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# EXAMINING FACTORS AFFECTING ONLINE IMPULSE BUYING OF APPARELS AMONG CONSUMERS IN KOTA KINABALU

Norhafizah Abd Samat<sup>1</sup>, Imelda Albert Gisip<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Universiti Teknologi MARA, UiTM Sabah Branch

\*Corresponding Author

<sup>2</sup>imeldag@uitm.edu.my

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aims to examine the relationship between shopping environment, website quality, promotion, and perceived enjoyment toward online impulse buying of apparel among consumers in Kota Kinabalu. This paper is focused on secondary data sources of references and analyses of publications in selected papers on online impulse buying. This paper highlights past studies on the relationship between the antecedents and the application of S-OR theory in explaining the relationship. The work of the researcher is a genuine reference to published literature and seeks to contribute to the development of knowledge by adapting and testing the mediating effect of perceived enjoyment in the relationship between shopping environment, website quality, and promotion toward online impulse buying.*

**Keywords:** *Shopping Environment, Website Quality, Promotion, Perceived Enjoyment, Online Impulse Buying, S-O-R Theory*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Due to the simplicity of e-commerce, online buying has become a craze. Today, approximately 26 million Malaysians utilise the internet, and the (?) what is GWIGWI reports that 80% of those aged 16-64 purchase online. In the 1990s, massive sales in the mall meant a long wait for customers. But today's technology has revolutionised customer shopping habits. The internet portal has many bargains. Prices are substantially below market. The benefit of online buying is that customers do not have to go to the store. It is crucial to do it whenever and wherever there is an internet connection. The number of individuals shopping in the country has risen dramatically.

Given the enormous increase in impulsive buying by customers, researchers have been motivated to learn more about online impulse buying (Park et al., 2012). This has resulted in online impulse buying becoming a crucial research area for industry researchers and retailers, which has resulted in an increase in impulsive buying by customers. Online impulsive buying refers to shopping that occurs without prior planning in an online retail store. Shopping online was a convenient and stress-free experience. A consumer shopping online should not be subjected to social pressure due to restricted working hours, store location, or other customers or staff (Eroglu et al., 2001). Therefore, researchers as well as participants in the online retail business have begun to obtain a better grasp of online impulsive purchasing in the hope of gaining a deeper comprehension of this trend and, as a result, developing strategies to attract and retain more clients.

The clothes and textiles sector has limited research on impulsive buying. Three types of people were interviewed for this study: textile and apparel students, apparel students and non-textiles students, and non-students. He compared planned purchases, accidental purchases, and clothing aspirations. Both Chen Yu and Seock (2002) compared impulsive and non-impulse teenage clothes purchase motivation, information sources, and shop selection needs. No empirical models or theories have been created to characterise the components that lead to pulse buying.

Those who believe that clothes items have tremendous symbolic characteristics and a high ability to send identification signals (e.g., personality, social position) have stated that customers are highly attached to apparel products (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). In order to become communicative and symbolic, apparels are an essential part of their life, and apparel goods are more likely to be purchased for fashion items than for any other reason.

Thus, this research aims to examine the relationship between shopping environment, website quality, promotion, and perceived enjoyment toward online impulse buying of apparel among consumers in Kota Kinabalu.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical Background

Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory is mostly used in online impulse buying studies, perhaps because this framework has historically formed the basis for consumer behavioural studies. Akram, (2017) in his study stated that past studies have examined the relationships between environmental cues, cognitive organism, and resulting behaviours. Most online impulse buying studies also highlight the role of environmental cues in online impulse buying behaviour. Regardless of the theoretical framework, they have adopted, current online impulse buying studies have continuously explored the links between environmental factors, the cognitive, and affective reactions of consumers and their consequent behaviour as well as drawing on the environmental psychological model that can be reconciled with the S-O-R framework.

The S–O–R framework is an extension of the classical stimulus – response (S–R) approach. The S–O–R structure has three main elements:

- 1. stimulus (S), which is a trigger that arouses consumers,
- 2. organism (O), which is an internal evaluation of consumers, and;
- 3. response (R), which is an outcome of consumers’ reaction(s) toward online impulse-buying stimuli and their internal evaluations.

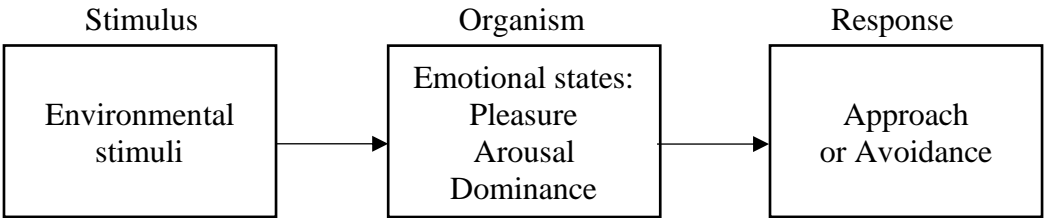


FIGURE 1 S-O-R framework. Source: Mehrabian and Russell (1974).

Online shopping is an outcome of various stimuli created by individuals as it defined or modelled the S-O-R paradigm (Stimulus-Organism-Response). An external stimulus (S) alters

an internal person's emotional (O) appraisal, causing an approach reaction or avoidance (R). People react favourably or adversely to environmental variables (approach) (conduct of avoidance) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell & Pratt, 1980). For the regulation of internet buying, the S-O-R framework is the optimal theory (Deng & Poole, 2012; Xu & Huang 2014; Li et al., 2011).

This study's SOR model reveals that online impulsive purchases are a response to a stimulus. As a result of the massive increase of internet pages worldwide, Rhee (2006) found that a site may influence purchases 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A purchase decision will be made in less than a minute. Marketers must consequently promote the adoption of a nice site design (Brohan, 1999).

The S-O-R framework, based on environmental psychology, gives theoretical support for the impacts of the e-shop atmosphere on user (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell & Pratt, 1980). A Stimulus (S) changes internal affect evaluations (O), causing approach or avoidance (R). People react to external stimuli either favourably (attitude) or adversely (attitude avoidance). Emotions are the final link in the S-O-R model chain.

The S-O-R hypothesis has also been used to examine impulsive purchases. Customers (the organism) are influenced by the ambient / seasonal features of a retail setting (the stimuli) (the response). Hedonic drive moderates these effects (Chang et al. 2011). Nonetheless, the impact of retail businesses and employees on interior sensations of joy and elation is vital. While excitement often promotes pulse purchasing, enjoyment of such shopping is equally beneficial when customers are not temporarily pressed (Xu, 2007).

## **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1.1 Online Impulse buying**

In the context of online shopping, impulse buying may be defined as the urge for a sudden purchase; the spur of the moment, spontaneous and quick purchase; and hedonistic, complex purchasing behaviour for shopping online without any prior purchasing purpose (Verhagen & Dolan, 2011; Parboteeah et al., 2009; Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004).

Online impulsive purchase was originally studied by LaRose (2001) and Koufaris (2002). Parboteeah et al. (2009) and Wells et al. (2011) examine the influence of online shopping platform features on online impulsive buying. Bedi et al. (2017) studied the web experience of online shoppers as one of the elements determining online impulse purchases. Environmental retail tactics result in impulse purchases (Kotler, 1974). As long as all indicators are visible and audible to the online customer, and the framework for online shopping remains focused on the same dimensions (layout, ambient indicators, and signal) as Bitner (1992) suggested, while Eroglu et al. (2001) concluded that the complete business environment is being reduced to a computer screen.

Purchasing e-impulses is not a new practise, as it has been studied for 65 years. Clover (1950) created this idea. Much research on impulsive purchasing has been undertaken globally, yielding many interesting findings. However, it is still extremely early in the internet sense, and little effort has been done. And most studies are done overseas. This part summarises key findings from much large online research. Experts were interested in e-impulse buying and online sales experiments around the end of the 1990s. Several academics have discovered fresh insights regarding e-impulse buying stimulus.

LaRose and Eastin (2002) explored the lack of self-regulation, depression, Internet time, self-efficiency, and optimistic impressions of online shopping. And how these characteristics have influenced online impulsive purchases. M. and L. (2004) studied this phenomenon, proposing the influence of air signals, mood, impacts, and pleasant hedonic experiences. Bressolles et al. (2007) proposed a model for purchasing impulses that improves website quality through consumer satisfaction. The chance of online purchases of impulsive items increases with time spent on the web before viewing an item (Jeffrey & Hodge, 2007).

### **2.1.2 Shopping Environment**

In online retail stores, Eroglu et al. (2001) discovered that the shopping experience is identical (layout, ambient signals, and signals) to Bitner's (1992). Information availability, loading time, and product image as shopping environment parameters are examined.

Dholakia (2000) characterised the retail environment as a purchasing trigger (i.e. the information process). An incentive to obtain knowledge is indicated in the following studies (Dimoka et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2016).

Loading time is the time it takes for the training materials to display on the website (Davis & Hantula, 2001; Palmer, 2002; Mohiuddin, 2018). It has images, videos, and sounds. Several studies, like Wells et al. (2011) and Wu et al. (2016), studied loading time in an online buying environment.

Product images are important for shopping site apps (Chang & Cheung, 2001). Griffith et al. (2001) said that the product images on the online retail website interface were vivid. Parboteeah et al. (2016) utilised the web interface to buy impulses online.

The newest Vonkeman et al. (2017) study similarly found that product presentation on an online retailer's website influences customers' emotions and consequently increases impulsive buying. In summary, this research uses existing knowledge, loading time, and product portals to stimulate the online buying experience.

Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follow:

H1: Shopping Environment has significant influence on perceived enjoyment

### **2.1.3 Website quality**

Website quality involves information layout, graphic design, and site details (Newman & Landy, 2000). The quality of the site attracts and maintains new users (Sharma, 2013). Previous research shows that numerous aspects of website efficiency may be improved. Online impulsive buying is highly efficient (Turkyilmaz et al., 2015; Matharaarachchiet al., 2016; Akram et al., 2018). Usability and enjoyment seem to have the greatest influence on online impulsive purchases. Efficiencies of websites are defined by Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) as usability, website design, privacy, and customer service. To depict the physical world, Childers et al. (2001) developed a webmosphere. Aspects of website design such as "one-clicking" and pop-up windows are included. These applications assist boost online sales.

Both Turkyilmaz et al. (2015) and Prihantoro et al. (2018) found that perceived utility and ease of use of websites increase impulsive purchases. Wells et al. (2011) discovered that website quality influences consumer purchase behaviour (security, functional convenience, and visual appeal). Lo et al. (2016) found that one of the elements that encourage impulsive buying is the design of online retailers.

Store design influences purchase impulses (Lo et al., 2016). With 22 online design aspects to consider, buyers are encouraged to make impulse purchases while hygiene measures impact all other factors. The list goes on and on. Rezaei et al. (2016) imply favourable buying drives. They advocate power, excitement, genuineness, sophistication, and enjoyment on the web. Wadera and Sharma (2018) believe that the substance, selection, navigation convenience, and style of the website are significant factors of buying that stimulate users to browse and shop. According to Verhaegen and Dolen (2011), product attractiveness has a substantial positive and negative impact, whereas pleasure and online engagement have a high positive impact on impulsive buying.

The aforementioned discussion leads this study to formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: Website quality has significant influence on perceived enjoyment

### **2.1.3 Promotion**

According to Solomon et al. (2018), promotions are meant to encourage quick purchases and testing of a product, resulting in impulse purchases. Dholakia's demand stimulant model includes sales promotion as an external stimulus that can form a demand pulse if discovered on e-commerce websites (Dawson & Kim, 2009). According to Badgaiyan and Verma (2015), sales marketing might lead to impulsive purchases. Forgiveness might lead to shame over a squandered opportunity (Lo et al., 2016).

A promotional campaign is one-way advertisers may persuade purchasers to buy their items (Andreti et al., 2013). It is a way for marketers and producers to persuade people to buy (Alvarez & Casielles, 2005). According to Kotler (2005), marketing is the process of persuading clients to buy additional services for a product. It usually takes place over a lengthy period and has greater marketing aims. According to Andreti et al. (2013) sales marketing has influenced client purchasing decisions. The authors believe that marketers can boost consumer engagement and purchase intent by offering better prices and better service.

Researchers discovered the top way for motivating shoppers to buy on impulse (Shuleska, 2012; Lee & Tsai, 2014; Lo et al., 2015). Metilda and Kartika (2015) investigated the effects of sales marketing on hedonism and utilitarianism in purchase impulses. The study linked sales marketing to hedonic and utilitarian purchasers. Nonetheless, Chaharsoughi and Hamrad (2011) found no link between sales promotion and impulsive buying. Not every buyer is attracted by the deal, and every customer has preferences before purchasing. The conflicting outcomes of sales promotion for consumer purchases imply that additional study is required.

"A direct promotion that offers the eventual buyer with an extra advantage or incentive" (Haugh, 1983; Belch & Belch, 2003). Wierenga and Soethoudt (2010) state that a company should promote a certain product brand for a short time. D'Astous et al. (2003) and Alvarez et al (e.g. gifts). Shoppers love discounts, freebies, and coupons from online merchants (Dawson & Kim, 2009; Chen et al., 2012; Chiang-Kuo et al., 2017). For these reasons, sales promotion is thought to be beneficial to clients.

According to the above studies, the proposed hypotheses consider sales promotion as having a direct effect on online impulse buying behavior.

H3: Promotion has significant influence on perceived enjoyment

### **2.1.4 Perceived enjoyment**



Online impulsive purchases influenced reported satisfaction in the past (Kim, Fiore, & Lee, 2007; Parboteeah, Valacich, & Wells, 2009; Floh & Madlberger, 2013; Saad & Metawie, 2015). According to Fiore and Kelly (2007), visuals on an online shop's website are associated with perceived enjoyment and online impulse purchases. In a study by Hasima et al. (2020), consumers tend to buy on impulse when they are happy (perceived enjoyment) Various empirical research shows that subjective satisfaction is a frequent mediating element between determinants and online impulsive purchases. But these investigations have mostly been done in Europe and the Middle East. The authors recommended testing the influence of perceived enjoyment on online impulse purchases with a variety of respondents to enhance theory and add to empirical information.

Venkatesh (2000) defined perceived enjoyment as the degree to which the action of utilising a system is regarded to be delightful in and of itself, regardless of any performance repercussions. Consumers' existing experience of utilising cards, Internet, and Mobile on a single platform manifests their delight in adoption plans to utilise a single platform e-payment system. Researchers begin to recognise that an information system's enjoyment is as vital as its usability and utility (Blythe et al., 2004). Thus, customers' inclination to adopt the novelty of single platform e-payment system is determined by delight.

