Strata Social and Humanities Studies, 2026, Vol. 4, No. 2, 108–119
E-ISSN: 2987-2537 | P-ISSN: 2987-3193
doi: 10.59631/sshs.v4i2.632
Advance Access publication October 31, 2026

STRATA
SOCIAL AND HUMANITIES STUDIES
journals.stratapersada.com/index.php/sshs

Maslahah versus Utility: A Systematic Literature Review on the Determinants of Generation Z's Halal Consumption Decisions

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Article History	Submitted	Revised	Accepted
	2026-10-06	2026-10-17 & 2026-10-23	2026-10-29

Abstract

Generation Z's consumption of certified-halal products reveals a persistent tension between conventional utility maximization and the Islamic principle of maslahah. Existing studies largely rely on positivistic frameworks and fail to examine whether such decisions are driven by functional utility or by substantive maslahah. This study aims to identify the determinants of Gen Z's halal consumption decisions and to distinguish authentic maslahah-driven rationality from utility maximization within their digital-consumerist environment. Employing a qualitative systematic literature review and thematic synthesis of 34 peer-reviewed articles following PRISMA 2020, the analysis identifies five determinant clusters, with digital influencers and FOMO trends receiving the greatest scholarly attention. Through ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions, the study reconstructs the utility–maslahah contrast and proposes an integrative model in which authentic *maslahah*-oriented consumption emerges when high halal literacy and religiosity elevate the blessing component within the function M = U + B. The findings offer a more comprehensive theoretical framework than conventional utility theory and provide practical guidance for fostering genuine maqasid-oriented consumption.

Keywords: Generation Z, halal consumption, *maslahah*, systematic literature review, utility.

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of the 21st-century global economy are marked by the rising prominence of the halal industry and shifting consumer behavior led by Generation Z (Gen Z) (Yandrizal et al., 2026). Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z represents the first cohort of digital natives raised in an integrated information-technology ecosystem, interactive social media, and digital commercialization (Falah et al., 2024). In Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Gen Z constitutes a significant market segment that shapes the future trajectory of the sharia market (Nuryani et al., 2026). Yet empirical observations reveal a persistent tension: while Gen Z displays elevated ethical awareness and religious identity, their actual consumption of certified-halal products frequently coexists with strong exposure to consumerist culture, social-media-driven trends such as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and the pursuit of instantaneous physical satisfaction (Irmayanthy et al., 2025). This raises a fundamental question of Islamic microeconomics: are Gen Z's decisions regarding certified-halal products governed by conventional utility maximization or by the substantive Islamic principle of maslahah?

This question carries substantial urgency. The rapid expansion of the global and domestic halal market (Khasanah, 2026), combined with Gen Z's growing demographic weight and increasing purchasing power, means that the orientation of their consumption decisions will significantly influence the long-term integrity and direction of the sharia economy. In a digital environment saturated with lifestyle content and social validation pressures, the boundary between authentic religious commitment and symbolic consumption has become increasingly blurred. If symbolic or hedonic motives continue to dominate over genuine adherence to maslahah, the risk of "pseudo-maslahah" consumption rises, potentially eroding the ethical foundations of Islamic economics and undermining the sustainable development goals that the halal industry is expected to support.

To understand the theoretical root of this behavioral distortion, it is necessary to examine how conventional microeconomic theory constructs consumer choice. Conventional microeconomic theory constructs consumer behavior upon the axiom of utility maximization (Karacuka & Zaman, 2012), inherited from Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism and developed by Alfred Marshall (Becchetti et al., 2020). It assumes the individual to be a rational *homo economicus* who continually seeks to maximize unbounded material satisfaction under budget constraints (Lahuri & Labolo, 2023; Melé & Cantón, 2014). Preferences are treated as purely subjective measures of physical or psychological pleasure, devoid of moral, ethical, or religious criteria. In contrast, Islamic microeconomics advances an alternative paradigm grounded in the theory of *maslahah* (Rinaldi & Afifah, 2026). Articulated by classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali (1901) and Al-Shatibi (1997) and further developed by contemporary Muslim economists including Chapra (1979, 1992) and Kahf (1989), consumption aims not at material utility alone but at the fulfillment of essential human needs that promote welfare, benefit, and protection from harm in pursuit of *falah*—genuine well-being in this world and the hereafter. Islamic consumption therefore subjects individual preferences to a *shar'i* filter of *halal* and *haram* boundaries and prohibits *israf* (extravagance) and *tabzir* (wasteful dissipation of wealth) (Budiman, 2025; Nurana et al., 2026).

