

**MUSLIM SCHOLARS' PERCEPTIONS OF INDONESIA'S
NEW HALAL LOGO: A CONSUMER BEHAVIOR
PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of a new halal logo in Indonesia by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) in 2022 has triggered wide-ranging public responses, particularly from Muslim consumers and stakeholders. This study explores the perceptions of Islamic economics scholars regarding the new halal logo, analyzed through the lens of Muslim consumer behavior theory. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight lecturers from the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Manado. The findings reveal that five out of eight participants expressed disapproval toward the new logo, citing its aesthetic complexity, lack of clear Islamic symbolism, and cultural partiality—factors they argue diminish recognition and trust among Muslim consumers. Conversely, three respondents supported the

redesign, viewing it as a cultural representation of Indonesian identity and a fresh approach to halal branding. The study also uncovers critical reflections on the shift in halal certification authority from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to BPJPH. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on halal consumer perception and suggests that policy efforts must be accompanied by public education to ensure acceptance and functionality of halal symbols. The results underscore the importance of religious-cultural alignment and visual clarity in halal certification communication strategies.

Keywords: Halal Logo, Muslim Consumer Behavior, Perception, Islamic Marketing, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *halal*—which denotes that which is permissible under Islamic law—has evolved beyond its purely religious connotation to become a powerful driver of global consumer behavior, particularly in the food, cosmetics, and pharmaceutical industries. As the global Muslim population continues to grow, with projections exceeding 2.2 billion by 2030, the halal industry has emerged as a vital sector within the global economy, expected to reach over USD 3 trillion in value (Thomson Reuters, 2020). In this context, halal certification and labeling serve not only as religious compliance markers but also as strategic marketing tools that foster trust, transparency, and loyalty among Muslim consumers (Bonne, Vermeir, & Verbeke, 2007). Among these, the halal logo plays a critical communicative role as a visual assurance mechanism that facilitates product selection and influences perceived product integrity (Tiemann, 2011). Effective halal logos are expected to communicate Islamic values clearly, ensure ease of recognition, and minimize ambiguity in the minds of both devout and casual Muslim consumers (Mohd Suki & Mohd Suki, 2015). The design and credibility of halal logos, therefore, are deeply tied to the socio-religious identities of consumers and the legitimacy of certifying authorities.

In March 2022, Indonesia—the world’s largest Muslim-majority country—officially replaced its long-standing halal logo, previously issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), with a new design under the authority of the newly established Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), a state institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The new logo, which features a purple motif shaped to resemble traditional Javanese *gunungan* imagery in Arabic calligraphy, represents a significant shift in visual and symbolic orientation. While the government has promoted the change as a cultural localization effort to assert Indonesia’s unique identity in the global halal market (BPJPH, 2022), the response among the public and stakeholders has been mixed. Critics have raised concerns regarding the readability, religious clarity, and potential cultural exclusivity of the new design—arguing that it might obscure Islamic symbols and complicate consumer recognition (Rachman, Maemunah, & Ulpah, 2022). Such responses reflect deeper tensions between national branding strategies and the expectations of Muslim consumers who seek religious authenticity, especially in matters as sensitive as food consumption and religious observance. Despite its significance, scholarly attention toward the socio-psychological reception of the new halal logo—particularly from the perspective of Muslim academics—remains limited. Given the potential influence of academic actors on public discourse and policy evaluation, their perspectives warrant focused examination.

The introduction of Indonesia’s new halal logo, while intended to enhance national identity and streamline certification under a unified governmental body, has ignited widespread debate concerning its communicative clarity, cultural