Some researchers identified a link between perceived enjoyment and online impulsive purchase. Sohail (2013) The pleasure of information technology and computer-mediated settings is a psychological experience that is both enjoyable and exploratory (Webster et al., 1993). For example, Venkatesh (2000) emphasised how delightful using a given application is separate from any impacts emerging from its use. Perceived delight is the pleasure one feels while purchasing online (Mohan et al, 2013). Positive impacts increase with buying pleasure. Consumers who like shopping are more likely to purchase spontaneously and benefit mentally.

Based on the past literature discussed above, a few hypotheses have been formulated:

H4: Perceived enjoyment has a significant influence on online impulse buying

H5: Perceived enjoyment mediates the relationships between the shopping environment, website quality, promotion, and online impulse buying

### 3.0 PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, consistent with the abovementioned literature reviews, a theoretical model specifies how the relationship between the antecedents is developed. Thus, the present study examines the relationship between shopping environment, website quality, promotion, and perceived enjoyment toward online impulse buying of apparel among consumers in Kota Kinabalu by using the S-O-R Theory.

### 3.1 PROPOSED THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

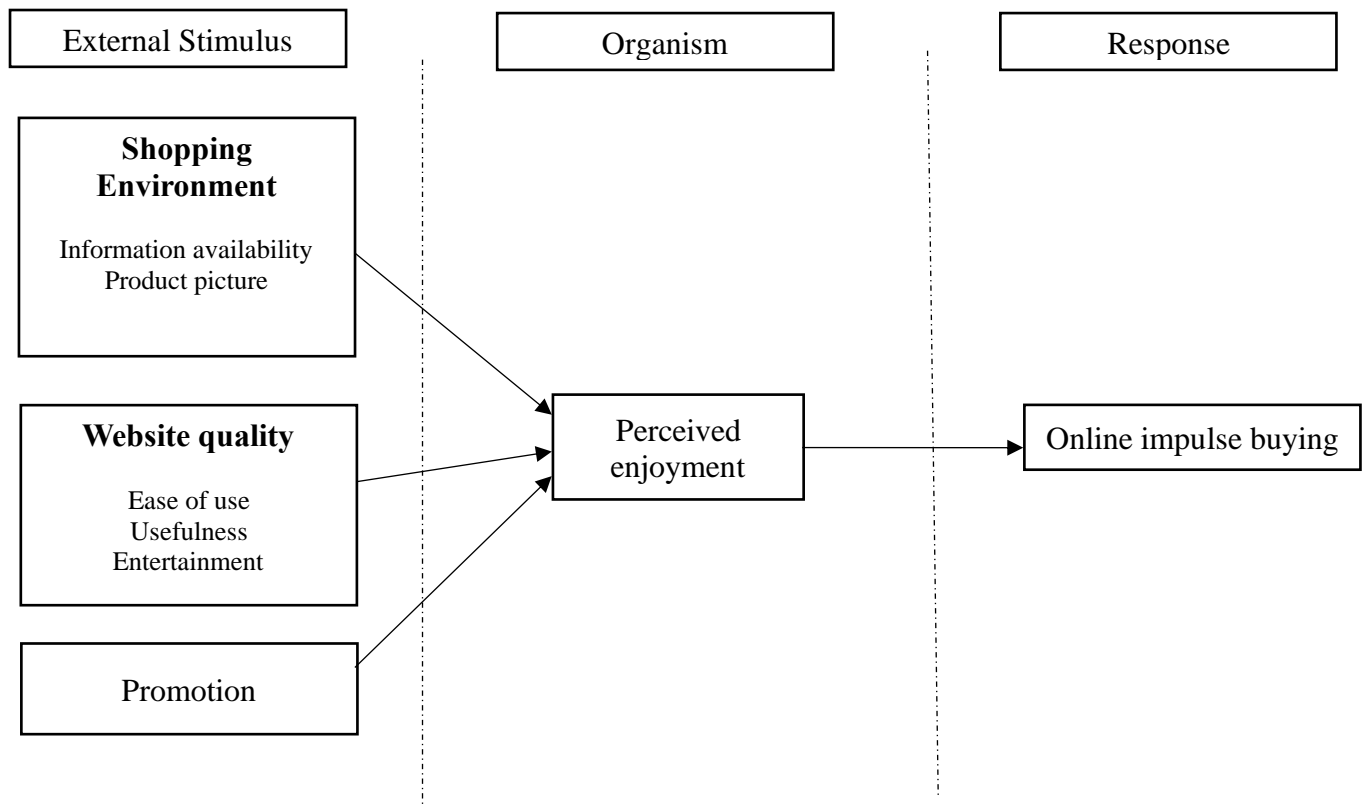


Figure 2: Proposed Theoretical Framework

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The study is conceptual and seeks to better understand the link between shopping environment, website quality, online impulsive buying, and subjective enjoyment as a mediator. The literature study suggests that there is a link between the antecedents. Using S-O-R theory, this conceptual investigation also identified antecedent relationships. This study will help researchers and marketers better understand online impulsive buying.

Online shopping is distinct from conventional shopping. Online shopping eliminates the time and location limits, allowing shoppers to explore and purchase 24 hours a day. Online sales marketing is the main impact on online shoppers. The more time individuals spend online, the more likely they are to make impulse purchases.

This article sends relevant messages to managers that the shopping environment, website quality, and promotion are one of the most important tools to influence buying impulsiveness and to have an impact on impulse buying online. Few studies had been done on the online shopping environment (Chen et al., 2016), sales promotion (Xu & Huang, 2014), and website quality (Lin & Lo, 2016). There is also extensive research on promotion, but primarily in the form of conventional marketing. There are also inconclusive findings on the relationship between promotion and impulse buying in the online context. For example, Chaharsoughi and Hamrad (2011) have reported that sales promotion is not directly influenced by online impulse buying. The writers have shown that not all consumers are

interested in the offer and they have their expectations when making a purchase. The mixed findings from sales promotion for customer purchasing indicate that more study into the role of sales promotion in consumer buying behaviour is needed. Thus, this could be a new study direction for future research in online impulse buying.

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# Social Media Influences Towards Consumer Eating Behaviour: A Systematic Review

Farah Khayrina Kamarudzaman<sup>1</sup>, Fathi Shahira Shamsul 'Anuar<sup>2</sup>, Izhar Hafifi Zainal Abidin<sup>3\*</sup>,  
Samsul Bahri Usman<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1234</sup>Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, UiTM Dungun Campus,  
23000 Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia

Email: <sup>1</sup>farahkhayrina99@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>fathishahira@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>izharhafifi@uitm.edu.my,  
<sup>4</sup>samsu271@uitm.edu.my

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

*Social media has become part of our norms, and almost everyone has at least one social media account. As a result, it became an avenue for companies, including food and beverage enterprises, to advertise their products as there were more viewers. Apart from marketing their products, messages spread through social media may also influence users' thinking and behaviour. This review investigates the role of social media in influencing consumer eating behaviour. Articles were searched through PubMed, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight using the search terms: social media, eating behaviours, consumer decision-making, and food advertisements. Eligible articles were selected for findings based on inclusion criteria. Of the 51 records, 16 studies met the inclusion criteria. The studies revealed two major findings: age has its connection with social influence, and youngsters, especially adolescents' eating behaviour, are heavily influenced by social media, especially in terms of unhealthy food promotions throughout all social media platforms. Restrictions on advertising unhealthy food content on social media should be legislated to prevent users from consuming more unhealthy food content. However, more study is needed to discover how social media affects consumer eating habits and the marketing strategies used by food and beverage firms to influence users since the techniques get more sophisticated every time.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Eating behaviour, Food advertisements, Consumer decision making

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this day and age, the term "social media" is no longer a foreign concept. Social media can be described as a digital communication tool, either web-based or via smartphone applications, that has developed into a platform for humans to interact with one another online by creating or sharing any content like images, videos, music, ideas, and commentary that they desire (Ventola, 2014). The pervasiveness of social media has had a tremendous impact on how humans communicate and is crucial to society and businesses (Dwivedi et al., 2018). Any content uploaded on online social media platforms can affect someone's behaviour, actions, and ways of thinking (Powell et al., 2018; Rageliene & Grønhøj, 2021). Even if the content appears trivial, it can change a person's mind over the content posted unconsciously. This development has led to social media being an avenue for advertisers to market their products and is an excellent approach to developing brand loyalty in a digital economy, mainly

because it allows direct regular communications with potential customers (Ziyadin et al., 2019). However, this has also had a negative impact altogether. Countless brands are marketing their products to an increasing number of consumers through social media platforms such as Instagram, which uses a high frequency of targeted and selected posts that control consumer emotions rather than convey information regarding their goods (Vassallo et al., 2018). In the food service sphere, the number of social media users advocating junk food and other low-nutrient energy-dense food and beverages outnumbered the number of posts promoting healthy nutrition. Any food and beverages posted and advertised online may entice these individuals to engage with the assigned element and modify it in real life. This exposure to food and drink advertising connects to a high intake of unhealthy diets (Gascoyne et al., 2021). In a study by Kucharczuk et al. (2022), social media may increase the risk of harmful health outcomes such as obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and even mental health issues, and children and adolescents are the primary victims (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019; Chung et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2022; Qutteina et al., 2022; Rageliene & Grønhøj, 2021).

This study systematically evaluates published literature to analyse the aspects of social media that affect users' eating behaviour. By understanding these attributes, a health-related goal, such as health interventions or public health campaigns, could be tailored more effectively to intervene in the destructive impacts of social media use. In addition, this study's findings will redound to society's benefits, considering that people are spending more time on social media platforms now than they did in the past.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 The review protocol**

This study is guided by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) review protocols. This method combines and analyses data from various studies on similar research topics to present findings (Ahn & Kang, 2018). A systematic approach is more likely to adhere to a pre-defined review protocol that helps protect against intentional or unintentional changes in scope during the review (Booth et al., 2021).

### **2.2 Systematic searching strategies**

This study gathered secondary data from searching through online databases: PubMed, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight. A full-text database was chosen instead of an indexing database, and specific databases were not included to avoid redundancy. Identifying potential literature is the first step in the data collection process. The following keywords: social media and eating behaviours, are developed based on the research questions and will be used in combinations using synonyms and related terms. Field code functions, phrase searching, truncation, and Boolean operators were just a few of the search functions used on these keyword combinations. Table 1 depicts the search string used in this initial stage.

**Table 1:** The search string

Database	Search String
Google Scholar	Phrase searching: Social media AND eating behavior/ behaviour, diet intake, consumer/ customer decision-making, food advertisement/ ads
ScienceDirect	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("Social media") AND ("eating behavio*" OR "eating disorder*" OR "diet intake" OR "food intake" OR "food pattern*" OR "food consumption" OR "food preference*"))
Pubmed	(social media) AND (eating behavi*) OR (eating disorder*) OR (diet intake) OR (food intake) OR (food pattern*) OR (food consumption) OR (food preference*) AND (2017:2022[pdat]) Filters: Full text, Systematic
Emerald Insight	Review, in the last 5 years ("social media") AND ("eating behavio*") OR ("food intake") OR ("eating disorder") OR ("diet intake")

Next, a screening process was conducted, automatically eliminating any unsuitable or irrelevant literature to the study. The first step in this process is to remove duplicates and redundancy. Here, title screening was carried out. Several selection criteria were developed, including the literature's reliability and whether it was well-written, carefully constructed, and insightful. The paper is considered well-written based on the author's credentials, the reliabilities of the publishers, and content. The author must have their paper's academic credentials, e-mail addresses, and institutional affiliation to check for eligibility. Basic information, such as the names of the editorial board members and the Editor-in-Chief, is required for publisher credentials and can be found on the journal's website (Radhika, 2018). Non-English papers were also excluded from this research paper. In addition, sources must have been published ranging from 2017 to 2022 in light of the idea of "research field maturity" stressed by Kraus et al. (2020). The fixed time frame was justified not because of the 'outdated' myth surrounding the scientific community but rather because of the maturity of the intended subject: social media. The amount of information that is readily available and accessible might easily overwhelm the review process. This practice also served to gain the recent discoveries in this matured field. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** The inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
<b>Document sources</b>	PubMed, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight	Academia, StuDo, IJSER, Coursehero and other fake journals websites
<b>Document types</b>	Article journals	News articles, books, reports, brochures
<b>Timeline</b>	2017 and above	Below 2017
<b>Language</b>	English	Non-English

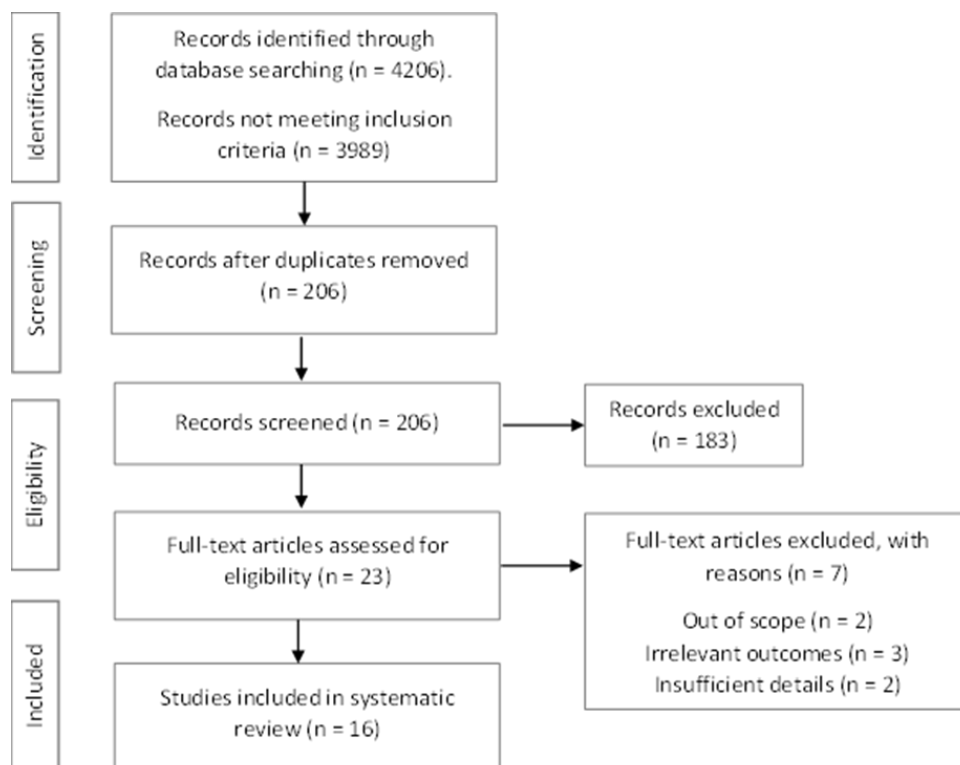
After that, the process of determining eligibility begins with the elimination of any duplicated papers. The retrieved literature was then manually assessed by reading its abstract to ensure that it was eligible before being evaluated by experts. According to Polanin et al. (2019), abstract screening enables the review team to narrow down a large number of identified studies to the citations that should be "full-text" screened and eventually included in the review. This process allows the review team to save time and ensure that only relevant studies are included in the review.