Existing empirical studies on Gen Z's halal consumption, however, predominantly adopt conventional social-psychology frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior or UTAUT (Lada et al., 2009; Prasasti et al., 2024; Abdullah et al., 2025; Raza et al., 2025; Faqihuddin et al., 2026). These approaches typically test variables such as price perception (Djunaidi et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2026), awareness (Primulin & Abror, 2026), and peer influence (Anugrah & Fajri, 2026) in a positivistic manner without decomposing whether the purchase of certified-halal products is driven by functional utility calculations or by substantive adherence to maslahah. Consequently, a significant research gap persists. The literature has yet to reconstruct the utility–maslahah dichotomy within the socio-digital realities of Gen Z, leaving open the possibility that much of what is observed as "halal consumption" may in fact constitute symbolic-hedonic behavior that contradicts the foundational principles of Islamic economics. To address the gap, the present study develops an integrative conceptual model that synthesizes the philosophical principles of Islamic microeconomics with the socio-digital phenomena of Generation Z. Drawing on complementary frameworks advanced by Islamic economics scholars (Wartoyo & Haida, 2023; Wartoyo et al., 2024; Irmayanthy et al., 2025; Layaman, 2015; Layaman et al., 2021), the model reconstructs the utility–maslahah contrast through three normative-philosophical dimensions—ontological, epistemological, and axiological—while mapping the key determinants of Gen Z's halal consumption decisions.

The primary objectives of this study are: (1) to identify and conceptualize the determinants that shape Gen Z's decisions to consume certified-halal products, and (2) to distinguish authentic maslahah-driven rationality from conventional utility maximization within their digital-consumerist environment. The main research challenges lie in operationalizing the abstract concept of maslahah in a measurable conceptual framework and in disentangling symbolic religious identity from substantive ethical commitment amid pervasive digital influences. By overcoming the limitations of prior positivistic approaches, this study contributes theoretically to the clarification of Islamic consumer rationality in the digital age and offers practical guidance for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and educators seeking to align the halal industry with genuine maqasid-oriented sustainability.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library-research design operationalized through systematic literature review (SLR) and thematic synthesis, following the guidelines of Thomas and Harden (2008) and the PRISMA 2020 reporting standards (Page et al., 2021). The qualitative library approach was selected because it enables systematic deconstruction, reconstruction, and evaluation of theoretical constructs and philosophical thought drawn from high-quality scholarly publications. The SLR protocol was executed in four transparent stages. Identification involved searching the primary academic databases Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Sinta using structured Boolean combinations of the keywords ("Maslahah" OR "Utility") AND ("Halal Consumption" OR "Islamic Consumer Behavior") AND ("Gen Z" OR "Generation Z"). The initial search yielded 142 records. Screening applied explicit inclusion criteria (peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2026 in English or Indonesian, focused on Islamic economics or consumer behavior) and exclusion criteria (non-peer-reviewed sources, absence of DOI, and topics outside halal products or Generation Z), reducing the corpus to 68 articles. Full-text

eligibility assessment then retained 45 articles on the basis of substantive theoretical contribution, and the final included set comprised 34 core scientific articles together with essential classical and contemporary literature. For greater clarity, this can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Literature Selection Protocol for the Systematic Literature Review (PRISMA 2020)

Stage	Operational Procedure	Criteria & Extraction Focus	Number of Articles
Identification	Structured Boolean search across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Sinta	Keywords: Maslahah, Utility, Gen Z, Halal Consumption	142
Screening	Title/abstract screening and duplicate removal	Exclusion of duplicates and non-peer-reviewed items	68
Eligibility	Full-text assessment of methodological fit and relevance	Inclusion of studies on Islamic consumption theory and Gen Z behavior	45
Included	Final sample for data extraction and thematic synthesis	34 primary articles + classical literature (Al-Ghazali, Al-Shatibi, Chapra)	34

