient	Critical Ratio (T-Value)	Results
H1	SQ → VI	0.21	3.094	Supported
H2	SC → VI	0.18	3.814	Supported
H3	PP → VI	0.08	1.477	Not supported
H4	HFB → VI	0.14	3.147	Supported
H5	FPE → VI	0.51	3.189	Supported

Table 5 shows the estimated coefficients of each variables relationship to visit intention.

Limitation of Measuring SQ

The relationship between spirituality and intention is directly suggested by research. Walton (1996) states that spiritual relationships, which involve connections to self, others, a higher power, or nature, are important in one's spirituality. Positive work intentions are strongly linked to workplace spirituality, which is the recognition of employees' inner lives by an organization (Soder, 2016). To achieve spirituality and achieve true peace, intention is essential in Islamic texts, with divine pleasure as the top goal (Dagli, 2016). A theoretical explanation for the direct impact of intention on physical manifestation suggests that a layer of deep consciousness is the basis of both intentional consciousness and physical reality. Baruss (2010) states that this mechanism involves the exercise of unconstrained choice of observables at the intentional level and modulation of quantum field operators at the deep consciousness level. The findings suggest a plethora of interplay between spirituality, intention, and physical reality.

Naail et al., (2012) mentions that there are numerous research studies on spirituality that have been conducted using the Judeo-Christian and Hinduism religions, but little is done to focus on aspects of spirituality in the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition. Islam is the major religion in the world, and this represents its viewpoints. It is crucial to understand that Islam teaches its followers to maintain two major relations, of which *Hablunminallah* (relation with God) and *Hablunminnanas* (relation with people) as well as to gain the benefits and rewards in the hereafter. The researcher believes that a human must start with appreciating himself and other people surrounding. Spiritual Islamic values can be measured with difficulty due to the potential for items to create biases in respondents when answering questions. Allah is emphasized in every item. Respondents tend to give the best answer and plot the higher scales to express their opinion. This is supported by few researchers (Jager et al., 2012; Amram & Dryer, 2007b; Nasel & Dagmar, 2004). Each perspective has its own values to make the individual have a strong inner sense which may influence behaviour to make the best decisions in their lives.

In a study Samah et al., (2012), they have an opine that spirituality determines individuals to achieve a profound understanding of their own self-potential in order to discover their purpose of life and value in the relationship between God and themselves as they believe there is love of God, to own self and one another that has a relationship with God. That is the reason why the construct of spirituality is considered as intelligence, which is based on some scientific observations and findings that the application of specific patterns of thoughts, emotion and behaviours discussed under religion and product image rituality, in daily life which led to an increase in the individual's adaptation and wellbeing (Faribors et al., 2010). Compared to other SQ scale (western countries), they tend to focus on the relationship between individual and God in the health and counselling context. Further, most of the studies had been literally conducted in the context of Christianity. We had found that the items are difficult to understand and to adapt to the culture in Malaysia, problems arising with measurement; in so much that self-report measures are limited in their ability to directly capture cognitive skills. According to King and Decicco (2012), future research should seek to establish performance-based measures of spiritual capacities to reduce the limitations of self-report data (e.g., overestimation of one's abilities). This may further aid in the development of methods for fostering spiritual capacities in applied settings.

SQ Is the Key Driver of Intention to Visit the Concept Restaurant

The influence of SQ on various aspects of entrepreneurial and prosocial behavior has been explored in recent studies (Rodrigues et al., 2019). SQ has not been consistently shown to have a direct impact on intentions across all domains, which suggests a need for more research in this area. Although spirituality research is still in its infancy, there is growing evidence that the more spiritual an individual is, the more benefits they perceive in terms of satisfaction, commitment, productivity, flexibility, and creativity (Indradevi, 2020). This study finds a significant direct relationship between these two variables. This may be due to the educational characteristics of the local Muslim millennials in the urban area, who have easy access to information about the restaurant and its halal status. Over the age of 30-40, most individuals are married, have children to feed, and are mature enough to make decisions about what to eat and how halal the food is. And this was agreed upon by Wibowo et al. (2022) who study millennials in Indonesia.

