

Investigating Factors Shaping Sunnah-Based Product Consumption among University Students

*Annurizal Anuar¹, Abdul Kadir Othman², Siti Noorsuriani Maon¹, Mohd Zulkifli Abdullah¹,
Mohd Redhuan Dzulkpli¹, Noor Zaihan Mat Hasan@Mat Hussin¹

¹Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor, Malaysia

²Institute of Business Excellence, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

*annurizal@uitm.edu.my, abdkadir@uitm.edu.my

Abstract: Health problems have increased because of modern lives, especially in young people because of poor nutrition and improper eating habits. Inspired by Islamic teachings, especially the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), this study attempts to investigate the factors impacting Sunnah-based product consumption among Muslim college students. Data were gathered by utilizing a correlational research approach and questionnaires given to 476 Muslim university students. According to the study, 96.6% of respondents were aware of Sunnah-based products, and a sizable majority (93.9%) favored them. Childhood exposure to such products (44.3%) points to familial or cultural impacts. The frequency of consumption varied, though, with 41.8% consuming Sunnah-based goods on occasion. Taste concerns were negligible (12.0%) and accessibility issues (23.9%) emerged as the main obstacles to consumption, followed by high pricing (56.5%). Positive sentiments notwithstanding, real-world barriers impede widespread adoption. These results highlight how critical it is to remove obstacles preventing Muslim youth from using Sunnah-based products. Interventions can be designed to encourage healthy eating habits in line with Islamic teachings by knowing the factors influencing their decisions. This will ultimately improve the general health and well-being of Muslim communities.

Keywords: *Sunnah food, Sunnah-based products, University students, Malaysia*

1. Introduction and Background

Modern civilization is experiencing an increase in health issues because of unhealthy eating conditions, obesity, poor nutrition, and unhealthy eating habits among young individuals. Scientific studies indicate that unhealthy and unbalanced diets increase the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension. Allah has stated in the Holy Quran in Surat Al-Baqarah (2:172) that Muslims must eat "good things," which are the nutritious, hygienic, pure, and wholesome foods that the Almighty has provided for humankind. Muslims should take great inspiration from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to attain and maintain excellent physical and mental health. Muslims must also follow and put into practice all the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), according to Surat Al-Nisa (4:59). In addition, society can benefit greatly from the Prophet's teachings on eating and other aspects of life.

Our eating habits today are quite different from those of previous generations. Emerging, possibly lethal illnesses connected to nutrition are a sign that something is wrong with our lifestyle, particularly the way we eat. The right diet can have a significant influence on the heart and even the spirit, so it must be carefully chosen. Green (1979) is another Western scientist who agrees that an individual's identity is greatly shaped by their heart. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said in a well-known hadith, "In a body, there is a lump of flesh; if the flesh is good, the whole body becomes good and if the source is bad, the whole body becomes bad and indeed it is the heart" (Al-Bukhari, 2002).

Sunnah foods are those that have been examined in the Hadith and al-Quran and have been shown to have several health benefits. Additionally, it is the guidance given to Muslims by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to live better and healthier lives (Hashman, 2011). Sunnah food labeling must also adhere to the fundamentals of halal and good (*halalan toyyiban*), which begin with the preparation of raw materials and continue through material processing until the finished product is completed. The traditions and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are known as the "sunnah," an Arabic term, and are intended to be followed by all Muslims. Islamic dietary rules are based on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s sunnah, or recommended, eating regimen.

But even with the possible health benefits and religious prohibitions, there is still a lack of knowledge about what factors influence the use of sunnah-based products, especially among Muslim college students. It is

imperative to close this gap since eating choices have a big impact on general health and well-being. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the factors influencing Muslim university students' usage of sunnah-based products by (i) identifying the underlying factors influencing Muslim youth in the consumption of sunnah-based products, (ii) examining the relationship between social norms and the consumption of sunnah-based products among Muslim university students and (iii) investigating the relationship between health considerations and the preference for sunnah-based products among Muslim university students.