Researchers will then extract data from final papers in their separate approaches during the data extraction process. Following the completion of this step, the data will be

classified utilising iterative definitions to make the process of data analysis more organised and readable. The data are then examined and analysed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying themes and subthemes, and the researchers guarantee that there is little bias in the data analysis process by assessing correlations between the data.

### 3.0 FINDINGS

The four databases yielded 4206 records as a result of the literature search. Of the 4206 records retrieved, 3989 records did not meet the inclusion criteria, and 11 duplicates were removed thereafter. The remaining 206 records were later screened based on their titles and abstracts; 183 were eliminated, leaving 23 records. After reading the whole text, seven articles were judged to be ineligible due to several factors: two articles were out of context, three papers had irrelevant outcomes, and another two articles had sketchy details about social media influences on consumer eating behaviour. Figure 1's PRISMA flow diagram gives more information on the causes of exclusion. In the end, 16 manuscripts were accepted for evaluation.



**Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram**

Out of 16 selected articles, three were conducted in the United States, another three were from the United Kingdom, five were in Australia, three were carried out in Malaysia, and one was in each of these countries, notably Canada and Ireland. In terms of the years of publications, twelve editions were released in 2018, 2020, and 2021 respectively, three in 2019 and one in 2022. The results of the thematic analysis led to the development of three themes, which were as follows: social factor, user attributes, and functional factor. These characteristics of social media have been shown to impact user behaviour, explicitly eating behaviour in the context of this research. After conducting more research on the topics, the study was able to identify eleven sub-themes. Table 3 provides a concise summary of the detected overarching themes as well as the subthemes.



**Table 3:** Themes and sub-themes identified

Studies	Years	Region	Social Factor	User Attributes			Functional Factor		
			SI	UP	UE	UPE	A	TG	K
1. Chung et al.	2021	United States	/				/		
2. Coates et. al.	2019	United Kingdom	/				/	/	
3. Hawkins et al	2020	United Kingdom	/	/	/				
4. Saunders & Eaton	2018	United Kingdom	/		/	/			
5. Kucharczuk et al.	2022	United States	/				/	/	
6. Molenaar et al.	2021	Australia		/	/			/	
7. Baldwin et al.	2018	Australia	/		/		/	/	
8. Potvin Kent et al.	2019	Canada	/		/		/	/	
9. Rounsefell et al.	2019	Australia	/		/		/		
10. Murphy et al.	2020	Ireland	/				/	/	
11. Rummo et al.	2020	United States					/	/	
12. Pung et al.	2021	Malaysia	/				/		
13. Tan et al	2018	Malaysia	/				/	/	
14. Jaffery et al.	2020	Malaysia	/		/		/	/	
15. Gascoyne et al.	2021	Australia	/		/		/		
16. Lambert et al.	2018	Australia	/						/

Social factors	User Attributes	Functional Factors
SI : Social influence	UP : User perception U.E. : User experience  UPE : User personality	A : Age T.G : Type of goods . K : Knowledge

### **3.1 Social Factors**

The link between social media and food choices is determined by how individuals employ social media as a venue for information sharing or discourse around food. The vast majority of individuals use social media to discuss food consumption, dietary restrictions, and advice that may influence their eating habits with others. Therefore, how individuals use social media in their daily lives is crucial. Social media was the most widely reported source of knowledge (Lambert et al., 2018), and the prevalence of social media has increased people's propensity to remember unhealthy meals, and celebrity influence substantially affects dietary choices (Kucharczuk et al., 2022). Social norms and perceived social support may be underpinning peer influences related to the practice of eating. Peer groups and the type and degree of peer influence may shape one's relationship with food. Peer influence on eating behaviours may extend from in-person impact to social media influence (Chung et al., 2020). Popular social media influencer food promotion influences children's food consumption, and influencer marketing of harmful foods increases children's immediate food consumption, whereas equal marketing of healthier foods has no effect (Coates et al., 2019). In addition, Pung et al. (2021) claim that social media is so powerful that it can even influence health supplement intake and is the source of health supplement advice among Malaysian students. Furthermore, the portrayal of new behaviour patterns associated with overeating and weight gain has become a norm in social media; evidently, communicating these norms through social media impacts eating habits (Hawkins et al., 2021) and may have played a role in recent rises in obesity.

### **3.2 User Attributes**

The time spent on social media puts the users at risk of being exposed to unrealistic ideals of beauty, unhealthy food messages, and advertisements that unconsciously condition the viewers. Experiencing food commercials on social media increases the tendency of the users to engage in harmful eating behaviour, even if the users are aware of the negativity of such products (Molenaar et al., 2021). For instance, the consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages was substantially linked to watching food brand video material on YouTube, purchasing food online, and seeing favourite food brands advertised online (Baldwin et al., 2018). According to the findings presented here, Tan et al. (2018) discovered that YouTube is swamped with advertisements that promote non-core foods more than core foods and varied meals. In the same vein, the material found on other Social Networking Services (SNS) such as Instagram and Snapchat are mostly centred on a person's outward looks (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). These signals cause users to experience feelings of body dissatisfaction, weight worries, an over-evaluation of their shape and weight, binge eating, and emotional eating as compensatory behaviours to counterbalance the apparent weight gain from eating, dietary restriction, and low weight status. According to Rounsefell et al. (2019), prolonged exposure to information connected to images may have a detrimental effect on the body image of certain healthy young people and the dietary decisions they make. A considerable influence on these perceptions is exerted by the media's role in highlighting the good or destructive elements of people's behaviours. When it comes to healthy eating behaviour, according to Jaffery et al. (2020), the main positive drivers of attitudes toward fruit and vegetable eating among university students, for instance, significantly correlated with the number of likes, views, comments, and answers on YouTube. These factors were found to be the most influential. In addition, Molenaar et al. (2021) found that advertisements for commercial food used overt forms of persuasion. Young people are an ideal demographic to target with advertising that focuses on pleasure-seeking (taste), affordability, and convenience.

### 3.3 Functional Factors

A few researchers have only investigated age differences in healthy eating and belief about healthy eating. However, age also moderates the influence of the determinants on healthy eating. Murphy et al. (2020) found that young people in the study, who were adolescents, responded considerably more positively to unhealthy food promotion than non-food advertising. According to Potvin Kent et al. (2019), children were exposed to food marketing, and the majority of the exposures discovered promoted unhealthy goods such as fast food and sugar-sweetened beverages. Furthermore, food and sugary drink companies have millions of adolescent social media followers (Rummo et al., 2020). Promoting energy-dense and nutrient-poor (EDNP) food and beverages through social media is well documented as a successful campaign in marketing case studies. Social media platforms are ideal for food and beverage companies to engage with young people. Common techniques used to engage children and adolescents with these unhealthy food and beverage brands included flash animation, music, and games. A high intake of unhealthy drinks was linked to exposure to food and drink advertisements on social media, whereas involvement with such marketing was linked to high consumption of both unhealthy food and unhealthy drinks (Gascoyne et al., 2021). Food and beverage advertising influences children's product preferences, requests, and diet. Although the food and beverage sector has vowed to self-regulate its marketing to children, this has not resulted in a major increase in promoting healthier foods. In conclusion, more than 80% of the studies involved in this review have reached a consensus where those minors, children, and adolescent, have been proven to be the most vulnerable section of the population to the damaging effects of social media.

### 4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate social media aspects that affect consumer eating habits. Social media can be incorporated into practically every part of people's lives, from social networking to buying products and services to starting a business and getting health and nutrition advice. Most people on social media are likely to receive at least some nutrition, eating habits, and body image messages from the accounts they follow on any social media platform. The results in Table 3 show that all these three factors were connected. Most papers concluded that social influence and age under the category of functional factors became the major influence on user behaviours on social media. Age is associated with social influence, and youngsters, especially adolescents' eating behaviour, are heavily influenced by social media regarding unhealthy food promotions.

Behavioural psychology commonly establishes that when humans are exposed to "social norm messages," they are influenced to imitate such behaviours as closely as possible. In other words, people will aim to acquire eating patterns resembling socially accepted or anticipated standards. Food photos shared on social media may reflect a lifestyle that teenagers admire or desire to promote. Because of viral transmission of poor eating behaviours, social media contagion may have mental health consequences, adding to distinct social norms that affect anxiety levels. Social media involvement or exposure to image-related content was linked to higher body dissatisfaction, dieting or restricting food or overeating, or healthier food choices, according to Rounsefell et al. (2019). Young adults exposed to idyllic images (celebrities, peers, fitness) or negative social media behaviours (negative body talk, seeking reassurance, engaging in appearance-related comparisons, or self-objectification) may be more prone to negative body images and food choice results.

Body shape and size have little to no impact on health, and it has long been recognised that attractiveness is a subjective concept. Users' feeds are overwhelmed with images of bodies that appear to meet the culturally acceptable ideal, resulting in low self-esteem, guilt, and a desire to control their diet to reduce weight, gain weight, or gain muscle. Disordered eating is often misdiagnosed or disguised as healthy or disciplined eating habits due to this way of thinking. According to Saunders and Eaton (2018), social media participation, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, indirectly increases body dissatisfaction and disordered

eating behaviours among young women. Users of Instagram and Snapchat who had an overall negative experience were more likely to engage in body surveillance and upward appearance-related comparison. There were very high connections between body dissatisfaction and binge eating, purging, and cognitive constraint across all three platforms. These actions place a person at the highest risk of having a clinical eating disorder.

It is a sensitive subject to discuss the impact of advertisements and paid promotions on social media. By definition, for-profit advertisements are intended to provoke a response from users that will lead to a purchase. On social media, unhealthy food and beverage brands, particularly fast food and sugary drink firms, have millions of adolescent followers (Rummo et al., 2020). The high number of adolescent followers is alarming because advertising is linked to higher consumption of fast food, sugary drinks, and salty snacks. Adolescent followers are "opting in" to increased food and beverage ad exposure, perhaps increasing their risk of bad dietary decisions due to ad exposure.

In addition, unhealthy brands have more adolescent followers than healthy brands, and because social media advertisements blur the line between entertainment and advertising, adolescents may be more susceptible to this form of marketing. According to Tan et al. (2018), the presence of unhealthy food advertising on YouTube can hold the attention of youngsters. Due to the range of accessible advertising formats, unhealthy foods were marketed to children more aggressively than other foods. Exposure to information that emphasises unhealthy meals and beverages promotes unhealthy behaviour. In addition, marketing corporations utilise pictures of family-friendly events to peddle harmful foods. Due to the typically unregulated nature of internet marketing channels, this widely distributed information can significantly influence eating habits and may be viewed as manipulative by public health specialists.

According to Baldwin et al. (2018), Coates et al. (2019), Potvin Kent et al. (2019), and Pung et al. (2021), children who connect with food brands more frequently, especially through internet videos, are more likely to eat unhealthy foods and beverages. Children who buy food online may wind up being online for longer periods, being subjected to increased marketing, or ordering unhealthy takeaway meals for themselves and the rest of their families. Exposure to food marketing with a food cue would have similar effects for unhealthy cues but not healthy ones. Children have a greater propensity to spend more time on social media sites, implying that they will be subjected to more influencer marketing on food. Furthermore, on social media platforms, children and teenagers are exposed to harmful food and beverage marketing, which comes from various sources, including commercials, user-generated and celebrity-generated content, and other entertainment content. Adolescents were more likely than children to be exposed to food marketing on social media platforms. Adolescents were not only more likely than children to be exposed to food marketing, but they also watched more food marketing videos on average. A proportion of students aged 12–17 reported a high unhealthy food and drink intake by frequency of exposure to and involvement with food or drink advertising on social media, according to a study by Pung et al. (2021). A higher frequency of liking or sharing food or drink posts on social media was linked to a higher likelihood of consuming unhealthy foods and beverages.

The food industry targets children in various ways, including television, the Internet, online games, sports or concert sponsorships, children's apps, apparel, branded toys, and fast-food toy giveaways, to name a few. Children's dietary tastes can be influenced by unhealthy meals and food brands that are aggressively advertised to them for the rest of their lives. According to Kurcharczuk et al. (2022), social media may impact adolescents' dietary choices. Adolescents were better able to recall unhealthy foods, beverages, brands, and favourite products advertised by celebrities or influencers. If teens choose these foods and consume low-nutrition goods regularly, these impacts may increase health risks. Aside from that, whether assessed by attention, recall, favourable peer judgement, or probability to 'share,' young people's responses to unhealthy food advertising were much stronger than their responses to healthy and non-food posts (Murphy et al., 2020). Adolescents spent more time watching unhealthy food commercials and remembered unhealthy food brands.

Social media platforms' complexity, richness, and ever-changing nature affect users' eating behaviours and perceptions of their bodies. The health, nutrition, and wellness businesses have found a home on social media because of the growing need for easily digestible and actionable information, ideas, guidance, and services that may help people make positive changes to their lifestyles that are beneficial to their health. The unfortunate reality is that most mainstream health and nutrition advice shared on social media has adverse effects on people's health and well-being over the long run, even though it was likely intended to do quite the opposite. Parents should keep an eye on their children's social media activity and the information they are exposed to because of the profound influence these platforms may have on developing minds. The healthcare industry is responsible for educating the public about the negative effects of social media exposure on eating habits. Users can be deterred from consuming more unhealthy content by making it illegal to promote such stuff on social media platforms. To guarantee their material is beneficial to their followers' mental and physical health, social influencers must keep a few things in mind. First, social influencers need to develop trusting relationships with their followers if they want to persuade them to adopt positive lifestyle changes, such as eating more healthily. Increasing people's food intake will require novel strategies to promote the intake of fruits and vegetables. Due to their prominence among their intended audience, social influencers present a golden opportunity for health promotion campaigns. More study is required to understand how social media affects consumer eating habits and how food and beverage firms utilise marketing to sway consumers. Still, we cannot ignore how social media may fan the flames of food shaming and restriction, which can cause humiliation, trauma, and an eating disorder.

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# Consumers' *Halal* Products Purchase: An Integration of TPB

Farah Lina Azizan<sup>1</sup>, Zulaiha Ahmad\*, Noor Afzainiza Afendi

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis,  
02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>School of International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Email <sup>1</sup>farahlina@uitm.edu.my, <sup>2</sup>zulaiha895@uitm.edu.my, <sup>3</sup>afzainiza@uum.edu.my

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

*Halal* products are becoming increasingly popular among consumers around the world, especially among Muslims. Muslim consumers are looking for a product that is fitted to their religious and society's needs. Thus, this study aims to examine the factors affecting consumers' *halal* products grounded by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), including consumer attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and trust towards purchase intention. This study involved 261 Muslim consumers in the Northern region of Malaysia using a simple random sampling technique. A path model that fitted properly in the analysis was used,  $\chi^2 = 543.14$ ; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.908; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.908; root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = 0.068. Path analysis of the structural model indicated a positive significant statistical relationship between consumer attitudes, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and trust with purchase intention.