Thematic synthesis proceeded in three sequential qualitative stages: (1) free line-by-line coding of qualitative and quantitative findings from the 34 included articles; (2) organization of free codes into descriptive themes concerning the determinants of Gen Z halal consumption; and (3) development of higher-order analytical themes that reconstruct the theoretical relationship between maslahah and utility. To ensure philosophical depth consistent with Islamic microeconomics, the analytical themes were examined through three interdependent normative-philosophical dimensions that emerged directly from the coded literature: the ontological (shar'i) dimension, which interrogates the objective nature of halal–haram boundaries and the filtering function of Islamic law on consumer preferences; the epistemological (maqasidi) dimension, which reconstructs consumer rationality by decomposing the maslahah function and the hierarchical needs of maqasid al-shariah; and the axiological (ethical-spiritual) dimension, which evaluates the ethical value of consumption, its contribution to falah, and the social-environmental responsibility required to prevent israf and tabzir. This integrated procedure guarantees both systematic transparency and conceptual rigor in addressing the study's research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review and thematic synthesis of the 34 included articles produced a comprehensive mapping of the principal determinants shaping Generation Z's decisions to consume certified-halal products. The synthesis organised these determinants into five dominant clusters, which are summarised in Table 2 together with their key behavioural indicators, the mechanisms through which they influence Gen Z, and the relative weight of supporting literature.

Table 2. Thematic Synthesis Mapping of Determinants of Generation Z's Halal Product Consumption Decisions

Determinant Cluster	Key Behavioural Indicators	Mechanism of Influence on Gen Z	Literature Proportion
Digital Influencers & FOMO Trends	TikTok/IG recommendations, halal lifestyle content, social-prestige cues	Generates aesthetic appeal and imitative desire for physical trends (high hedonic utility)	29.4% (10 articles)
Halal Literacy & Knowledge	Understanding of *thayyib* criteria, critical points of *syubhat* ingredients, *maqasid* awareness	Fosters rational-substantive consciousness of health and purity (*maslahah*)	23.5% (8 articles)
Halal Certification & Branding	Official BPJPH/MUI logo, brand credibility, legal certainty	Provides quality signals that build security and trust	20.6% (7 articles)
4. Religiosity & Value Orientation	Internalisation of *tawhid*, worship commitment, awareness of the hereafter (*falah*)	Functions as an internal ethical fortress and *shar'i* filter in product selection	14.7% (5 articles)
Peer Pressure & Social Environment	Peer-group influence, subjective norms of campus/digital communities	Encourages conformity to group standards of halal purchasing behaviour	11.8% (4 articles)

The distribution revealed in Table 2 indicates that digital and social-media forces (Cluster 1) are the most frequently discussed theme in the synthesised literature, accounting for nearly one-third of the included articles. This pattern in the literature suggests that current research has paid particular attention to aesthetic presentation, influencer endorsement, and FOMO-related pressures. In contrast, the second-largest cluster—halal literacy and knowledge (23.5%)—points to a stream of studies that emphasise a more maslahah-oriented pathway grounded in cognitive understanding of thayyib standards and maqasid principles. Certification and branding (20.6%) occupy an intermediate position, while religiosity and peer-pressure effects appear less frequently in the reviewed studies. Collectively, the uneven distribution of topics in the existing literature indicates that research on Gen Z's halal consumption has so far given greater visibility to utility-related drivers than to substantive maslahah-oriented motivations. This unevenness in scholarly attention supplies the empirical foundation for the subsequent ontological, epistemological, and axiological analyses.

Ontological Dimension Analysis: Halal–Haram as Absolute Choice Constraint

Ontologically, the essence of a halal product in Islam is not merely a commercial label or an ordinary quality attribute, but a manifestation of divine legal command (*khitab Allah*) that governs the relationship between human beings, their Creator, and the universe (Alpasa & Syam'ani, 2025). In conventional microeconomics the consumer's choice set is continuous and is constrained

solely by the budget line ($Y = P_1X_1 + P_2X_2$). Consumers are free to select any combination of goods that yields positive utility provided income is sufficient.

By contrast, the ontological analysis of Islamic microeconomics, grounded in the thematic clusters of the present SLR, demonstrates that the *shar'i* filter of *halal–haram* partitions the entire commodity space into two discrete and mutually exclusive sets: the Halal set (H) and the Haram set (R). A Muslim consumer who is rational in the *shar'i* sense eliminates all *haram* commodities from the feasible set, rendering the individual utility function undefined over the *haram* domain (U(R) = undefined/nil). Consequently, the *halal–haram* principle operates as an Absolute Choice Constraint. The synthesised literature (particularly Clusters 3 and 4) shows that, even while Gen Z is heavily exposed to diverse digital lifestyles (Cluster 1), an ontological awareness of the necessity of consuming only *halal* goods continues to function as the primary ethical boundary that prevents the purchase of food, beverages or services proven to be *haram*.