2. Literature Review

Allah granted Prophet Muhammad the position of Uswah Hasanah (role model). Allah SWT stated that the Prophet Muhammad serves as a positive example for believers. Surah Al-Ahzab 33:21 and Surah Al Qalam 68:4 highlight the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a role model for Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serves as a model for mankind, with his health and personal hygiene practices providing advice for his followers. Following a Sunnah diet, based on the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), significantly improves human health, and positively impacts an individual's overall well-being. The Quran and Sunnah promote nutrient-rich foods and prohibit consuming anything shown to be hazardous or with more disadvantages than benefits. Sunnah food, which includes herbal knowledge, sanitation, and dietary practices, originated during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It includes medicinal recipes that the Prophet (PBUH) used for his treatment or recommended for others. Furthermore, it includes practical guidance for human health, such as daily dietary habits and strategies for preventing and managing illnesses.

The Quran offers profound guidance on nutrition, underscoring its significance for humanity's well-being. In Surah Al-Baqarah 2:168, a directive is issued to mankind, urging them to consume what is lawful and wholesome on the earth. This verse emphasizes the importance of adhering to dietary practices that are permissible and beneficial, reflecting a holistic approach to sustenance. Similarly, Surah Ta-Ha 20:81 admonishes individuals to partake of the provisions bestowed upon them by the Divine, emphasizing the consumption of wholesome and nourishing sustenance.

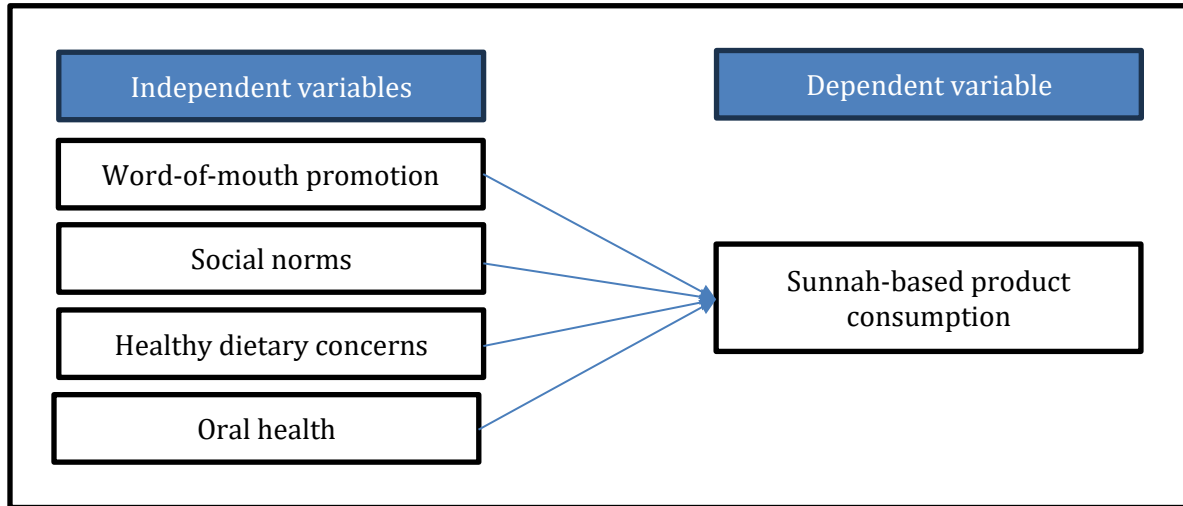
The consumption of Sunnah-based products among university students holds significant cultural, religious, and health-related implications within Muslim communities. Understanding the factors influencing the consumption patterns of Sunnah-based products is essential for elucidating the complex interplay between cultural practices, religious beliefs, and consumer behavior among this demographic. Investigating factors shaping Sunnah-based product consumption among university students reveals a multifaceted interplay of cultural, religious, and health-related influences. Sunnah-based products, rooted in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), carry significant cultural and religious significance within Muslim communities, symbolizing adherence to prophetic traditions and preserving cultural heritage. Studies highlight the cultural importance attached to Sunnah-based product consumption among university students, reflecting a desire to uphold religious teachings and maintain cultural identity (Syed Hassan & Baharuddin, 2021; Ishak et al., 2013).