**Keywords:** *Purchase Intention, Trust, Consumer Attitudes, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioral Control*

## 1.0 Introduction

*Halal* food is described by the Malaysia Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) as food that is free of any illegal elements and does not contain any parts of animals that Islam forbids. *Halal* food also refers to the methods used to prepare the food, such as slaughtering, freezing, and displaying it. In other words, it is related to religious passion and perceptions that are safer, healthier, and more nutritious (Khalek, 2014). The opposite of *halal* is *haram* or non-*halal*, which means forbidden and prohibited. In contrast, the term *syubhah* refers to any product that does not fall within the *halal* or *haram* categories, or in other words, when it is unclear if the food is *haram* or *halal*. Consumption of *syubhah* foods should be avoided until the status is clarified (Azmi et al., 2018).

Muslim consumers have become more aware of *halal* criteria and have become more receptive to them. They started enquiring and avoiding foods not certified as *halal* (Rizkitysha & Hananto, 2020). However, according to Akram (2022), if consumers are unable to find the *halal* symbol, they can read the ingredients to determine the *halal*-ness of the product to be consumed. Most supermarkets began to include and reach out to this growing society that is unmistakably defined by faith. As a result, retailers are more aware of changing needs of Muslim consumers and are committed to meeting their demands. Besides, the mission of the



organization is to recognize and address the needs of Muslim consumers. This will assist them in getting a deeper understanding and planning on doing business to achieve a vital competitive advantage (Shahabuddin et al., 2020).

In this regard, the researchers intend to conduct a study on Muslim consumers on *halal* product purchases, especially in Malaysia. After all, Malaysia's *halal* market participation is still insufficient compared to neighbouring countries such as Thailand, which is emerging as a regional *halal* centre (Hamzah et al., 2020). In addition, the Muslim consumer is a rapidly expanding market, owing to religious convictions about *halal* and the adoption of the *halal* concept through the process of assimilation into the global community.

Supermarkets, hypermarkets, and retailers would satisfy real customers' needs and desires by knowing their buying intentions, resulting in customer satisfaction (Haro, 2016). It is common knowledge that satisfied consumers are more likely to repeat their purchases, or in other words, patronise the supermarket, which is one of the company's goals to create long-term profit and acquire a competitive advantage over its competitors. At this level, this research will delve into several factors such as customer attitudes, customer subjective norms and, perceived behavioural control, as well as how it influences purchase intentions among Muslim consumers. Looking at the scenario, the researchers will examine the consumer's *halal* product purchase intention underlying the theory of TPB (Theory of Planned Behaviour).

Aside from the mentioned above, one of the most influencing elements that have a significant impact on consumer *halal* goods purchases is trust. Lack of trust has been identified as one of the primary factors preventing consumers from purchasing *halal* products (Azmi et al., 2018). No transaction can be executed unless the trust is built (Rahman et al., 2021). Ha and Nguyen (2019) indicated that trust is a central factor in the relationship of exchange nature and significantly impacts online and traditional shopping. Therefore, this study will integrate TPB with trust to research Malaysian consumers.

The objective of this paper is to review and analyse the association of consumer attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and trust with consumer purchase intention towards *halal* products by offering an integrative structural model, and its implication and to suggest directions for future research. It is posted that a broader view of consumers' *halal* products purchase is needed to develop an empirical structural model; therefore, this paper will attempt:

1. To develop the relationship between the constructs, particularly in marketing research; and
2. To develop a structural model of Malaysian consumers' *halal* products purchase. Implications exist for both researchers and practitioners alike.

The rest of the paper is organized into three main parts. First, the constructs are defined, and their association is discussed. Second, the hypothesis of the model is tested via quantitative study. Third, the paper concludes with several incisive implications and recommendations.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour**

Ajzen (2011) developed TPB that was based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which was previously developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) by adding a new factor of "Perceived Behavioural Control" into TRA. Perceived Behavioural Control represented the ease or complexity of carrying out behaviour dependent on resources and opportunities available to carry out such behaviour (Ajzen, 2011). Based on TPB, factors that influence consumers' behavioural intentions were attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. TPB has been widely accepted and used in research to predict individuals' purchase intentions and personal behaviour. Furthermore, empirical studies have shown the model's suitability for analysing consumer behaviour in the context of this research (Elseidi, 2018). Ha

and Nguyen (2019) compared the TRA and TPB models, showing that TPB could better describe customer behaviour than TRA.

TPB was created to forecast actions that are entirely out of a person's control. This theory is based on the concept that people are logical beings who use information in the most efficient way possible. Before choosing whether to engage in specific behaviours, people consider the effects of their choices. TPB starts by examining the purpose to act as the most immediate antecedent of behaviour. It is thought that a person will be more successful at exhibiting a particular action if his purpose to do so is greater. The intention is a function of beliefs and/or significant facts regarding the propensity that engaging in a particular behaviour will result in a particular outcome. With time, intentions might change. The likelihood of an intention changes increases with the distance between it and actions (Ajzen, 2015). This idea suggests a framework for measuring how human behaviour is controlled. Given that the behaviour is deliberate, it anticipates its occurrence. Because behaviour may be thought about and planned, the planned behaviour theory predicts deliberate activity (Ajzen, 2015).

This theory has a few objectives and advantages, among them the ability to anticipate and comprehend motivating influences on activities that are not determined by the individual's own choice or control. It identifies where and how to focus behaviour modification methods while also providing explanations for some key aspects of human behaviour. This theory offers a framework for examining attitudes about behaviour (Ajzen, 2015). According to this notion, a person's intention to act is what determines their action the most. The intention of a person to exhibit a behaviour is a result of both their attitude toward doing so and their perception of appropriate behaviour. Beliefs about a behaviour, evaluation of behaviour results, subjective norms, normative beliefs, and compliance motivation are examples of individual attitudes toward conduct (Ajzen, 2015).

## 2.2 Purchase Intention

The consumer's inclination to purchase the good or service is known as their purchase intention. In other words, buying intention also includes the consumer's decision to buy a product following evaluation. The final selection is dependent on the consumer's purpose with significant external influences, and many elements influence the consumer's intention while selecting the product (Keller, 2001). The group influences the decision-making process when choosing a brand for well-known products. The consumer's anticipated purchases to meet future requirements and wants are represented by their intention to purchase (Blackwell & Branke, 2006). Nevertheless, unforeseeable events may lead consumers' goals to shift. Therefore, businesses must work proactively to guarantee that consumers have a favourable perception of their goods and services (Naseri, 2021).

## 2.3 Consumer Attitudes

The desire to purchase *halal* commences before the actual purchase. The intention reflects future action. Attitude, in theory, has a direct association with purchase intent behaviour. Attitude evaluation refers to assessing a specific activity involving the attitude object, such as purchasing a product (Blackwell & Branke, 2006). Garg and Joshi (2018) discovered a favourable and robust association between attitudes and intentions to purchase *halal* items. The TPB model may explain 29.1 percent of the difference in intentions to buy *halal* goods based on their findings. Because people with favourable attitudes are more likely to buy *halal* products, attitude is regarded to be a crucial element in influencing customer intention to purchase *halal* items.

The concept of attitude has long been seen to be crucial in comprehending human conduct. Wicker (1969) defined attitude as an individual's level of affection for a specific thing or a willingness to respond to certain stimuli. The importance of trust as a factor of an individual's attitude or purchase intention has been underlined in the previous study by

Masithoh and Widikusyanto (2017) pointed out that one of the most essential aspects influencing attitude is trust. Despite empirical and theoretical evidence, the literature has long overlooked the importance of trust, but academics are increasingly interested in developing linkages between consumer attitudes and trust (Dumay et al., 2019).

Besides, trust is a decisive factor in generating positive or favourable sentiments, resulting in brand commitment as the ultimate representation of a successful relationship between the brand and the consumer (Mandili et al., 2022). Furthermore, the desire to engage in recurrent transactions including m-commerce could be influenced by trust leading to favourable views (Wang et al., 2020). Customers build a good or negative picture of a firm based on their interactions with it, and a positive brand image promotes consumer trust by lowering purchase risk (Zhang & Li, 2019). Consumer behaviour can be predicted by brand attitude, which is generated through emotional responses. Emotional responses to a brand (e.g., enthusiasm, attitude, and positive answers/assessments for a brand) are compounded and transformed into brand love (Iqbal et al., 2021). This creates a framework through which the customer's brand attitude is translated into recognition, emotions, and behaviour. As a result, a positive attitude can help clients create trust and affection for a company.

## **2.4 Subjective Norm**

Perceptions and subjective norms play a key part in reaching the desired effect, and various consumers hold various ideas about *halal* foods (Elseidi, 2018). The subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure that influences customers' decisions to buy *halal* food (Bhuttow et al., 2022). Pradana et al. (2020) discovered that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived control all play a role in the intention to consume *halal* meat in a study on attitudes regarding *halal* meat shopping in France. According to Haque et al. (2019), subjective norms play a role in shaping intention. The most important driver of intention to choose *halal* foods was revealed to be subjective norms. Subjective norms are prominent in Malaysia, with family members, co-workers, and colleagues functioning as major reference points.

Situation parameters can alternatively be thought of as subjective norms according to Shahabuddin et al. (2020) or the felt social pressure to do something. They are a function of the individual's motivation to comply with the essential others and their ideas about whether they should engage in the conduct. They are also unique to the circumstances and behaviour in the issue. Subjective norms have been significantly absent from discussions of trust, except for Ali et al. (2018), who emphasized the relevance of norms in a model of national culture and the formation of trust. Subjective norms of cooperation are likely to have an impact on the establishment of trust. Cooperation is necessary for building trust, as previously said, and the concept of subjective norms involves the effect of what significant others believe is appropriate behaviour in a situational environment. Specific to the demonstrated connections between attitude, intention, and behaviour, it is logical to anticipate that this impact will also extend to what a person considers to be an appropriate attitude in a given scenario (Hidayati et al., 2020). The perception of the other person's actions has a role in the building of trust. There will be direct proof as to whether the trustee should or should not be trusted after the trustor has watched the trustee's actions due to some contact. As a result, after just one trial, there will be personal evidence of the trustee's dependability. As a result, subjective norms will become less important, and the trustee's action will have the most impact on the future development of trust.

## **2.5 Perceived Behavioural Control**

Perceived behavioural control is defined by an individual's beliefs about the power of both situational and internal factors to enable the performance of the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). According to Haro (2015), their findings indicated that perceived behavioural control influenced purchase intention of buying *halal* food in Malaysia. In contrast, Nurhayati and Hendar (2020) found that perceived behavioural control is still an important predictor that influences intention. Their finding also claimed that perceived behavioural control has a

positive relationship and a more significant impact on the control in explaining variability in behaviour. It is determined by the individual's assumptions about the ability of both external and internal influences to facilitate the behaviour's efficiency. The greater the individual's sense of control over making *halal* product purchases, the more likely they are to do so.

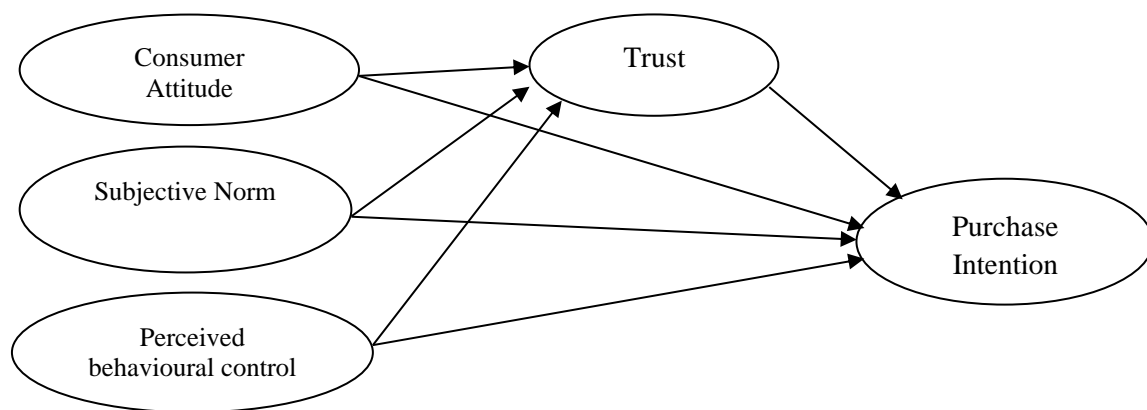
The key distinction between trust and social control is that trust is concerned with behaviour expectations, whereas control is a tool for influencing behaviour. Because trust and behavioural control are founded on partner contact and the formation of shared norms and values, they are different and can alter independently of one another (Zhang & Li, 2019). The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) includes a component called perceived behavioural control (PBC) (Ajzen, 2011). PBC is defined as an individual's assessment of having the internal competence to exert external control to do a specific activity. It has been shown to influence purchase intentions (Casais & Faria, 2021). In a way, customers justify their decisions, perceived behavioural control has the potential to establish trust (Ali et al., 2018).

## 2.6 Trust

Ha and Nguyen (2019) stated that trust is a vital element in developing a strong and long-term relationship between organizations and their consumers. In the case of food goods, trust is a possible important factor in consumer purchasing intentions, particularly for *halal* food, because the Muslim customer values the authenticity of *halal* food the highest (Ali et al., 2018). According to Shahzad et al. (2020), this authenticity has two parameters: is the vendor a Muslim, and is the product *halal*? Furthermore, if a merchant is a Muslim, there is a faith that the product will be *Halal* if it is not, faith in *halal* authenticity is only based on product guarantee. Ali et al. (2018) have claimed that the *halal* label/logo will be crucial in this case. When purchasing *halal* food, Muslim consumers in Malaysia place high importance on trust and confidence. They also wanted to know if the food is *halal*, if the selling point is *halal*, and if the *halal* label/logo persuades and transmits to the customer that the meal is *halal*. In addition, Rahman et al. (2021) discovered that Muslim Malaysians identify the *halal* emblem with food purity, followed by safety and cleanliness. Ali et al. (2018) discovered that in the case of low faith in *halal* items, behavioural buying intentions are predicted.