Besides, the relationship between spirituality and halal food consumption has been explored in recent studies. According to Syed & Karia (2017), halal food has a positive impact on SQ, mental alertness, and overall well-being. Choosing halal food is significantly influenced by spiritual marketing, which encompasses product, price, location, and promotion (Nurbasari, 2015). The food industry's production and competitiveness in global markets are affected by the influence of spirituality in an Islamic context in deciding to purchase halal food, as indicated by research (Widyakto et al., 2022). Spiritual capital awareness among traditional market traders has been observed to influence their mindset and economic behavior, leading to halal trading practices that are aligned with Islamic principles (Soleh et al., 2022). The importance of spirituality in halal food consumption and business practices is highlighted in these studies, which suggests that more research is necessary to fully understand the spiritual dimensions in halal contexts.

The food industry's focus on halal production is affected by the influence of spirituality in an Islamic context on the decision to purchase halal products (Widyakto et al., 2021). Spirituality cannot have a direct impact on halal food shopping behavior, but it can be significant when mediated by factors like image, trust, and satisfaction (Juliana et al., 2021). Current study is contradicted with what been mentioned, where SQ and SC shows direct relationship and become a key driver to visit intention to concept restaurant. Spiritual aspects must be considered in the halal food market and potential strategies for halal food companies to appeal to Muslim consumers are suggested because of these findings. This study shows the visit intention to the concept restaurant outlet is significantly influenced by SQ ($\beta = 0.85$), and H1 is supported; the SC towards visit intention ($\beta = 0.82$); H2 is confirmed. Align with the study which related to the Green Entrepreneurial whereby the predictor of green mindfulness and green entrepreneurial intention are influenced by SQ (Cai et al., 2023). Additionally, in yoga practice, the first intentions of practitioners tend to be more physical than spiritual, but over time, spiritual intentions increase and correlate with better psychological well-being (Ivtzan & Jegatheeswaran, 2015). Spiritual involvement can be a protective factor for substance abuse, with low religious engagement being linked to addiction and spiritual reengagement being linked to recovery. Thus, both studies highlight how spirituality, intention, and behavior interact in different domains, indicating the need for more research to fully understand these relationships. The subsequent studies were carried out to address these issues.

Serving Up SQ Versus Religiosity Vibes in Concept Restaurant

Direct principles are suggested by these sources and should be applicable for every time and place (Beekun & Badawi, 2005). To reiterate, sacred references play a crucial role in providing fundamental principles to guide humans when purchasing, using, or utilizing products. According to Islam, a human being is made up of two elements. Initially, there is a physical dimension, followed by the spirit known as 'nafs' (Arabic language) in the present moment, and the soul known as 'ruh' (soul) in the past moment. (Naail et al., 2012) pointed out that human beings possess four distinct types of characteristics. Numerous studies have examined how the spirituality can influence and influence behavior (Binu Raj et al., 2023; Bhatia & Arora 2017; Faribors et al., 2010; Soleiman, 2010). However, there is limited research that tests SQ towards intention in the context of a concept restaurant.

Previous research suggests that Muslims' consumption behavior will be influenced by integrated values that align with Islamic principles, and they will be more mindful of what, when, where, how, from whom, and how. Despite the literature's calls for such research, abundance studies have examined religion as a predictor of consumer behavior. Recently, systematic reviews have investigated the state of religiosity studies and revealed both progress and ongoing challenges in the field. Quantitative approaches often fail to capture cognitive aspects and provide superficial explanations (Agilkaya-Sahin, 2020). Many studies use simplistic measures that do not reflect the complexity of religiosity as a multidimensional construct. Despite conducting a substantial number of empirical studies, there are still ongoing concerns regarding measurement complexity and theoretical integration. After reviewing 530 publications, researchers categorized studies into macro, micro, and meso-level approaches, and highlighted the need for more diverse representation of geographic and religious traditions (Herzog et al., 2020).

Over the past century, there has been a significant evolution in research on religion. Studies in the 1920s centered around children's religion, questionnaire methods, and principles for studying religious life (Poplavsky, 2024; Marks-Katz, 2022). In the 1950s, there was a rapid increase in religiosity in the field, followed by a decline in the 1960s and a slower decline in the 1970s. Azancot-Chocron et al. (2022) have shown that religiosity research in social sciences has focused on six main components namely education, mental health, attitudes, psychological aspects, religion, as well as gender. Thus, the evolution of religiosity research is demonstrated in these studies, which highlights importance in different areas of social and behavioral sciences.