Epistemological Dimension Analysis: The Shift of Rational Choice from Utility to Maslahah

Epistemologically, consumer rationality in Islamic microeconomics undergoes a fundamental deconstruction from utility maximisation to *maslahah* pursuit (Fadllan & Lailatul Maufiroh, 2024). Conventional microeconomic theory rests on three foundational axioms—completeness, transitivity and non-satiation (unbounded wants) (Shone, 1975). The axiom of non-satiation is rejected within Islamic epistemology because it fosters greed and the neglect of spiritual limits.

Through the reconstructed *maslahah* function M = U + B, and drawing directly upon the relative weights of the thematic clusters, Islamic epistemology explains Gen Z's halal-purchase decisions as the interaction of two drives: (1) the Utility drive (U), measured by sensory satisfaction, taste, packaging aesthetics, affordable price and social prestige (a theme that appears most frequently in the reviewed literature, particularly within Cluster 1); and (2) the Blessing drive (B), measured by inner tranquillity, certainty of freedom from *syubhat*, assurance of *thayyib* healthfulness, and the intention to seek divine pleasure (prominent in Clusters 2 and 4). When Gen Z purchases a certified-halal product merely to follow aesthetic social-media trends without grasping the essence of purity and *shar'i* compliance, the value of B approaches zero and the act remains at the level of 'utility-oriented' or symbolically driven halal consumption—a pattern that has received comparatively greater attention in studies focusing on digital influencers and FOMO.

Conversely, when Gen Z possesses high halal literacy (Cluster 2) supported by religious commitment (Cluster 4), the hierarchy of *maqasid al-shariah* needs is internalised: priority is given to *halal* products that satisfy *dharuriyyat* (health and survival) and *hajiyyat* (convenience and efficiency) before *tahsiniyyat* (beauty and lifestyle). At this point rational choice is epistemologically transformed into '*maslahah*-oriented consumption', a shift that the thematic synthesis shows is still less frequently documented yet conceptually decisive.

Axiological Dimension Analysis: Ethical Implications, the Attainment of Falah, and the Danger of Pseudo-Maslahah

The axiological dimension evaluates the ethical value and ultimate (teleological) purpose of consumption (Kouarfaté, 2025). The highest aim of Islamic consumption is the attainment of *falah* (Mutmainnah et al., 2026; Rohmana, 2022)—holistic well-being encompassing spiritual

tranquillity, physical health, social harmony and salvation in the hereafter (Al-Thani, 2025; Faizah & Kurniawati, 2026; Faozan et al., 2022; Kader, 2021). In the thought of Wartoyo (Wartoyo, 2022; Wartoyo & Haida, 2023; Irmayanthy et al., 2025), the axiology of Islamic consumption explicitly prohibits *israf* (excess in the consumption of even *halal* goods) and *tabzir* (the purchase of useless items or the wasteful dissipation of wealth). Wartoyo (2022) emphasises that genuine *halal* consumption must contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example by preserving ecological balance, alleviating poverty through *zakat* and *sadaqah* drawn from residual income, and promoting social justice.

The axiological reading of the thematic clusters reveals the concrete danger of 'pseudo-*maslahah*' or 'halal consumerism' among Generation Z. This phenomenon occurs when Gen Z massively purchases lifestyle *halal* products (fashion, cosmetics, certified-halal hang-out venues) in excess, solely for social-media content or hedonic trend satisfaction (a behavioural pattern that is frequently highlighted in the digital-influencer and FOMO-related studies within the synthesised corpus). Although the goods themselves are legally *halal*, the impulsive and comparative consumption violates Islamic axiological values by falling into *israf* and dissipating economic resources that could otherwise be allocated to *sharia*-compliant savings or Islamic philanthropy (ZISWAF). Thus the SLR evidence indicates that without a strong axiological anchor supplied by religiosity and *maqasid* literacy (Clusters 2 and 4), the numerical expansion of *halal* markets risks remaining ethically hollow.