Figure 1 shows the theoretical framework of this study. Estimates for the structural model of Malaysian consumers' *halal* products purchase were based on seven hypotheses:

- H1: There is a significant relationship between consumer attitudes and trust
- H2: There is a significant relationship between consumer attitudes and purchase intention
- H3: There is a significant relationship between subjective norm and trust
- H4: There is a significant relationship between subjective norm and purchase intention
- H5: There is a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and trust
- H6: There is a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and purchase intention
- H7: There is a significant relationship between trust and purchase intention



**Figure 1** Theoretical Framework

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

To meet the study's objectives, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to Muslim consumers in Malaysia's northern region. The research employed a systematic sampling technique in which every fifth customer leaving a *halal* food store was chosen to collect data. Since this study aims to understand the factors influencing *halal* food purchasing intention, all the respondents were *halal* food buyers. The criteria of respondents include 18 years and above and are involved with purchasing food decisions within the household. The questionnaires were distributed to 300, but only 261 questionnaires were usable, with a response rate of 87 percent. It shows appropriate statistical reliability and is suitable to perform using SEM-AMOS.

For the study instruments, "Purchase Intention" consists of seven items adopted by Abdul (2010). The reliability instrument was  $\alpha = .900$ . "Consumer Attitude" consists of the five items that were adapted from (Lada et al., 2009). This instrument obtained a reliability of  $\alpha = .923$ , which is acceptable. "Subjective Norms" consists of the seven items that were adapted from George (2004). The internal consistency of the instrument was  $\alpha = .848$ . "Perceived Behaviour Control" consists of the five items that were adapted from George (2004). The reliability of this scale was  $\alpha = .914$ . Trust was measured by an inherited scale (McKnight et al., 2002). This instrument obtained a reliability of  $\alpha = .865$ , which is acceptable. The scale using a 5-point Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The data was analysed using SPSS version 22.0 and AMOS version 23.0. The structural model was developed to verify the associations between the variables involved in the structural equation on the consumers' *halal* products purchase in Malaysia. According to Hair et al. (2010), this approach has a few advantages it manages to test the measurement model and structural model concurrently. The measurement model was conducted through confirmatory factor analysis to verify the measurement scale for each construct. After conducting the analysis, all the variables that meet this analysis were applied to structural model analysis to determine the relationship between the endogenous variable and exogenous variable in this study. Thus, path models are created using four observable variables to establish indicators (Figure 2).

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Data analysis

The measurement model and structural model were computed simultaneously using AMOS 23.0 and a correlation matrix with maximum likelihood. The measurement model evaluated how latent variables (such as consumer attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, trust, and purchase intention) were measured for the observed indicators (X and Y variables). Cronbach's alpha was used to determine inter-item dependability. To test the hypotheses, the structural model used the causal links between these latent variables (see Figure 2). Chi-square (2), the goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), and root mean squared residual was used to evaluate the model's overall fit (RMR).

### 4.2 Measurement and structural models

AMOS 23.0 was used to simultaneously estimate structural and measurement models. The proposed model examined the four latent variables for causal relationships. In the structural model presented in Figure 1, there are four exogenous variables. (Variables X) – Consumer Attitudes ( $\xi$  1), Subjective Norm ( $\xi$  2), Perceived Behavioural Control ( $\xi$  3), Trust ( $\xi$  4) – and one endogenous variable (Y variables) – Purchase Intention ( $\eta$ ).

### 4.3 Measurement model

All observed indicators were set free by normalising all exogenous and endogenous latent variables to test the measurement model. The magnitude of the coefficient matrix (s or s) for latent variables on one observable indicator that was arbitrarily picked as a referent for the latent variables was used in this technique. Three observed X variables (X1-X3) for consumer attitude, three observed X variables for subjective norm (X4-X6), and three observed X variables for perceived behavioural control were included in the estimated measurement model. (X7-X9). There are five observed Y variables for trust (Y1-Y5) and observed variables for purchase intention (Y6-Y9). The factor loading coefficients (ij) on the latent components ranged from 0.77 to 0.93 (p 0.001). The latent variable reliability ranged from 0.90 to 0.94, indicating that the measurement model was valid and reliable.

### 4.4 Structural Model

The model is comprised of 18 items, each of which identifies one of the five elements. The covariance among the variables is utilised for model testing. The goodness-of-fit indices show that this model adequately matches the data. Figure 1 illustrates the goodness-of-fit statistics for each hypothesised path. It denotes that the overarching structural model under consideration has been accepted. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.91, the Tucker-Lewis index is 0.96, and the Goodness of Fit (GFI) is 0.90, all of which are acceptable within the parameters for showing a good fit (Hair et al., 2010). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.068, which was satisfactory. In addition to these findings, the chi-square ratio index (1.74) is determined to match academic standards (McIver & Carmines, 1981). Furthermore, most path coefficients are significant (P.05). As a result, the final model shown in Figure 1 was thought to be a good fit for testing the assumptions.

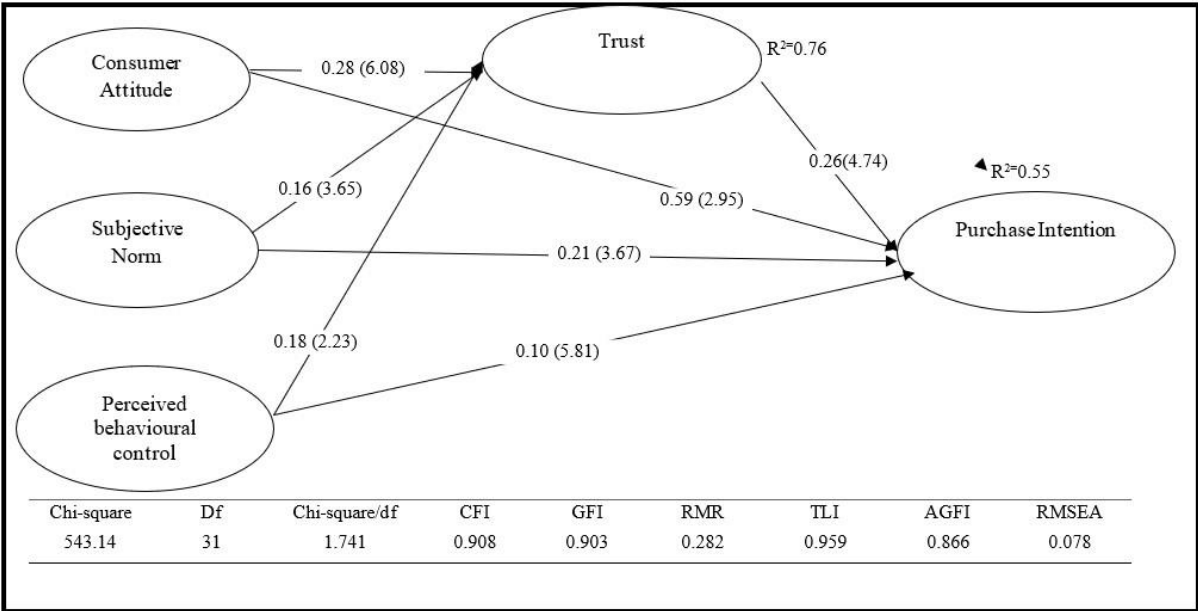


Figure 2 Structural model

#### 4.5 Hypothesis Results

##### 4.5.1 Consumer Attitudes

Consumer Attitudes had a positive causal effect on trust ( $\gamma = 0.28$ , t-value = 6.08) and purchase intention ( $\gamma = 0.59$ , t-value = 4.74). Consumers with high attitudes were more likely to have a purchase intention of *halal* products. This finding supported H1 and H2 and suggested consumer attitudes can increase trust and purchase intention on *halal* products. This is confirmed in previous studies by Ali et al. (2018). Consumer intention to purchase *halal* products seems to be influenced by attitude, as those with high positive attitudes tended to have greater intentions to purchase *halal* products. Social pressure can compensate for highly favourable attitudes in such a culture by instilling intentions to purchase *halal* products. The individual's positive or negative feelings about performing an action are referred to as attitude.

##### 4.5.2 Subjective Norm

Subjective Norm had a direct significant effect on trust ( $\gamma = 0.16$ , t-value = 3.65) and purchase intention ( $\gamma = 0.21$ , t-value = 3.67). Consumers with eager subjective norms were more likely to influence their intention to purchase *halal* foods. This finding supported H3 and H4 and suggested that SN encourages consumers' *halal* product trust and purchase. The research found that subjective norm was positively and significantly linked to intention (Suleman et al., 2021). Other studies, such as Kumar (2019), have also found subjective norms to be significant. The subjective norm is an individual's assessment of whether significant people in his or her life believe the action should be carried out.

##### 4.5.3 Perceived Behavioural Control

There was a significant direct effect of Perceived Behavioural Control on trust and purchase intention. This result supported the notion that perceived behavioural control among Muslim consumers is a form of cultivating their purchase intention on *halal* products. Thus, H5 and H6 were supported as the parameter estimates are significant ( $\gamma = 0.18$ , t-value = 2.23) and ( $\gamma = 0.10$ , t-value = 5.81). People in collectivist societies, such as Muslim culture, prefer to regard themselves as interconnected with their community and strive for collective goals rather than individual ones (Suleman et al., 2021). This is in line with the findings of this study, which suggest that subjective standards have a considerable impact on consumer purchasing

intentions, especially in Malaysia, a collectivist country. The link is upbeat, implying that a stronger role for regulation in explaining behavioural variation is not uncommon.

#### 4.5.4 Trust

Finally, we also found a significant effect on trust and purchase intention ( $\gamma = 0.26$ ,  $t\text{-value} = -4.74$ ); thus, H7 was accepted. This is consistent with findings from previous research (Rahman et al., 2021), which found a positive link between trust and purchase intention. It shows that Muslims with high trust levels in *Halal* products will have the propensity to purchase *Halal* products based on their religious prescriptions.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of this study was adding a new factor of trust by underlying the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The results showed that consumer *halal* products purchase have been influenced by consumer attitudes, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and trust. Several past studies have found that attitude has a significant direct relationship with purchase intention (e.g., Dumay et al., 2019; Garg & Joshi, 2018; Iqbal et al., 2021). Because those with high levels of positivity tended to have stronger intentions to acquire *Halal* goods, attitude is a significant element in determining consumer intention to buy *Halal* goods. High favourable sentiments may be offset by social pressure in fostering intent to buy *halal* products in this culture. The research discovered that subjective norm was positively and significantly associated with intention, supporting the findings of the study by (Haque et al., 2019). A person's perception of the subjective norm is whether they believe that the behaviour should be carried out by others who are significant to them. The outcome demonstrates that perceived behavioural control and purchase intention have a favourable association. People in collectivistic societies, like the Muslim culture, often see themselves as connected with their group and prioritise communal aims over individual ones (Casais & Faria, 2021). This is consistent with the study's results that subjective standards play a significant role in determining customers' purchasing intentions, particularly in Malaysia, a collectivistic nation.

Apart from that, the study also indicates that consumer attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control positively influence consumer trust in choosing *halal* products. The findings are consistent with the findings from (Salleh and Harun, 2021; Rahman et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2018; Zakaria et al., 2015). All of them discovered that *halal* brand personality, *halal* food knowledge, consumer knowledge about an ingredient used, *halal* logo, and religious knowledge can be the priority factor highlighted by Malaysian Muslims before they have the intention to purchase *halal* food products. This could be because consumers who are confident regarding food labelling and information on ingredients used in making the food product consistent with their beliefs concerning the safety and *halal*-ness of food products will be likely to rely on their positive and strong attitudes. Additionally, the findings also show that subjective norms play a significant role in building a level of trust when purchasing *halal* product.

A study conducted by Elseidi (2018) among Arabian Muslims revealed that consumers with less confidence in the *halal*-ness of a food product would be more likely to rely on the opinions of other people in their lives. Moreover, the main distinction between social control and trust is that control is a technique for influencing behaviour, whereas trust is concerned with behaviour expectations. They are distinct from one another and can change independently of one another since trust and behavioural control are based on partner contact and the development of shared norms and values. In conclusion, Muslims with high trust levels always have the motivation to comply with their Islamic teaching (Ali et al., 2018) since they are obliged to adhere to the principles and legislation of Islam (Zakaria et al., 2015). Moreover, Ali et al., (2018) also conclude consumers with lower trust levels will depend on individual factors such as attitude and perceived behavioural control rather than motivation when dealing with *halal* purchase intention.



The findings also revealed that customer trust is a key component that substantially impacts their inclination to purchase *halal* items (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020). As a result, retailers must create consumer trust to improve such intentions. Building effective consumer-product partnerships require trust (Ali et al., 2017). The trust element may be even more crucial for *halal* foods than for ordinary foods due to religious considerations (Ali et al., 2017). Herjanto and Amin (2020) suggest that developing confidence is especially important when there is a lot of ambiguity and risk, and product guarantees aren't always available. As a result, customer trust in *halal* food is a delicate problem, as customers are unable to determine whether a food item is *halal* or *haram*. *Halal* food certifying agencies and their ultimate sellers have a huge impact on customer views and subsequent behaviour due to the importance of confidence in *halal* meals (Ali et al., 2017).

The study's findings have beneficial ramifications for both marketers and producers of *Halal* cuisine. Marketers must first realise that *Halal* food marketing campaigns must be created in a way that affects consumers' personal and societal perceptions as well as their religious beliefs. Manufacturers should be aware that consumers are informed and assess products based on their quality attributes and health benefits before making a purchase. Therefore, the quality of the product itself should be the main emphasis of all marketing efforts, rather than only the product packaging that bears *Halal* certificates and logos. Customers in Malaysia particularly have a wide range of options for *halal* food goods, and they carefully assess each option based on the product's attributes and personal beliefs. It has also been discovered that using celebrities to promote *Halal* cuisine would be a good idea, as Malaysian consumers like to buy food from well-known businesses, and celebrity endorsement would undoubtedly foster this familiarity. Manufacturers influence the two aspects of this model; *Halal* certification and *Halal* marketing, so these aspects can be leveraged to change consumer standards and views.

There are a few limitations to this study. One of the study's limitations is that it only looked at Malaysia's Northern region customers at a few select supermarkets, rather than the entire population of Malaysia. As a result, it is proposed that future research be conducted in rapidly growing cities, with the results being more comparable and providing practical guidance in *halal* products. With a larger number of responses, statistical analyses such as Structural Equation Modelling can be more robust. Despite the small sample size, the results of this study can be used to better understand *halal* product buying behaviour.