Additionally, Sunnah-based products are valued for their potential health benefits, with items such as honey, black seed oil, and *miswak* praised for their medicinal properties and nutritional value (Al-Ghazal & Mawas, 2020). Peer interactions, family dynamics, and societal norms play a pivotal role in shaping consumption patterns, with word-of-mouth promotion, social norms, and peer recommendations influencing product preferences and purchasing decisions (Michaelidou, & Hassan, 2014; Ajzen, 2015). Despite the merits of Sunnah-based product consumption, university students may encounter barriers such as cost, availability, and awareness. Practical challenges, coupled with competing consumer preferences, may hinder widespread adoption among student populations, necessitating collaborative efforts to promote awareness, affordability, and accessibility of Sunnah-based products on university campuses and beyond. Further research is warranted to explore the nuanced dynamics of Sunnah-based product consumption and its implications for the health and well-being of university students.

Figure 1 below shows the framework of the study that highlights the relationships between factors that influence students' Sunnah-based product consumption. The factors comprise word-of-mouth promotion, social norms, healthy dietary concerns, and oral health. Studies have shown that word-of-mouth promotion influences product consumption (Gildin, 2022; Liu et al., 2021). Similarly, previous studies have shown that

social norms influence consumers' product consumption (Ali et al., 2023; Hosta, & Zabkar, 2021). Healthy dietary concerns are associated with consumers' product consumption in previous studies (Alae-Carew et al., 2022; Petrescu et al., 2020). Another variable that is important to influence product consumption is oral health. Studies have also shown that oral health is one of the reasons consumers choose products to consume (Janakiram et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Based on the discussion, the following research framework is proposed.

Figure 1: Research framework of the study depicting the relationship between influential factors and Sunnah-based product consumption among students



3. Research Methodology

A correlational research design was used for the investigation. Data were collected using personally administered questionnaires from students at public universities. With a total of 34 items on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), this study employed a quantitative research methodology using instruments from multiple sources, including Islamic and scientific materials. The sampling frame for this study comprised final-year students of the Faculty of Health Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Puncak Alam. The physical questionnaire was personally distributed to selected Muslim university students by the researchers. At the end of the data collection period, a total of 476 sets of questionnaires were collected, indicating a 100% response rate. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Software (SPSS) version 28.0.

4. Results

Referring to Table 1, the study included a total of 476 participants, and 70% of them were women. Most participants (65.3%) were between the ages of 21 and 23, which aligns with their current academic endeavors. Based on the findings, most respondents (96.6%) were aware of Sunnah-based products, and many of them (93.9%) preferred these products over other alternatives. A noteworthy finding was that a sizeable segment of the respondents (44.3%) had been exposed to Sunnah-based products at an early age, possibly due to cultural or familial customs. 25.2% of the respondents started consuming them more recently. The frequency of consumption varied among respondents, with 41.8% occasionally consuming Sunnah-based products and 38.9% rarely doing so. While respondents generally held favorable views towards Sunnah-based products, the biggest barriers to their use were high prices (56.5%) and accessibility issues (23.9%). A small group of respondents (12.0%) expressed concerns about the taste or lack thereof. Despite the younger generation's receptiveness to these products, the practical hurdles such as cost and availability could impede their widespread adoption.

Profile of Respondents: Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the total sample of students who participated in the study.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER		
Males	143	30%
Females	333	70%
Total	476	100%
AGE		
18-20	12	2.5%
21-23	311	65.3%
24-26	121	25.4%
27 and above	32	6.7%
Total	476	100%
SUNNAH-BASED PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE		
Yes	460	96.6%
No	16	3.4%
Total	476	100%
SUNNAH-BASED PRODUCT PREFERENCE		
Yes	447	69.5%
No	29	5.5%
Total	476	100%
FIRST-TIME CONSUMED SUNNAH-BASED PRODUCTS		
None	52	10.9%
Childhood	211	44.3%
Recently	120	25.2%
Teenagerhood	93	19.5%
Total	476	100%
FREQUENCY OF CONSUMING SUNNAH-BASED PRODUCTS		
Most of the time	42	8.8%
Sometimes	189	41.8%
Always	50	10.5%
Seldom	185	38.9%
Total	466	100%
REASONS FOR NOT CONSUMING SUNNAH-BASED PRODUCTS		
Hard to get	114	23.9%
Expensive	169	56.5%
Tasteless	57	12%
Others	36	7.8%
Total	376	100%

Table 2 shows the results of factor analysis for the independent variables. A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotations was performed to examine the dimensionality of items measuring the contributing factors of Sunnah-based product consumption. The results of the factor analysis show that the test produced a desirable outcome with a KMO value of .851, which indicates a sufficient correlation matrix for performing the analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at the 0.01 level.