symbolism, and religious representativeness. Unlike the previous logo issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), which featured recognizable Arabic calligraphy and Islamic typology, the new logo introduced by BPJPH in 2022 emphasizes traditional Javanese aesthetics that many perceive as abstract or culturally biased (Rachman et al., 2022). This design transition raises a critical concern: whether Muslim consumers—particularly those outside of Java or less familiar with symbolic calligraphy—can still effectively interpret the logo as a marker of religious compliance. Scholars have noted that religious branding elements such as halal logos must be both semantically and semiotically coherent to ensure consumer trust and behavioral intention (Tieman, 2015; Wilson & Liu, 2010). The lack of familiarity and visual ambiguity risks diluting the functional role of the halal logo, which is central to Muslim consumer decision-making processes involving perceived risk and ethical compliance (Ali, Tanakinjal, & Ratten, 2020). Moreover, the sudden visual and institutional shift from a long-established religious body (MUI) to a state-led agency (BPJPH) may also affect perceptions of credibility, legitimacy, and spiritual authority, particularly in communities that place high value on religious endorsements. Despite the salience of these issues, few empirical studies have explored how such a logo transformation is perceived by Muslim academic communities—stakeholders who are not only knowledgeable about Islamic economic principles but also influential in shaping discourse on halal policy and consumption practices.

While the academic discourse surrounding halal consumption has expanded considerably in recent years, especially in relation to consumer trust, certification processes, and brand perception (Bashir, Bayat, & Ariffin, 2022; Tieman, 2011), limited attention has been given to the symbolic and visual dimensions of halal logos—particularly in the context of state-driven logo redesigns. Much of the existing literature tends to focus on consumer awareness, purchase intention, and halal authenticity from the consumer perspective (Golnaz, Zainalabidin, & Mad Nasir, 2010; Shafie & Othman, 2006), while overlooking the implications of graphic semiotics, cultural representation, and institutional legitimacy. Moreover, few studies examine these issues within the Indonesian context, which presents a unique case as both the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and a site of religious-political negotiation in the management of halal governance (Rachman et al., 2022). Even more scarce are empirical studies that engage with the perceptions of Muslim scholars—especially Islamic economics lecturers—whose dual identity as religiously informed intellectuals and educators positions them as critical mediators in public understanding of halal policies. Furthermore, although the theory of Muslim consumer behavior has been developed to account for religious, ethical, and cultural values in decision-making (Alserhan, 2010; Wilson & Liu, 2011), few empirical works have employed this framework to interpret stakeholders' responses to halal visual rebranding. This study therefore seeks to fill this interdisciplinary gap by examining the perceptions of Muslim academics

toward the new halal logo in Indonesia through the analytical lens of Muslim consumer behavior theory.

This research contributes to the growing body of interdisciplinary literature on Islamic branding and halal governance by offering a critical perspective on how visual changes in halal certification logos are received by religiously informed academic stakeholders. In doing so, it sheds light on the tension between aesthetic innovation, cultural specificity, and religious clarity—elements that are often underexplored in policy-driven design changes. By focusing on Muslim scholars' perceptions, this study also emphasizes the role of epistemic authority in shaping public understanding and acceptance of halal-related symbols. The findings are expected to inform future policy strategies in halal communication, particularly the need for visual accessibility, cross-cultural inclusivity, and symbolic coherence in halal logos. More broadly, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about the intersection of religious identity, visual semiotics, and consumer trust in majority-Muslim societies.

This study aims to explore how Islamic economics lecturers in Indonesia perceive the new halal logo introduced by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) in 2022. Specifically, it seeks to analyze these perceptions through the theoretical framework of Muslim consumer behavior, focusing on dimensions such as trust, recognition, symbolic representation, and cultural alignment. By doing so, the study intends to deepen scholarly understanding of how visual transformations in halal certification are interpreted by educated Muslim stakeholders and what this implies for the broader legitimacy and functionality of halal assurance systems in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how Muslim academic stakeholders, specifically Islamic economics lecturers, perceive the introduction of Indonesia's new halal logo. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for examining perceptions, attitudes, and values in culturally embedded contexts where interpretive depth is essential (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than quantifying attitudes through structured instruments, this study prioritized rich, contextualized understanding through open-ended inquiry. The qualitative design was chosen to capture nuanced opinions about symbolic interpretation, aesthetic appeal, and religious meaning associated with the logo change—dimensions that cannot be adequately explored through quantitative surveys alone (Silverman, 2021). Given that logo perception involves semiotic processing and cultural background, qualitative data allows for interpretive flexibility and deeper theoretical insight, especially when framed within the lens of Muslim consumer behavior.