Synthesis of Wartoyo's and Layaman's Thought into an Integrative Model of Generation Z Halal Consumption Behaviour

To integrate the qualitative findings of the thematic synthesis with the three normative-philosophical analyses, this article constructs an Integrative Model of Generation Z Halal Consumption Behaviour that draws upon the complementary insights of Wartoyo and Layaman. Wartoyo's emphasis on *maqasid al-shariah* compliance and the attainment of *falah* (Wartoyo & Haida, 2023; Irmayanthy et al., 2025) functions as the 'Spiritual & Ethical Anchor' that orients the ultimate purpose of consumption and guards against *israf* and *tabzir*. Layaman's contributions concerning knowledge leadership, strategic value proposition and consumer trust (Layaman et al., 2021) operate as the 'Strategic & Managerial Driver' that translates ethical orientation into concrete market behaviour. Together these two strands, when read against the five determinant clusters of Table 2, explain how Gen Z's consumption can shift from utility-dominated patterns (especially Cluster 1) toward genuine *maslahah*-oriented rationality (Clusters 2 and 4).

Table 3. Synthesis Matrix of the Three Normative-Philosophical Dimensions of Generation Z Consumption Behaviour

hilosophical Dimension	**Key Guiding Question**	**Implication for Gen Z Consumption Decisions**	**Contribution of SSC Thought**
Ontological (*Shar'i*)	Is the product essentially *halal-thayyib*?	*Halal–haram* operates as an Absolute Choice Constraint that filters out *haram* goods	Halal certification as an instrument of legal certainty (Wartoyo)

Epistemological (*Maqasidi*)	How is the rationality of expenditure satisfaction constructed?	Transformation of rationality from Utility (U) to *Maslahah* (M = U + B)	Sharia value perception and knowledge sharing in consumer decisions (Layaman)
Axiological (Ethical-Spiritual)	Does consumption lead to *falah* and prevent *israf/tabzir*?	Long-term orientation toward blessing and social-environmental responsibility	Actualisation of *maqasid al-shariah* and SDGs in sustainable consumption (Wartoyo)

Table 3 crystallises the integrative model by mapping each philosophical dimension onto a concrete decision question, its behavioural implication for Gen Z, and the corresponding theoretical contribution drawn from the SSC scholars. The ontological row anchors the Absolute Choice Constraint in the practical instrument of certification, thereby linking Cluster 3 (halal certification & branding) to the foundational shar'i filter. The epistemological row captures the shift from pure utility to maslahah (M = U + B) and assigns Layaman's knowledge-sharing and value-perception constructs as the cognitive mechanisms that elevate Clusters 2 and 4 above the hedonic dominance of Cluster 1. Finally, the axiological row situates Wartoyo's maqasid-SDGs framing as the ethical safeguard against the pseudo-maslahah risk identified in the digital-influencer literature. Read as a whole, the matrix demonstrates that an authentic maslahah-oriented consumption pattern among Generation Z emerges only when the spiritual-ethical anchor and the strategic-managerial driver operate in tandem—precisely the condition that the present systematic synthesis shows is still unevenly realised in the contemporary literature.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review of 34 articles reveals that Generation Z's halal consumption decisions are shaped by five main determinant clusters, with digital influencers and FOMO trends receiving the greatest scholarly attention, followed by halal literacy, certification and branding, religiosity, and peer pressure. The analysis across ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions demonstrates that while the *halal–haram* distinction functions as an absolute choice constraint, Gen Z's actual rationality often remains utility-oriented when digital and hedonic drivers dominate. Authentic *maslahah*-oriented consumption emerges only when high halal literacy and strong religiosity elevate the "blessing" component (B) within the reconstructed function M = U + B, supported by an integrative model that combines a spiritual-ethical anchor with strategic-managerial drivers. Theoretically, these findings reconstruct the utility–*maslahah* dichotomy in the digital age and offer a more comprehensive framework than conventional utility theory; practically, they provide guidance for curriculum development, halal industry stakeholders, and policymakers seeking to foster genuine *maqasid*-oriented consumption rather than symbolic or *pseudo-maslahah* behaviour.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on existing literature, which is unevenly distributed across themes and predominantly reflects research trends rather than direct

behavioural measurement. Future research should therefore employ empirical methods—both quantitative and qualitative—to test the proposed integrative model, measure the relative strength of utility versus *maslahah* drivers among Gen Z, and examine how digital interventions can strengthen *maslahah*-oriented rationality in real consumption contexts.

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