From the results, four factors are extracted explaining 59.9% of the variance in the model. The first factor contains five items measuring word-of-mouth promotion of Sunnah-based products. The factor loadings range from .709 to .784. The second factor also contains five items measuring social norms including values, attitudes, and behavior. The factors loadings are from .623 to .794. The third factor has four items meant to assess healthy

dietary concerns. This factor has loadings ranging from .524 to .849. The last factor concerns oral health which was measured using four items. The factor loadings range from .480 to .788. The average (mean) value of items representing the respective factors was calculated to be used in the subsequent analysis.

Table 2: Results of factor analysis of the independent variables.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
I know someone who has consumed sunnah-based products and the benefits of consuming them.	.784			
I trust my relatives and friends to share their experiences after consuming Sunnah-based products.	.774			
I received information about sunnah-based products from my relatives and friends.	.737			
My relatives and friends seem to enjoy sharing their knowledge about Sunnah-based products with me.	.724			
Most of my relatives and friends recommended me to consume sunnah-based products.	.709			
Consuming sunnah-based products allows for controlling personal health.		.794		
I used to consume sunnah-based products because of the easiness of preparing the food.		.762		
I am willing to spend more of my money to purchase Sunnah-based products.		.673		
I used to consume sunnah-based products because the ingredients consisted of healthy food.		.631		
I recommended others to consume Sunnah-based products.		.623		
Milk is the best drink described in Al Quran.			.849	
Either 'Habbatussauda' can cure all diseases except death.			.804	
Honey is the most nutritional food mentioned in Al-Quran.			.756	
The level of health is the factor that I consume Sunnah-based products.			.524	
I used to choose the ingredients that contained 'Kayu Sugi' in my toothpaste.				.788
Using 'Kayu Sugi' will give me good health for my teeth.				.777
I will ask my family and friends to change their toothpaste which consists of 'Kayu Sugi' contains in toothpaste.				.586
'Kayu Sugi' is the best which to replace the toothbrush.				.480
% of variance explained (59.9%)	17.4	16.6	14.7	11.2
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.				.851
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			Approx. Chi-Square	3250.272
			df	153
			Sig.	.000

Table 3 shows the results of factor analysis for the dependent variable. The factor analysis produced a desirable outcome since the KMO value is higher than the threshold value of 0.6 (KOM=.818). Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant, indicating that there is enough correlation between items to proceed with the test. The dependent variable, Sunnah-based product consumption, has six items with loadings ranging from .484 to .781. The average (mean) value of the six items was calculated to be used in the subsequent analysis.

Table 3: Results of factor analysis of the dependent variable.

	Component 1
The ingredients of Sunnah-based products are out of curiosity and Halal.	.781
Sunnah-based products have high nutrients.	.764
Sunnah-based products are free from chemical and artificial ingredients.	.762
Sunnah-based products are better than any other supplement.	.740
Sunnah-based products should be made for scientific research for their validity, efficacy, and benefits to health.	.597
I am highly aware of Sunnah-based products.	.484

% of variance explained	48.6
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.818
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	748.138
df	15
Sig.	.000

Table 4 shows the results of descriptive, reliability, and correlation analyses. For descriptive analysis, Sunnah-based product consumption recorded the highest mean value (M=4.12; SD=.53) while word-of-mouth promotion scored the lowest (M=3.49; SD=.73). These findings indicate that the respondents are consuming Sunnah-based products, but they are less willing to promote the products to others because it is not the Malaysian culture to promote something to others. Results of the reliability analysis are presented in parentheses along the diagonal. Word-of-mouth promotion had the highest Cronbach's alpha value ($\alpha=.848$) while Oral health scored the lowest ($\alpha=.609$) but is still considered acceptable for the study.