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## Determinants of Profitability: Evidence from Banking Sector in Malaysia

Nor Anis Shafai<sup>1\*</sup>, Aina Fageera Binti Ahmad Badri<sup>2</sup>, Shaliza Azreen Mohd Zulkifli<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA,  
UiTM Perlis Campus, 02600 Arau, Perlis, Malaysia

Email: <sup>1</sup>anis448@salam.uitm.edu.my, <sup>2</sup>afageera@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>shaliza@uitm.edu.my

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### ABSTRACT

*Profitability, the keyword, refers to a company's capacity to create earnings from sales after paying all necessary costs for a particular time. Every company's management views it as one of their top priorities, and without it, their operations would come to an end. The goal of this paper is to examine and determine factors that impact the profitability of Malaysia's banking sector over the period of 2011-2020 in a sample of 8 commercial banks listed in Bursa Malaysia. This study employed a panel data and static model which is the Fixed Effect Model to look at the link between bank profitability and the independent variables of bank size, liquidity, leverage, and capital adequacy. The empirical result showed bank size is the only important factor in bank profitability, while liquidity, leverage, and capital adequacy are not significant towards profitability. The data demonstrate that bank size had the biggest influence on bank profitability in Malaysia of all the characteristics studied. These suggested that monitoring credit and liquidity risk is crucial for bank decision-makers and should be taken into account to diversify resources and cut costs.*

**Keywords:** *profitability, bank size, liquidity, leverage, capital adequacy*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Profitability is, without a doubt, one of the most significant factors for businesses, as higher profit margins or profits for shareholders allow companies to reinvest in their operations, hire more people, develop new technologies, and implement improvements, allowing them to boost and increase their business value. Banks are not an exception; in reality, these companies, like any other business, are concerned with competitive strategies, efficiency levels, and risk assessment, to increase revenues. Furthermore, because they are a crucial component of a country's financial system, the function of the financial system plays a significant part in the effectiveness of the economic system (Vera-Gilces et al., 2020).

Financial ratios can be used to evaluate the profitability of a firm. The most prominent ratios, according to a previous study, return on equity, return on investment, and net interest margin (Flamini et al., 2009; Naceur & Goaied, 2008; Saona, 2011). Bank profitability, on the other hand, is determined by both internal and external variables. Only a stable economy with strong profitability can generate enough financial resources for long-term expansion, attracting both local and international interest and investment. Profitability is a useful tool for predicting future business success as well as a reliable basis for evaluating business results (Tharu & Shrestha, 2019).

According to Dao and Nguyen (2020) profitability has long been shown to be one of the key markers for the health of the banking industry. To be more precise, profitable banks have the capacity to diversify their operations in a way that effectively manages unsystematic risks. Malaysian banks, which are among Southeast Asia's largest, provide a diverse variety of financial and banking services. The Malaysian financial institutions are governed by Bank Negara Malaysia, which was established in 1959. It is the country's central bank, with responsibility for maintaining monetary and financial stability. Commercial banks, Islamic banks, Development Financial Institutions (DFIs), and Investment Banks are the four categories of banking in Malaysia. Malaysia's banking sector includes 27 commercial banks (19 of which are international), 16 Islamic banks, 11 investment banks, and non-bank financial entities (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2016).

It has been stated that every company's long-term viability depends mostly on its level of profitability. Although achieving profitability is the main objective of all commercial endeavours, the factors that influence profitability in developing nations have received less attention (Alarussi & Alhaderi, 2018). Thus, the goal of this research is to look at the determinants that impact banking institution profitability in Malaysia, with an emphasis on bank-specific features (internal factors) such as bank size, liquidity, leverage, and capital adequacy. Firm-level impacts are the most important type of influence in explaining variance in performance, according to earlier research (Goddard et al., 2009). As a result, the focus of this research is on bank-specific characteristics.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Profitability**

Ayanda et al. (2013) defined bank profitability as a situation in which the money earned over a given period exceeds the money spent during that same period, whereas (Almumani, 2013) defined bank profitability as the return on assets, which is calculated using a formula that divides a bank's net profits by its total assets. There are several techniques to account for bank performance among the diverse interpretations by academic researchers, however, most academic researchers included (Staikouras & Wood, 2011) studies agreed that financial ratio, return on assets (ROA), is the most renowned approach employed. From 1994 to 1998, this research looked at the variables that influence European banks.

Internal and external variables impact the profitability of financial organisations. Internal determinants included bank-specific characteristics such as liquidity, bank size, and leverage, whilst external determinants included environmental elements outside banks' control. According to previous research, numerous studies that included both internal and external factors concluded that only internal variables influence bank profitability, whereas exterior determinants have no impact at all. This is supported by (Abuzar, 2013), which found that only internal variables such as cost, liquidity, and bank size have a favourable influence on the bank's profitability in Sudan, whereas external drivers have no effect.

Several studies, including Krishnan (2014), indicated that bank size is the most important indicator of a bank's profitability when only internal variables are considered. This condition is backed by resource-related theory, which states that as the size of the organisation grows, the company's financial resources become more accessible, resulting in a cheap cost of capital and great profitability. As a result, the financial indicator of return on assets is utilised in this section to focus solely on bank-specific factors that impact bank performance, with bank size, leverage, and liquidity as independent variables and profitability

as the dependent variable. The influences on internal components are the only macroeconomic elements that are considered in this study.

Alarussi et al. (2018) examine the elements determining profitability in 120 firms listed on Bursa Malaysia for the years 2012 to 2014 that were taken from the annual reports of the companies. The data were analysed using fixed-effects and pooled ordinary least squares regression. The results demonstrate a significant positive link between profitability, WC, assets turnover ratio, and business size (total sales). The findings also indicate a negative relationship between profitability and both the leverage ratio and the debt-equity ratio. Profitability is not significantly correlated with liquidity (current ratio).

## **2.2 Bank size**

The size of a bank is generally described as the net total assets of banks. As the slogan "too big to fail" indicates, the current financial crisis has raised worries that banks that become too large may represent a risk to their financial viability. Banks may be motivated to participate in high-risk transactions because regulators function as the creditor of last resort. Banks are likely to desire fast expansion to become more lucrative. Because of their product and service variety, large banks, for example, may have a higher and more steady flow of income than small banks. However, some banks are losing money because of their expansion. These factors have a positive and negative impact on the relationship between bank size and profitability.

Profitability rises as the bank's size increases. According to Goddard et al. (2004), who studied the link between bank size, profitability, and growth in 148 countries and including around 15,000 commercial banks from 1988 to 2010, banks with a big scale expand at a modest pace but are believed to profit more than banks with a small scale. The profitability of a bank changes depending on its size, according to researchers.

Mergers and acquisitions of banks are smart strategies for a bank to grow in size. Bank mergers are required, according to Gyamerah & Benjamin Amoah (2015) since the size of the bank has a significant impact on profitability. According to the poll, the association between profitability and bank size is favourable when utilising quarterly data. This was based on the quarterly balance sheet and income statement data from Ukrainian banks from 2005 to 2009.

When Staikouras and Wood (2011) researched the factors impacting European bank profitability, they discovered that the outcome is negative for large-scale banks but favourable for small-scale banks. According to this survey, when banks develop, diseconomies of scale emerge, meaning that greater bank size may result in losses. Furthermore, marginal returns decline as a bank's size expands, resulting in lower average earnings. In terms of information and operational efficiency, smaller banks have a competitive edge. In summary, because huge banks cannot always ensure profit, there existed a negative association between bank size and profitability.

## **2.3 Leverage**

The definition of leverage, according to Boadi et al., (2013), is total debt divided by total assets. One of the predictors of profitability has been leveraged. However, the study looked at insurance businesses in Ghana and found that there is a positive association between liquidity profitability and leverage.

According to Pattitoni et al., (2014), the higher the debt, the lower the return on equity. The findings of this study suggest that bank profitability and leverage have a negative connection. If a further study on Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) is conducted, the same results will be obtained. The link between leverage and profitability, according to this study, is nonlinear.

However, Habib et al., (2016) intend to explore the relationship between profitability and leverage on economic efficiency firms using a sample size of 667 non-financial firms from Malaysia from 2013 onwards, with both dependent variables being the firm's equities price and market value, and independent variables being earnings per share, book value, and vector variable, among other variables. According to him, stockholders play a vital part in determining the firm's true worth because some investors like to raise the firm's wealth when making an investment decision. Furthermore, lowering internal expenses, such as environmental costs, will simply raise external costs, such as shareholder costs.

## **2.4 Liquidity risk**

Liquidity risk refers to the chance of a company losing money if it fails to satisfy its short-term obligations (Bordeleau & Graham, 2010). It is because liquid assets like cash and government securities provide poor yields, a bank incurs an opportunity cost by keeping them. As a result, banks frequently maintain liquid assets that can be rapidly converted into cash to avoid insolvency due to liquidity shortages and to maximise profits. In contrast to Molyneux and Thornton (1992), which found a negative link between bank profitability and liquidity, Bourke, (1989), found a positive association between bank profitability and liquidity.

The liquidity ratio, bank size, and management effectiveness were all found to have a substantial impact on the profitability of Syrian banks (Al-Jafari & Alchami, 2014). As a result, banks will be obliged to maintain high liquidity levels to fulfil depositor demand in a narrow financial market with few options for diversified income during difficult times.

According to Sulieman (2014), who investigated liquidity risk and its influence on 22 Pakistani banks from 2004 to 2009, he observed a substantial association between banks' liquidity risk and their risk of default. This is due to a rise in deposits, which results in increased bank profitability and decreased reliance on the central bank.

However, several researchers have found a negative correlation between profitability and liquidity risk. Bordeleau and Graham (2010) looked into both US and Canadian institutions that were engaged between 1997 and 2009. According to the data, liquidity risk and bank profitability have a nonlinear relationship. As a consequence of the findings, it is clear that keeping liquid assets on hand will lower the liquidity risk. As a result, it will have resulted in

significant bank profitability. On the other hand, a bank's profitability may suffer if it has too many liquid assets. It also raises the possibility of running out of money.

Waleed et al. (2016) investigated the effect of the trade-off between liquidity and profitability in the banking sector of the Pakistan Stock Exchange from 2010-2015. They discovered a clear relationship between bank liquidity ratios and Tobin q, return on equity, return on assets, and net profit margin. The link between liquidity and return on investment and earnings per share, however, is minimal. Thus, the results are mostly reasonable given that policymakers are developing new rules for a suitable amount of liquidity for banks. This will increase shareholder earnings while also maximising the bank's use of its resources.

## 2.5 Capital Adequacy

Deposit is one of the profitability indicators that is regarded as a liability, and we know that it is one of the most important sources of funding in commercial banks, with a significant impact on profitability. High deposits indicate a bank's profitability, whilst low deposits indicate a bank's low profitability. According to Staikouras and Wood (2011), the equity-to-assets ratio may be used to assess a bank's capital strength (EA). This ratio should be used to give an average level of financial safety and soundness by representing the bank's capacity to absorb any unanticipated losses or risks.

The dependent variable is shown to be highly influenced by capital sufficiency (bank profitability). Existing research, such as Thota's (2013), backs up this assertion. According to the researcher, commercial banks' net income on assets rises as their capital adequacy rises at the same time. As a result, commercial bank profitability rises, suggesting a positive relationship between capital adequacy and bank profitability. Second, banks with high capital, which is often less risky, will have higher projected earnings and, as a result, financial crises such as liquidation will be avoided since predicted funding costs will be lower (Dietrich & Wanzenried, 2009). This analysis also demonstrates that profitability and capital sufficiency have a persistent positive relationship.

Other authors, however, have rejected this claim, including (Pasiouras & Kosmidou, 2007). They claimed that because banks' capital sufficiency is high, there is a negative link between the equity-to-asset ratio and bank profitability, indicating that the banks' performance is less at risk. When a bank is a low risk, it will have lower profits since it will take efforts to keep itself secure. This statement is comparable to the conventional risk hypothesis, in which the two variables have a negative association. Furthermore, one of the factors contributing to the adversely associated association between capital adequacy and bank profitability is inefficiency in utilising and managing capital. They discovered that the equity-to-asset ratio is inversely related to bank profitability (Aremu, 2013; Mustapha, 2013).

According to Batten and Vo (2019), they examine the factors that influence bank profitability in Vietnam from 2006 to 2014. Their study employed panel data methods with a special dataset, and the results show that profitability is significantly impacted by bank size, capital sufficiency, risk, expenditure, and productivity. The finding implies that macroeconomic factors and features of the banking sector have an impact on bank profitability. However, we discover that across profitability indicators, the direction of causation varies.



### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

To investigate the internal variables that impact banks' profitability in Malaysia, this study focused solely on the 8 listed commercial banks on the Malaysian stock exchange, with a data collecting period spanning 2011 to 2020. The reason behind choosing the local banks in Malaysia is to identify their performance of them, and whether their result will turn out positive or negative with the size of the banks, leverage, and liquidity towards profitability. Besides that, the year 2011 to 2020 and the available data during this period are important steps that need to be considered in choosing these 8 local commercial banks. 8 local commercial banks listed below were chosen to identify their performance in terms of their profitability:

**Table 1:** List of local commercial banks in Malaysia

No.	Local Commercial Banks
1.	Affin Bank Bhd
2.	Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd
3.	AmBank Malaysia Bhd
4.	Hong Leong Bank Bhd
5.	Malayan Banking Bhd
6.	MBSB Bank Bhd
7.	Public Bank Bhd
8.	RHB Bank Bhd

#### 3.1 Model specification

This model is accurate in analysing the factors that affect commercial banks' profitability in Malaysia. In order to capture the link between the factors that influenced profitability, this study used panel data and a static model called the Fixed Effect Model. The empirical model is therefore expanded as shown below.

$$\text{PROFIT}_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{BS}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{LV}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{LQ}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{CA}_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

$P_{it}$  = Profitability i at time t  
 $BS_{it}$  = Bank size i at time t  
 $LV_{it}$  = Leverage i at time t  
 $LQ_{it}$  = Liquidity i at time t  
 $CA_{it}$  = Capital adequacy i at time t

**Table 2.** The variables, proxy, symbol and expected sign used

Variables	Proxy	Symbol	Expected sign
<b>Dependent variable</b>			
Profitability	Return on asset	PROFIT	N/A
<b>Independent variable</b>			
Bank size	Size	BS	Positive
Leverage	Debt to equity	LV	Positive
Liquidity	Current Ratio	LQ	Positive
Capital adequacy	Equity to asset ratio	CA	Positive

## 4.0 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Descriptive analysis

Table 3 below shows descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables such as profitability (PROFIT), bank size (BS), leverage (LV), liquidity (LQ), and capital adequacy (CA) that have been used as proxies for this study. In a group of numbers, the mean is the most common or average value. The leverage (LV) has the highest mean of 116.48 percent, indicating that the bank is expanding its debt financing aggressively. Next, among all variables, profitability (PROFIT) has the smallest standard deviation, indicating that there is very little fluctuation in the dataset and that it is closer to the mean, potentially increasing profitability in the future. It also reveals that the liquidity (LQ) minimum is 0.08, the lowest rate suggested in Malaysia's banking sector's current ratio. Finally, when it comes to the minimum rate, profitability (PROFIT) has a lower rate of 2.83 when compared to the other variables.