Most researchers aim to determine the best approach and tools for evaluating the practice and belief (inner strength) of the person (Herzog et al., 2020; Hawa et al., 2018; Jager et al., 2012; King et al., 2012). Having faith and a strong belief in religion can lead to individuals not acting or practicing it. A person may be loyal to their beliefs, but their faith may not align with the teachings of religion. While Muslims pray five times a day and wear hijab in accordance with Islam's order, they do not prioritize halal restaurants when choosing to dine. Halal is a comprehensive set of standards and guidelines that Islam has. Halal is defined by what Shariah allows, and it pertains to all activities carried out by humans (Wilkins et al., 2019; Beekun & Badawi, 2005). In practice, the Sunnah is considered the second primary source after Allah's verbatim word in The Holy Book (Quran).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to review previous studies as well as empirical findings of studies that are relevant to the objectives of this study to gain the insight model specification and methodology of SQ and SC in guiding Malaysian local tourist decision making. Thus, this research attempts to assess the degree of SQ in predicting urban Muslim millennial towards their visit intention to concept restaurant in future. The present research model was based on the postulates of TPB.

Integration of Predictor-Intention Relationship

The integration of the predictor-intention relationship is the term used to explain or predict a person's intention to perform a specific behavior. Building a conceptual model involves statistical testing of predictors like spiritual intelligence, spiritual congruence, PP, halal food & beverages and facilities and physical environment are to see how the predictors influence intention in behavioral research. This integration requires a comprehensive understanding of how predictors interact, not just isolated ones. As motivation for conducting a particular behavior is determined by intentions. Intention is defined by Ajzen (1991) as the level of effort people are willing to put into engaging in a behavior. The more determined the intention, the greater the likelihood of the behavior being complete. Intentions are influenced by the situation and can be affected by the availability or likelihood of participating in a specific action (Ajzen, 1985). Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) have established that intention is a person's position on a subjective probability dimension, where there is a relationship between an individual and certain actions. Armitage and Conner (1999) argued that intention is understanding the motivation for individuals to hold onto certain behaviors.

In the TPB model, the direct factor in behavior is a person's intention to perform the behavior or not. The individual's subjective probability of engaging in that behavior is not the same as behavioral intention (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2000). The analysis includes the final set of items that indicate behavioral intentions. According to previous studies, using the TPB model, the service provider's ability to generate profits is what determines whether customers stay or leave (Zeithaml, 2000). Particularly, Zeithaml et al (1996) suggested that favourable behavior intentions are linked to a service provider's ability to foster customers' positive word of mouth about them, generate customer recommendation, remain loyal, increase spending with the company, and willing to pay premium prices.

Consequently, according to Wilkins et al. (2019) hunting behavior among outdoor recreationalists was predicted through intention to search. The upcoming behavior will be imitated through intention and continued purchases. The correlation between customer satisfaction and future intentions has been proven (Tarofder et al., 2016; Bearden & Netemeyer, 1999). Despite its theoretical distinction, revisit can be seen as reflecting an individual's commitment. Retaining customers is the most vital objective for the company's success and perhaps the most crucial concept in marketing (Villanen, 2025; Walia & Kumar, 2022; Wang & Chen, 2016). Intentions are believed to be the motivational factors that influence behavior, as noted by Ajzen (1991). They indicate the extent to which a person is willing to try and put the effort into performing the behavior. To put it simply, it is a conscious and deliberate attempt by an individual to perform specific actions.

A stronger intention to act will lead to a tendency to perform it. Marketing literature frequently examines behavioral intentions as one of the main concepts. The interest of marketing scholars in behavioural intentions comes from its relation to purchase behavior. In past research studies, there has been a positive correlation between behavioral intentions and purchasing behavior

(Peña-García, 2020). The TPB model states that the intention to conduct or perform behavior is determined by three primary components, which are based on the individual's attitude (ATT) toward performing the behavior, subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC). Joensuu-Salo et al. (2020) highlights the importance of considering the stability of the intention-behavior relationship and the moderators of PBC's relationship with intention and behavior when evaluating the model's explanatory value, predictive accuracy, and practical utility. These findings underscore the complexity of attitude-behavior relationships and the potential for further refinement of the TPB model.