Regarding the results of the correlation analysis, all independent variables are significantly correlated with each other (moderate to low correlation), indicating convergent validity. The highest correlation score is between word-of-mouth promotion and social norms ($r=.296$; $p<.01$) and the lowest correlation score is between health dietary concerns and oral health ($r=.490$; $p<.01$). Furthermore, all independent variables are significantly related to the dependent variable, indicating concurrent validity. The highest correlation score is between health dietary concerns and Sunnah-based product consumption ($r=.534$; $p<.01$) and the lowest correlation score is between word-of-mouth promotion and Sunnah-based product consumption ($r=.342$; $p<.01$).

Table 4: Results of descriptive, reliability, and correlation analyses

No		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Word-of-Mouth Promotion	3.49	.73	(.848)				
2	Social Norms	3.77	.64	.490**	(.796)			
3	Healthy Dietary Concerns	4.07	.64	.394**	.252**	(.790)		
4	Oral Health	3.60	.59	.301**	.321**	.296**	(.609)	
5	Sunnah-based Product Consumption	4.12	.53	.342**	.368**	.534**	.406**	(.778)

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed); N=476; Cronbach's alphas along the diagonal in the parentheses

The analysis proceeded with a multiple regression analysis and the results are shown in Table 5. The R square value of .385 indicates that 38.5% of the variance in the regression model is explained by the four independent variables. The remaining variance is the unexplained variance, thus, requiring the consideration of additional variables in future studies. The regression model is significant ($F(4, 471)=73.704$; $p<.01$). Out of four variables, word-of-mouth promotion is not significant ($\beta=.024$; $p>.05$). The most plausible reason for the finding is that Malaysian consumers are less likely to engage in a voluntary act of promoting any products because it is not ingrained in our culture. The other three variables are significant; social norms ($\beta=.182$; $p<.01$), healthy dietary concerns ($\beta=.414$; $p<.01$), and oral health ($\beta=.218$; $p<.01$). As expected, these three variables are the significant predictors of Sunnah-based product consumption because as Muslims, the consumers are well-informed on the values of the products, the nutritional content of the products for physical health and the benefit of the products for oral health. All these contribute to the consumption of the Sunnah-based products among the consumers.

Table 5: Results of a multiple regression analysis

	Standardized Coefficients	
	Beta	Sig.
Word-of-Mouth Promotion	.024	.587
Social Norms	.182	.000
Healthy Dietary Concerns	.414	.000
Oral Health	.218	.000
R	.620	

R square	.385
Adjusted R Square	.380
F value	73.704
Sig. F value	.000
Durbin Watson	1.711

Discussion

In Muslim communities, the consumption of Sunnah-based products holds significant cultural and religious importance. It is crucial to learn the factors influencing the consumption patterns of these products among university students.

Based on the present study findings, there are valuable insights into the consumption patterns and determinants of Sunnah-based products among university students. According to this present study, a significant proportion of respondents were aware of Sunnah-based products and expressed a preference for them over other alternatives. Most respondents believed in possessing knowledge about sunnah-based products, which became their preference. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the cultural and religious significance of Sunnah-based products within Muslim communities (Syed Hassan, & Baharuddin, 2021; Ishak et al., 2013; Anwar, & Yusoff, 2022). Nearly all the respondents were exposed to Sunnah-based products at an early age, possibly due to cultural or familial customs. This highlights the influence of socialization and cultural practices in shaping consumer preferences from a young age (Hota, & Bartsch, 2019). Moreover, it is said that children's eating style will follow their family's eating style (Akar, 2023). On the other hand, nearly half of the people who participated in the survey stated that they sometimes skipped consuming these goods because of the expensive elements as reasons for choosing not to buy sunnah-based products.

Although the younger generation is responsive to these items, it is possible to conclude that the broad acceptance of these products could be hindered by practical challenges such as the cost and availability of these products. This is aligned with a study that found that most respondents have a high level of knowledge on sunnah food, however, there are practical challenges in eating them because of their availability and capability of securing them from the local market. Thus, it is suggested that the government reduce the cost of Sunnah foods such as olives, pomegranates, figs, and dates and always make them available to the population, including Eastern Malaysia such as Sabah and Sarawak (Latif & Rahman, 2020).