**Table 3:** Descriptive analysis

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
PROFIT	1.29	0.38	0.45	2.83
BS	8.15	0.42	7.24	8.93
LV	116.48	47.32	46.87	250.36
LQ	1.17	1.24	0.08	9.33
CA	16.37	3.11	5.68	25.09

Notes: Profitability (PROFIT), Bank Size (BS), Leverage (LV), Liquidity (CR), Capital adequacy (EA)

### 4.2 Panel Specification Test

The next step is to figure out which panel data estimator is carried out using a static model such as pooled ordinary least squares (POLS), random effects (RE), or fixed effects (FE) model, which is best for this study. The F-test (p-value 0.0000) shows it is less than 0.05, the BP-LM (p-value 0.0000) suggests it is less than 0.05, and the Hausman test (p-values 0.001) also suggests it is less than 0.05, as shown in Table 4. As a result of the panel specification tests, the fixed effects (Fe) utilising the Hausman test model is the most acceptable analytical since the p-value is 0.0010, which is less than 0.05 if the rules of thumb are followed (Pasiouras & Kosmidou, 2007).

**Table 4:** Panel Specification Test

Model	F-Test (p-value of the tests)	BP-LM	Hausman	Technique
Model 1	0.0000	0.0306	0.0000	Fixed Effect

### 4.3 Regression Result: Determinants of Profitability

Table 5 demonstrates that bank size (BS) has a negative relationship and association with profitability (PROFIT). This is so because a bank's bank size (BS) is crucial. It implies that a bank with more assets and a greater size would be more profitable overall. The profitability (PROFIT) indicates that the size of the bank (BS) influences its performance, with giant scale banks making more money than small scale banks. According to Pasiouras and Kosmidou (2007), economies of scale have allowed banks to benefit greatly and are expected to continue to do so in the future, outpacing small banks in terms of profit.

Meanwhile leverage (LV) demonstrates negative effect and there is not significant to profitability. In other words, leverage (LV) has little bearing on profitability (PROFIT). According to the research Yoon and Jang (2005), the firm's leverage had a detrimental effect on the company's profitability because of the high debt rates. Furthermore, liquidity (LQ) as measured by the current ratio shows a positive but not statistically significant with profitability (PROFIT). This is due to the fact that profitability is not reliant on cash flow, and liquidity (LQ) is crucial for financial institutions like banks where it is used to pay for businesses' ongoing commitments. Although profitability is not based on monetary base, Alarussi and Alhaderi (2018) asserts that liquidity is crucial to satisfy the firm's responsibilities. However, the equity to asset ratio, which measures capital adequacy (CA), has a negative sign and is not statistically significant, indicating that the factors cannot be taken as absolute predictors of the profitability of banking institutions in Malaysia.

**Table 5:** Determinants of Profitability

Variables	Fixed Effects
BS	-1.6981*** (0.5613)
LV	-0.0016 (0.001)
LQ	0.0468 (0.0362)
CA	-0.0143 (0.018)
Constant	15.6*** (4.4791)
Breusch-Pagan	0.306
Hausman	0.0000
Groups (obs)	80

Notes:

(1) *t* statistics in parentheses

(2) \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

(3) Definition of variables: Bank Size (BS), Leverage (LV), Liquidity (LQ) and Capital adequacy (EA)

(4) The chosen model is Fixed Effect, and this model is successful as our *P*-value is  $< 0.05$

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the goal of this study is to assess the performance of Malaysia's commercial banks in terms of their profitability for 10-year period beginning in 2011 and ending in 2020. This study concentrates on eight commercial banks that are listed in Bursa Malaysia. In order to examine the relationship between bank profitability and the independent variables of bank size, liquidity, leverage, and capital adequacy, this study used panel data and a static model (Fixed Effect Model). Test statistics demonstrate the model's significance and outcome consistency. Three investigations, including a panel specification test, a study of descriptive statistics, and a study of profitability, made up the findings. The bank size (BS) exhibits a negative relationship and significant at a 1 percent level association with profitability (PROFIT). This suggests that bank size may have a detrimental impact for bureaucratic and other reasons. As a result, one may anticipate that the size-profitability connection is not linear. While, the leverage (LV) and liquidity (LQ) and capital adequacy (CA), did not show any significant effect on profitability (PROFIT). The findings of earlier studies may not have been consistent due to data collection from various nations and the time used.

The study suggests, for bank decision-makers, monitoring credit and liquidity risk is essential and should be taken into consideration in order to diversify resources and reduce costs. One of the goals of the research's future directions is to broaden the area of analysis by including time and dividing the data sample into groups of nations. The second piece of advice is for future researchers to utilise multiple banks, different sorts of data, or different years from this work to provide the most intriguing results. Additionally, incorporating data from other ASEAN nations may be advised for future scholars.

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# The Malaysian Literature in English Programme (Literature in Action): A Position Paper

Hanna Insyirah Mohd Sukri<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Hafidzudeen Norazizan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, UiTM Shah Alam Campus, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, UiTM Shah Alam Campus, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: hannainsyirah@uitm.edu.my, hafidzudeen@uitm.edu.my

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## ABSTRACT

*This position paper intends to explore both sides of the literature component included in Malaysian English programme in schools, specifically at the secondary level. We analyse the literature component, namely Literature in Action (LiA), in the perspective of the objectives stated in the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The discussion made in the paper also revolves around the component's rationales, its drawbacks, as well as beneficial propositions to resolve the shortcomings. It could enrich future research on English literature in Malaysian classrooms and thus, contribute to the English curriculum in Malaysia.*

**Keywords:** English programme, literature component, Literature in Action

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Literature and Language Learning

Literature has long been included in the teaching and learning of a foreign language or of a second language (L2). It has been used as a catalyst to learn language and in helping students to develop language skills all over the world. Lazar (1993) in his book 'Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers', gathers teachers' definitions of literature. One of them states that literature collects an individual's thoughts and feelings in the black and white's version and it aims to trigger readers' personal responses. It becomes teachers' responsibilities to make the literary texts relevant to the students and offer chances for students to express themselves and their personal opinions regarding the issue. However, as English teachers, it is more appropriate if we also use literary texts as the medium to bridge the gap between students and the target language. Literature does not only promote language learning, but it also brightens up the curriculum in which literature is incorporated in it (Erdem, 2016). In addition, Amer (2003) believes that literature offers a platform in which students are motivated to learn English and at the same time instills the value of empathy and develops students' critical and creative thinking skills.

## 1.1 Literature in Malaysian English Programme (literature component)

In Malaysia, English literature has been implanted in the National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) to help in promoting language learning. This is to support the second shift in the blueprint in which education in Malaysia should produce students who are proficient in English at the end of schooling age. The shift also elaborates on more exposure to the English language should be given to students where literature becomes one of the alternatives. One of the roles of English in the secondary level (literature component) is literature as a resource (i.e., small 'l' literature) where it becomes a mean to support language learning in Malaysian classrooms. As stated by Kaur and Mahmud (2014), in the Malaysian KSSR curriculum, the Language Art's component (literature) can be the agent to develop and enhance students' skills. Lazar (1993) states that "since literary language is not completely different or separated from other kinds of language," there is an option where "studying literary texts can help to improve students' overall knowledge of English" (p. 8). This statement confirms the clear role of literature and the relevancy of including its components in the education system in Malaysia, undoubtedly.

Since Malaysia uses Common European Framework of References (CEFR), the Ministry of Education (MOE) in collaboration with Cambridge English, United Kingdom (CE) developed the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) that maps the English Language Content (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017), to align with CEFR. SBELC has outlined Literature in Action (LiA) to be included in English lessons together with the teaching of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar skills. LiA emphasizes the literature component that is made up of a variety literary texts' genres (e.g., short stories, poems, dramas, graphic novels, and novels) mainly *to instill reading habits and to promote thinking skills among the students*. According to the Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (2017), the LiA's objective, in general, is to focus on *"students' ability to enjoy and appreciate different text types, to analyse and evaluate texts, and to respond imaginatively to texts"* (p. 42). Even though LiA has been implemented since 2017, there are no changes made in the reading list (i.e., literary texts that are specifically chosen for secondary students to read and learn). The only difference is that, starting in 2019, literary texts and its elements are not going to be tested in any examinations, including the major examination *Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3* (PT3) at the end of the year. The Ministry of Education (2017) also claims that the literature component is going to be assessed through the four language skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Nonetheless, the texts that the students are required to learn remain the same. The current reading list is as follows: -

**Table 1.** Literature Reading List (source by author)

Form	Poems	Short Stories	Plays	Novels
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Sad I Ams' by Trevor Millum</li> <li>• 'News Break' by Max Fetchen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Fair's Fair' by Narinder Dhani</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• '20 000 Leagues Under The Sea' by Jules Verne (Graphic Novel)</li> <li>• 'The Swiss Family Robinson' by Johann D. Wyss (retold by Martin Powel)</li> <li>• 'King Arthur' (retold by Janet Hardy-Gould)</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'My Hero' by Willis Hall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Cheat!'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'A Night Out'</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'What is Red'</i> by Mary O'Neill</li></ul>	by Allan Baillie	by O. Henry	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'Poisoned Talk'</i> by Raymond Wilson</li><li>• <i>'The Day The Bulldozers Came'</i> by David Orme</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'The Elephant Man'</i> by Tim Vicary</li><li>• <i>'We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea'</i> by Arthur Ransome</li><li>• <i>'Moby Dick'</i> by Herman Melville</li></ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'The Living Photograph'</i> by Jackie Kay</li><li>• <i>'Charge of the Light Brigade'</i> by Alfred Lord Tennyson</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'Leaving'</i> by M. G. Vassanji</li><li>• <i>'Tanjung Rhu'</i> by Minfong Ho</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'The Right Thing To Do'</i> by Martyn Ford</li></ul>	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'A Poison Tree'</i> by William Blake</li><li>• <i>'What Happened to Lulu?'</i> by Charles Causley</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>'Dear Mr. Kilmer'</i> by Anne Schraff (Perlis, Kedah, Selangor, WP Kuala Lumpur, WP Putrajaya, Negeri Sembilan, and Melaka)</li><li>• <i>'Captain Nobody'</i> by Dean Pitchford (Johor, Pahang, Sabah, Sarawak, and WP Labuan)</li><li>• <i>'Sing to the Dawn'</i> by Minfong Ho (Pulau Pinang, Perak, Terengganu, and Kelantan)</li></ul>

1.2 Malaysian Literature Component and Its Potentials

It is believed that LiA that enhances the literature component in the Malaysian curriculum is a valuable idea because it is based on solid, relevant, and encouraging objectives. LiA is designed to promote students' reading habit, develop both of their creative and critical thinking skills, enjoy and appreciate different literary texts, analyse and evaluate them, and to encourage imaginative responses to the literary texts (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017). In addition, at the same run these objectives are achieved, students are also learning about English language. Referring back to the function of literature as small 'l', the literature component is believed to bridge the gap between the students and the target language; literature as a resource to enhance language development. Literature can help in expanding students' knowledge of language and offers more chances of language use by exposing students with new vocabularies and syntax. It exposes students to a new way of writing and new vocabularies that might not be found in nonliterary texts. Moreover, Lazar (1993) believes that if we use literature as a resource, it can be



a powerful source of different kinds of motivating language activities in the classroom. As literature deals with unique themes revolved around human's life, nature, or stories from other cultures, it gives teachers various perspectives to initiate language games or activities that could possibly engage students with English.

## **2.0 DISCUSSION**

### **2.1 Rationalizing the First Objective: Developing Students' Reading Habit**

First and foremost, if literature is utilized well and creatively in English classrooms in Malaysia, it can develop students' interest towards reading with its unique ways of intriguing readers into the world of thoughts, stories, and feelings. For the reason to inculcate reading habit, the Malaysian literature component acts as an eye-opener for the students to see other cultures and traditions around the world. In fact, as claimed by Palardy (1997), when teachers expose students to the reading of literary texts, it will give them the chance to build comprehension about the cultures and people all over the world. Giddings (1992) in his paper states that to teach reading to students, teachers should start with real and meaningful literature instead of language in isolation and separately, and it may help students to take up the trait of a good reader. As an example, the short story '*Fair's Fair*' by Narinder Dhani, which is taught to all form 1 students, is written in simple language and the storyline can be related to the students' real excitement of attending a fair and thus, it helps in encouraging students to read and to explore more on the short story. Undoubtedly, it is a good effort by the Ministry of Education to include literature in the curriculum to inculcate reading habits as the positivity of reading literary texts in the classroom will give chances to students who are not exposed to any reading materials outside of the classroom the chance to read. "Reading of literature by children seems to correlate with reading achievement" as further explained by Giddings (1992) implies that the need to learn literature in school will help students to improve their reading habit and achievement as various kinds of literary texts will shape their reading comprehension in different ways. According to Erdem (2016), literature can be used mainly to produce students who are also effective readers, both in English and in their first language. Furthermore, literature offers reading practice that actually enhances students' reading speed and students' skill in guessing meaning while reading (Khatib et al., 2011). In our view, all of these evidences imply that the effort emitted by the MOE in integrating literature into the curriculum does not only inculcate reading habits among students, but also gives out benefits to improve their reading skills in the same run.

### **2.2 Rationalizing the Second Objective: Promoting Students' Creative and Critical Thinking Skills**

The second objective of including the literature component into the curriculum is to promote students' creative and critical thinking skills. Van (2009) believes that in the process of teaching literary devices such as characters and characterization, a plot, or themes, students' critical thinking is also sharpened. For example, in learning '*Tanjung Rhu*' by Minfong Ho (a literature text for form 4), students will have to sort out between the story telling of the past or current events in order to sort out the storyline of the story. This is further supported by Collie and Slater (1987) as they suggest a literature-based reading activity where different groups of students in a class have a discussion about the same literary text. When the outcomes of the discussions are presented (assuming that there is a possibility of the groups coming out with different plots of the story), they are then encouraged to discuss the similarities and differences of the outcomes, which is extending the time for more critical thinking skill to develop. Besides that, Asselin (2002) found

out that when students wrote down their responses about a certain literary text (e.g., in making connection between events in a story, writing about the preferred character, and asking further questions), it definitely enhanced their thinking skills. Another research by Awang and Ramly (2008) point out that in order for creative thinking to happen, students must engage in learning contents that exposed them to different perceptions and point of views. To illustrate, by including the literature component into the lessons, it will expose students to look at things in different point of views and sometimes it opens the window for students to look at one event or tragedy in more than one angle and thus, enhancing their creative thinking skill. Consequently, it will transform students to become more sensible readers (Damuri & Wahyuni, 2021). This further clarifies the rationale of the objective of including literature in the Malaysian English curriculum. In addition, research done in between 2014 and 2015 reported that several students admitted how literature helps in developing critical thinking skill as it gives them time and space to think about issues that they will not discover on their own if it is not because of the requirement of literature learning (Bloemert et al., 2017). This implies that students might be exposed to issues that are outside of their culture circle and widen their area of knowledge. Therefore, the truth of having literature in the curriculum to heighten students' critical thinking skill is proven as literary texts are not just enjoyable to be read, but also stimulate students' thinking skill (Ur, 1991).