The concept of customers' intention to behave is significant as it represents the most accurate estimate of future behavior available for market research (Kalwani & Silk, 1982). The intention is broadly defined as the buyer's purposeful effort to purchase in the future or continue to visit. Basically, it concentrates on the primary points of visit concept restaurant. To measure the intention to visit here, behavioral intentions must be examined. Research has shown that intention is predictive of actual behavior, and this is supported by evidence from sample of this study. The concept restaurant setting can show behavioural loyalty through revisit. In contrast to revisit tourist engagement by visit, modern marketing literature has discovered that consumer loyalty is a more complex phenomenon and psychological process (Nurhilalia et al., 2024).

In addition, this method of predicting behavior seems to have been relatively successful. Ajzen (1985) has examined several published studies on the association between behavioural intention and behavior in the general literature. In most studies, the correlation exceeded 0.7, as has been observed. A meta-analysis of studies that tested different relationships within the TPB model, including the relationship between behavior intention and actual behavior, was carried out by McEachan et al., (2011). This is in line with the research's main aim of investigating the key psychological factors that could explain by urban Muslim millennial traveller's intention to concept restaurant. It also demonstrates the correlation exceeded 0.7 which this research developments have taken place within the research discipline of behavioural intention.

Implications for TPB Evolution

The evolution of TPB is aided by our research that demonstrates its applicability concept restaurant. The framework's relevance is a result of the upgrading of customer expectations to incorporate SQ and SC shows positive relationship to intention. The significance of TPB in considering complicated, multifaceted constructs in the adoption of SQ and SC are underlined by this change which opens the possibility of its use in other tourism sectors that utilize spiritual values toward intention. The approach to understanding concept restaurant in tourism is based on the integration of SQ, SC, HFB and FPE to visit intention concept restaurant, which have not been explored in previous studies. Thus, for future research need to explore SQ as a moderator or mediator between TPB variables and behavioral intention, especially in culturally or faithfully significant contexts like halal consumption. These can enrich the model, particularly in ethically charged decisions. Furthermore, by extend TPB to include constructs such as perceived spiritual benefit as PSB may positively influence attitude by framing the behavior as spiritually rewarding in religious contexts. PSB might independently predict intention, beyond attitude or norms and could strengthen the relationship between attitude and intention, particularly among highly religious individuals. These insights could lead to refinement of TPB that emphasizes and evolving nature of intention.

The intersection of SQ and SC and halal studies is being examined in this research. Efforts to improve competencies and reinforce ethical business practices aligned with sharia principles have been shown by a spiritual-based which are SQ and SC, HFB and FPE towards visit intention to concept restaurant. The spirit of spirituality in both either scholarship or industry needs to be better understood and implemented through revisiting the philosophical underpinnings of halal practices (Nur, 2024). While PP shows negative significant toward visit intention to concept restaurant. Although price is usually a strong predictor in consumer behavior models, it can have a diminishing effect when it comes to halal, particularly among spiritually conscious consumers.

Halal consumption is a religious obligation that many Muslim consumers must adhere to. The decision is not about balancing price and value; it's rooted in spiritual compliance. Price elasticity becomes less relevant because of this. Even though it is cheaper, choosing non-halal food can cause internal conflicts. Consumers prefer to maintain congruence between their beliefs and behaviors, even if it means paying more. This is in line with the interest in spiritual congruence as a factor in behavior. Besides, halal certification can be considered a sign of trust, safety, and ethical integrity. Consumers may be sceptical of cheaper options even if they are technically halal because they think lower prices mean compromised standards. halal food has symbolic significance, affirming one's identity, values, and belonging to the ummah. The symbolic value can be more important than functional or economic considerations.

Some studies suggest that the PP does not have a significant effect on halal purchase intention, particularly when trust, perceived quality, and religiosity are incorporated into the model (Fachrozi et al., 2024; Ozkan et al., 2023; Wardani & Susanto, 2020) suggests that price will only become relevant once halal integrity is already assured. Considering PP as a non-significant predictor or testing it as a modifier could be considered for future research. Perhaps it only matters when SQ is low or trust in certification is low.

Limitation of the Study

This study's sample was limited to urban Muslim millennials, which could limit the generalizability of our findings to other areas within the tourism industry. The sample was enough to test the proposed hypotheses, but additional demographic data like age, gender, educational level, and halal literacy could offer more insights into how these factors affect spiritual values, ingredients, and functional abilities. Future studies could explore the effect of differences in SQ and SC consciousness or experience with viral restaurants that offer a new experience, such as Concept restaurant s, on user perceptions and behaviors.