Correlation analysis confirmed the convergent and concurrent validity of the identified factors, further validating their relevance in explaining Sunnah-based product consumption behavior. A significant relationship was found between independent variables and the consumption of sunnah-based products. The independent variables include word-of-mouth promotion, social norms, healthy diet concerns, and oral health. The dependent variable highlights the interconnectedness of social, cultural, and health-related factors in shaping consumer choices (Michaelidou, & Hassan, 2014; Ajzen, 2015). The importance of healthy diets has significant implications for oral health. Both parental guidance during formative years and peer influences have shaped this behavior. Thus, embracing healthy dietary behavior is conducive to enhancing the overall quality of life and promoting well-being.

Regression analysis provided additional insights into the predictive power of the identified factors on Sunnah-based product consumption. While word-of-mouth promotion did not emerge as a significant predictor, social norms, healthy dietary concerns, and oral health were identified as significant predictors. The present study findings indicate that the most significant predictor is the healthy dietary concerns among university students. This is aligned with previous studies that revealed the importance of social norms, health benefits, and oral hygiene considerations in influencing consumer preferences and behavior (Higgs, & Ruddock, 2020; Slavica, & Mirjana, 2023; Enshaei et al., 2018). In terms of Islamic literature, food and health are well established. Muslims are advised to consume good food and are taught to be careful about the food they consume, ensuring that it is halal, healthy, and good for their health. It is believed that one forbidden food that enters our body will affect not only our inner strength but even our children's inner strength. Those who practice Islam should be mindful of avoiding prohibited foods to be recognized as Allah's servants and raise a virtuous generation. The Muslims then need to ask Allah SWT for lawful sustenance and good deeds. In Surah Al-Baqarah 2:172, Muslims are obligated to consume good things, which refers to the nutritious, clean, pure, and nourishing foods that Allah

has made available for humans. The guidance of Prophet Muhammad PBUH concerning food and other aspects of life is a perfect guidance for society to Islam believers. Thus, sunnah foods encompass all aspects of nutrition, health, and psychological benefits to mankind. The Sunnah food has been appraised in the Quranic verses together with Hadith; and has been proven to have many benefits (Al-Ghazal, & Mawas, 2020). In terms of social norms, peer influence is becoming crucial in persuading students to consume sunnah-based foods, thus this factor could be used to promote behavioral change toward the consumption of sunnah-based food.

Nevertheless, the study findings of the insignificant variable of word-of-mouth fail to exert any contingent effect on consumer preference and actions. It is contrary to previous studies that found word-of-mouth promotion is a great tool to influence consumer preference and behavior. According to the findings of Wiratama et al. (2022), word of mouth has become the most impactful form of advertising that can influence consumer decision-making behavior. Moreover, a study conducted in Bangladesh assumed that word-of-mouth has a great impact on expensive items (Hossain et al., 2017). However, the current study findings indicate that when it comes to religious matters, which is a primary concern for Muslims, consumers cannot usually rely on the advice or words of others to make purchasing decisions regarding the consumption of food. However, the current study findings show that when it comes to religion, which is a primary concern for Muslims, consumers cannot usually rely on the advice or comments of others while purchasing food and beverages. They must be aware of and understand what they consume.

5. Conclusion

In essence, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of Sunnah-based product consumption among university students. By identifying key determinants and barriers, as well as exploring the interrelationships between various factors, the study offers valuable implications for marketers, policymakers, and researchers. For marketers, effort should be channeled to create social influence via social media platforms because young consumers prefer, and trust product information distributed through social media platforms. Furthermore, the focus of the campaign should be on healthy dietary concerns and oral health as these two factors have been established to influence consumers' Sunnah-based product consumption. For policymakers, Sunnah-based products should become one of the diets among young consumers to develop their brain functions to the fullest. Relevant policies should be created to promote the products and avoid manipulation from retailers. Future studies should explore additional variables and employ longitudinal designs to further elucidate the dynamics of consumer behavior in this domain.

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