### **2.3 Rationalizing the Third Objective: Appreciating Different Text Types**

Another reason of the inclusion of literature component is for students to enjoy and appreciate different text types. According to Maley (1989), literary drama and novels expose students to authentic texts such as conversations, contextualized expressions, expressions of feelings, functional phrases, and also descriptive writing. This is supported by Erdem (2016) where he also agrees that literature offers model examples of styles of writing together with authentic uses of the target language at the same time. As Muhammed (2013) explains that literature is valuable in a way that it provides readers with language varieties as language varies from one social context to another context. Bloemert et al. (2017) claims that literature comprises of various kinds of texts, poetry, and novels from different eras. In our view, when students learn about a literary text, it introduces them to a unique kind of writing style that only applied by the respective author. We also believe in the fact that the more the students read, the better they write. Therefore, through literature (that includes a wide range of type of texts) students can also learn how to write better in the target language. The same research also highlights the fact that when students learn literature, they found synonyms of the words they already know (Bloemert et al., 2017). This resulted in the expansion of vocabularies of the students. In addition, when Malaysia uses literature as a resource, it does not only increase a creative way of reading and writing, but also the appreciation of language used in the literary texts that they are exposed to (Erdem, 2016). In their paper, Kuijpers and Hakemulder (2018) defines 'appreciating literary text' in the way that students see the unique craftsmanship or the poetic aspects of the text. Thus, it is important that English teachers facilitate students to the path of seeing literary uniqueness that nonliterary texts may not offer.

### **2.4 Rationalizing the Fourth Objective: Analysing and Evaluating Literary Texts**

Even though literature as a resource is used as a foundation for adding literature component into the curriculum, LiA still aims to provide secondary students with the chance to analyse and evaluate literary texts. We believe that this is a reasonable aim because even though secondary students (English literature component) analyse the texts not as intense as those who take English as an elective (Literature in English), this is what drives them to benefit from other objectives. Jenkins (1987) affirms that in planning literature lesson, teachers should know how to grab students' interest and encourage their thinking more than just a simple comprehension.

Commonsensically, teachers must facilitate students to discover deeper meaning a literary text has to offer and must not only stop on the surface and literal meaning. Khatib et al. (2011) believe that literary text such as poetry gives students the best chance to do close analysis which later leads them to finding out hidden interpretation that is portrayed through literary elements (e.g., simile, allegory, or metaphor). This is useful in obtaining the objective of promoting imaginative response from the students. Furthermore, by analysing literary texts, students get to discover more knowledge of the world and acknowledge various man's issues and conditions that might never cross their minds before (Erdem, 2016). Erdem (2016) also claims that when English teachers encourage students to express their opinions, it may result in students' "enhanced ability to make critical and analytical summaries to literature texts", which, at the same time, promotes students' thinking skills. From our own standpoint, giving students the chance to analyse and evaluate literary texts means opening the window to many benefits not just in promoting the target language, but also the ticket to 'travel' to see other cultures in other countries, taking them back to the previous eras that are not in the history textbook, giving them the chance to look into other people's minds and thoughts (i.e., feeling of longing, loneliness, betrayal, love or death). Thus, it is compulsory to have the aim of analysing and evaluating texts as the base for including the literature component in the curriculum.

## **2.5 Rationalizing the Fifth Objective: Responding Imaginatively to Literary Texts**

The last aim of including literature component stated by the MOE is for students to be able to respond imaginatively to texts. This is the most crucial and thoughtful aim because literature has the key to open students' minds and let them explore their own imagination (Asselin, 2000), which is rarely initiated in other subjects aside from English. This is further supported by Collie and Slater (1987) as they state that literature provides students with imagination that will move them from the texts to the story itself. Students may be able to relate their personal experience to that written on the page. For instance, the poem '*News Break*' by Max Fetchen acknowledges the situation faced by students whenever they bring back their school reports to their mothers. It is relatable to the students in a sense that the author puts the poem in a situation that is most likely to happen among school kids. Therefore, it shows that literary texts bring about stories that encourage students' imagination to relate to their own and even if they have never experienced it before, they surely can imagine it with the help of the imageries written in the texts. Nonetheless, this would only work if the teachers know how to pull their students' interest towards the stories and design activities that allow their imagination towards the text run wildly. For beginner students, especially, teachers have to guide them in the discovery of new vocabularies before the connection between the students and the imageries contained in the texts happen. As literature deals with the universal themes of love, nature, death, and hatred (Maley, 1989), it would be a total waste to not fully and creatively use the literary texts provided to engage students with the stories of the target language. This is specially commented by Murat (2005) where he suggests that teachers should integrate a method that work on the "personal/evaluative level" where it can stimulate students' imagination towards the texts. Undeniably, students, especially of the low-level proficiency, will need teachers' guidance to arrive to the desired thinking or imagination as they might not even know certain words even on the surface level (literal). This is supported by the finding of a study in Indonesia whereby it is found that students' proficiency influences the teachers' methods of teaching literature (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

Everette (2017) believes that objectives in education should always put forward students' learning and used them as the foundation of why students should learn that particular topic. We believe that the objectives underlying the inclusion of literature component (Literature in Action) represents the right path and platform used for literature learning in Malaysia. This is very important because objectives work as the backbone of that particular programme. The stronger

the objectives and the reasons behind them, the bigger the chance for the programme to create positive changes in the field of literature in secondary schools. The only question remains to be answered is whether the execution really reflects the objectives or are there any other factors that affect the execution that might fail the attainment of the objectives?

## **2.6 Malaysian Literature Component and Its Drawbacks**

In every programme or policy, there must be several drawbacks either in the planning, execution, or monitoring phase. LiA is first designed to be aligned with CEFR, which has been planned to be implemented in the second wave of the Malaysia Education Blueprint. LiA was first implemented in 2017 starting from students in the first form of secondary level education and will be fully implemented across all forms in 2021. We strongly believe LiA that brings about the literature component into the curriculum might not be totally effective (in achieving the stated objectives) due to some factors such as the fact that it will not be tested in any examinations, incompetency of English teachers in the field of literature education, and even if it is tested (for students in the fourth and fifth forms in 2019), the nature of the test does not encourage or motivate students to truly appreciate literary texts.

### **2.6.1 Drawback 1: The Absence of Literature Component in Examination**

The fact that the literature component is not going to be assessed in any examinations making it the biggest drawback that will get in the way of achieving the objectives stated in the previous section. Even though many benefits can be obtained from not being too dependent on a test, we cannot deny the nature of the Malaysian education where both teachers and students always rely on what is coming out in the examination. In our point of view, it is a drawback in the sense that teachers will surely prioritize the items or skills that will be tested in a test. This is what is meant by Kappa (1999) when he states that an examination “narrows the curriculum” and will promote (in a negative sense) excessive focus or discussion on the materials that will be covered in the said examination. The revised curriculum standard for English will be focusing on the four language skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. With this in mind, the components of grammar and vocabulary, and the literature component (which is called Literature in Action) will only be assessed through the skills. Therefore, noting the need to cover these skills that will surely be out in the examination, teachers might delay the teaching of literature component. This is also due to the limited face-to-face meeting per week that influences teachers to prioritize the teaching of language skills. Tutaş (2006) claims that the way literature is taught in the classroom will affect their opinions and attitudes towards literary texts as well as the texts they will read outside of the classroom. Therefore, the less exposure on literature given to the students in the classroom, the less the time spent on developing thinking skills and appreciation towards literary texts among the students. As a matter of fact, the future generation of students (as the product of Literature in Action) might no longer be familiar with English literature, except for those who read literary works during leisure time.

From the perspective of the students, when they acknowledge that literature is not going to be tested, somehow or rather they may lose a form of extrinsic motivation to pursue on learning literature (e.g., losing focus, interest, and curiosity). Kappa (1991) believes that there is a positive motivation that surrounds a powerful test where “fear of a low score” obtained from a test is what driving the “lazy, recalcitrant, or otherwise unmotivated students to work hard”. The fact that they have to be prepared for what is coming out in the examination will drive them further to at least read the literary materials and focus their attention in the literature class. This is further supported by Brown (2009) where he claims that how much students learn depends on their perception of that particular learning environment. When students acknowledge the importance of

comprehending a literary text for the test plus the effort made by the teachers to enhance their comprehension, it will somehow determine how much students engage with and learn the literary texts. Reflecting this, we believe that the abrupt decision to stop including the literature assessment through examinations is not a beneficial act towards the field and future of English literature in Malaysian government schools.

### **2.6.2 Drawback 2: Teachers' Incompetency in Teaching Literature**

Another drawback of the literature component in the Malaysian curriculum is the incompetency of English teachers in the area of literature. Some experts believe that the expected level of engagement with the target language cannot be reached due to the traditional method teachers used combined with their lack of experience (Muhammed, 2013). Teachers' lack of creativity in using the literary texts is shown in the classroom activities that usually involve a lot of worksheets to drill students to memorize the answers of the commonly asked questions in the examination. This will be the cause for less engagement between the students and the liveliness of the literary texts thus, making it hard to truly achieve the objectives. As another research points out, the problem that might occur sources from the unfeasible strategies in the teaching of literature employed by the teachers (Muhammed, 2013). We consider the term 'unfeasible' in a way that the lesson plan does not take into account the true learning and appreciating the values represented by literary texts in the classroom. Students cannot relate the meaning behind the stories into their real-life experience as teachers only use whatever 'methodology' they deem important for students to ace in the examination. They overlook the fact that literature can also contribute to the students' emotional well-being (EQ) that can promote their personal development (Norling, 2009). Thus, again, it is really important for teachers to spend some time in brainstorming ideas to make the texts relevant to the students. In fact, teachers are believed to be the key to transform literature learning (Nugraha, 2021). Especially with the emergence of LiA, it is now up to the teachers to decide on how to engage students with the literary texts; imaginatively, critically, and emotionally. To further illustrate the point, the following picture shows the sample lesson plan that is included in the documentation of the new LiA curriculum:

**Table 2.** Sample lesson provided by the Ministry of Education for Literature in Action (LiA) for Form 1 students (source: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017)

SCHEME OF WORK: NON-TEXTBOOK-BASED LESSON (SAMPLE LESSON)

WEEK: \_\_\_\_\_

**LESSON 5:** Literature in Action

**MAIN SKILL(S) FOCUS:** Literature in Action

**THEME:** Consumerism and Financial Awareness

**TOPIC:** Money

**LANGUAGE/GRAMMAR FOCUS:** Adjectives and nouns

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARD	LEARNING OUTLINE	MATERIALS / REFERENCES	CROSS CURRICULAR ELEMENT	DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES	TEACHERS' NOTES / REMARKS
<b>Main Skill</b> <b>Literature in Action 5.3</b> Express an imaginative response to literary texts	<b>Main Skill</b> <b>Literature in Action 5.3.1</b> Respond imaginatively and intelligibly through creating simple stories and poems. Other imaginative responses as appropriate	Teachers to refer to the suggested lesson plan on the following page.	Octopoem about friendship and Octopoem template	Financial Education	Please refer to provided list of differentiation strategies and select appropriate strategy/strategies.	

Secondary Form 1 Scheme of Work

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Secondary Form 1 Scheme of Work

29

The lesson plan shows how the literature component is integrated into the curriculum and is aligned with one of the decided themes which is 'Consumerism and Financial Awareness' (among others are 'People and Culture', 'Health and Environment', and 'Science and Technology'). English teachers cannot entirely depend on this lesson plan alone in carrying out the lesson. Instead, teachers have to be more creative in encouraging students' response in relating money with friendship (e.g., introducing a poem that shows man's hunger towards money, introducing the concept of octopoem to the students, and providing more guidelines for students to create one on their own). Thus, if teachers fail to do so, the benefits of learning literature will be shamefully dismissed and the lesson becomes dry. As claimed by Witte and Jansen (2015), the most important factor (in regards of school) that influence students' achievement is the quality of teachers they have.

The drawbacks of literature component disable students from enjoying the benefits literature supposed to offer. We also believe that the curriculum designed (despite the objectives) fail to accommodate teachers' and students' needs to fully enjoy the benefits of teaching and learning literature. To some extent, the MOE should have encouraged the use of literature in a sense that it promotes not only language learning, but also students' personal development.

### 2.6.3 Drawbacks in the Literature Component: Beneficial Proposition

It is an endless argument when it comes to the teaching of literature in Malaysia. When literature is included in the examination, teachers tend to rely on the drilling technique and

disregarding the need to do more authentic learning and teaching of literature. However, when literature is not included in the examination, teachers might prioritize other skills instead of the literature component. As implication, we believe that English teachers need to take advantage of whatever the system is offering at the moment. As literature is no longer tested in the examination, teachers can now practice less structured literature activities that are not confined by the format presented in the examination. Teachers can now encourage limitless responses from the students as they are no longer chained to any answer schemes in accepting students' answer. As believed by Henry (2003), teachers should use the approach of no-wrong answer in teaching literature to the second language students. Nonetheless, in our view, students still need guidelines for them to arrive to their own personal response of the literary texts and teachers must act as facilitators that initiate the comprehension of the text. This is where English teachers can practice a more creative way of alluring students to appreciate the culture, value, theme, or issue that is portrayed in the literary texts.

We consider LiA as a call for teachers to make literature learning more meaningful for students. The logic (most probably) behind the reason of not including literature in the examination is to encourage a less scripted literature teaching practices so as to empower students' imaginative thinking. Goodwyn (2012) hypothesises that most people view literature as a reading activity that offers experiential, aesthetic, affective, and authentic essence. English teachers must be up to any recommended extend to immerse the students with all of these essences. Almost majority of second language students are not familiar with any English literary texts until the teachers introduce them in the classroom. This introductory phase is very crucial in setting students' mind in an excited, ready-to-explore-more, and interested attitudes towards learning that particular literary text. According to their research, Witte and Jansen (2015) conclude that the characteristics of a successful literature teacher must:

- i. Have the knowledge of his/her students as individual reader
- ii. Have a wide variety of teaching methods, and
- iii. Practice the integrated approach in the teaching of literature

Therefore, it is an on-going effort for teachers to keep finding out how to be effective in teaching literature in the Malaysian classroom because of the regular changes in the education system, and even then, to keep experimenting various ways to engage students with English literature.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Malaysian literature in English programme is always in constant change. Due to this, the effects of the particular literature component (positive or negative) are rarely monitored and thus, making less room for improvement or enhancement. With this in mind, one of the most important things to do is to go back and give the attention to what may enhance literature learning in the Malaysian classroom, which stems from the teachers' attitude towards literature themselves. As important as teachers who teach reading must love reading themselves, teachers who wants their students to love literature must first know how to appreciate literary texts too. Despite whatever curriculum structure the MOE has decided upon literature teaching and learning in Malaysia, at the end of the day English teachers still have the autonomy (even in the littlest sense) to construct the lesson planning and the way to go about opening the door for the students to experience literature learning in the best and most beneficial way possible.

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