The exploration of SQ's ability and PP to act as a moderator or mediator between TPB variables and behavioral intention, particularly in cultural or religiously significant contexts, including halal consumption, will be undertaken in future research. Enhancing the model can be beneficial, especially when making ethically charged decisions. This study implemented a quantitative approach using the TPB to investigate the factors influencing visit intention concept restaurant among urban Muslim millennial in Malaysia. The choice of TPB was motivated by its strong theoretical foundation and previous success in consumer behaviour adoption across various domains, including the spiritual values. However, it is important to note that future research may benefit from integrating qualitative methods to provide a deeper, more significant understanding of travellers' experiences and perceptions, particularly with emerging the concept restaurant.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the predictors of visit intention among urban Muslim millennials toward concept restaurants in the Klang Valley, grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The findings confirm that spiritual intelligence (SQ), spiritual congruence (SC), halal food quality (HFQ), and facilities and physical environment (FPE) are significant positive predictors of visit intention, while perceived price (PP) demonstrated a negative and non-significant relationship. Collectively, these results suggest that for this demographic, dining decisions are not merely transactional but are deeply value-laden, shaped by the desire for inner peace, belief-behaviour alignment, food safety assurance, and a Muslim-friendly atmosphere. The concept restaurant, therefore, functions as more than a venue for consumption; it serves as a space where faith, identity, and lifestyle converge.

The negative relationship between PP and visit intention is particularly telling. Consistent with recent empirical work (Rahim et al., 2024; 2022), Muslim millennials in Malaysia prioritise halal authenticity, certification credibility, and spiritual obligation over financial considerations when making dining choices. Halal compliance is perceived not only as a religious requirement but also as a marker of quality and ethical integrity, rendering price a secondary concern. This shift in consumer psychology signals a maturing halal market where value, rather than cost, drives behaviour—a dynamic that restaurant operators and marketers must recognise when positioning their offerings.

From a practical standpoint, concept restaurant operators should invest in credible halal certification, spiritually resonant environments, and Muslim-friendly facilities to meaningfully attract this growing consumer segment. Thematic narratives that reflect Islamic values, alongside quality halal food offerings, create the immersive and spiritually aligned experience that urban Muslim millennials actively seek. Future research should explore SQ as a moderator or mediator within TPB-based models, extend the framework to other halal tourism sectors, and examine the growing influence and its limits of social media on faith-driven consumption decisions. As Muslim millennial consumers grow increasingly guided by intrinsic beliefs rather than external influences, understanding the spiritual dimensions of their behaviour remains a rich and necessary frontier for both scholarship and industry.

DECLARATIONS

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by Geran Inisiatif Penyelidikan (GIP) KOD PROJEK: EP-2025-015. The authors gratefully acknowledge this funding support.

Authors' contributions

Azreen Jihan Che Mohd Hashim: Conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft. Nor Asiah Omar: Supervision, validation, writing, review and editing. Nur Shuhada Kamarudin: Methodology, data curation, writing, review and editing. N Alia Fahada W Abd Rahman: Investigation, resources, writing, review and editing. Muhamad Azrin Nazri: Formal analysis, software, writing, review and editing. Muhammad Majid: Validation, writing, review and editing. Popon Srisusilawati: Writing, review and editing, project administration. All authors(s) read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing Interest

The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests.

Ethics Approval

Formal ethics committee approval was not obtained for this study, and no documented consent form was administered to respondents. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and no identifiable personal data were collected from respondents. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Respondents provided written consent by checking the consent box on the questionnaire, after being informed of the purpose and procedures of the study, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their rights as participants. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

To protect participants' privacy, the collected data were anonymized, and no personally identifiable information, including names, addresses, or other identifying details, was collected or reported. The data were used solely for research purposes, and the findings were presented in aggregate form to ensure that individual participants could not be identified.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Azreen Jihan Che Mohd Hashim (azreenjihan@usim.edu.my), upon reasonable request.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

ChatGPT was used solely to assist with language editing and to improve the clarity of the manuscript. All content, analysis, arguments, and conclusions were reviewed, verified, and approved by the author(s), who remain fully responsible for the final manuscript.

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