The study was conducted among eight lecturers from the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Manado, Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique suitable for capturing information-rich cases based on domain expertise and relevance to the research objective (Palinkas et al., 2015). All participants had professional exposure to Islamic economic theory and were aware of the halal certification process and recent changes in policy. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, allowing respondents to articulate their views freely while enabling the researcher to probe specific aspects such as the visual recognition of the logo, its symbolic associations, and its implications for consumer behavior. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, and was audio-recorded with consent. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and key statements were translated into English for analytic consistency.

For data analysis, the researcher employed a thematic analysis strategy as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. The process included multiple rounds of coding, followed by theme refinement based on semantic and latent content. Initial codes were derived inductively from participants' narratives and then categorized under broader analytical themes such as *symbolic clarity*, *religious identity*, *visual accessibility*, and *institutional trust*. To enhance trustworthiness, the study utilized triangulation across literature sources, member checking with selected participants, and peer debriefing during the coding process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The theoretical lens of Muslim consumer behavior—particularly values such as *halal literacy*, *aesthetic acceptability*, and *religio-cultural alignment*—guided the final interpretation of data. This methodological framework ensures that the study's findings are both empirically grounded and conceptually robust.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Development of Halal Logos in Indonesia

Halal logo design in Indonesia has some history in it. On November 10, 1976, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia was an institution that passed through halal labeling of food and beverage products. All business actors in the food sector or the like, both raw materials that contain pork and those made from pork are required to include warning signs on each package. This is regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 280/Men.Kes/Per/XI/76 concerning the circulation and labeling of foods that contain pork in them. That is, the existence of a pig image and the inscription "CONTAINING PIGS" are placed in a red square box, like this carry-on image;

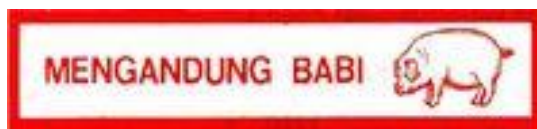


Figure 1. Halal Logo 1

Source: Permenkes RI

The warning logo of products containing pork explains that the product is haram for consumption. The Haram logo is believed to be more effective in providing clarity information related to the content of pork and its derivatives than displaying a halal logo in a product. This is because it is suspected that some beverage and food products and the like only contain pork raw materials or their derivatives. Therefore, producers only need to give haram labels to some products that clearly contain pork and its derivatives.

On August 12, 1985, there was a complete change to the halal logo which was originally labeled "CONTAINING PIGS". These provisions are regulated in the joint decree of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Religion No. 42/Men.Kes/SKB/VIII/1985 and No. 68 of 1985 concerning the Inclusion of Halal Writing on Food Labels. The inclusion of labels can be done after business actors provide a report on the composition of the processing methods of products and materials that have been produced to the Health department. The Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Health jointly supervise these business actors through the Food Registration Assessment Team of the Directorate General of Pharmacy and Food Supervision of the Ministry of Health. However, in 1988 there was a crowd in food containing pork spread in the market which finally could reduce the public's anxiety and based on the MUI Decree Number Kep./18/MUI/I/1989 on January 6, 1989, the Institute for the Assessment of Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics of the Indonesian Ulema Council (LPPOM MUI) was formed which has the task of inspecting products spread to the community to carry out the halal certification process. In 1994, MUI has issued halal certificates for products that have been certified by LPPOM MUI.

LPPOM MUI carries out the halal certification process not in the form of certificates and numbering but is required to provide a halal logo on goods that have undergone a halal certification test by LPPOM MUI. LPPOM MUI's halal logo is made based on the design that has been spread so far. This provision was made in the Cooperation Charter dated June 21, 1996 regarding the provision of halal logos on food. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia issued Decree No. 924/Menkes/SK/VIII/1996 as an amendment to the Decree of the Minister of Health No. 82/Menkes/SK/I/1996. The LPPOM MUI halal logo has been known by all Indonesian and international people, especially ASEAN countries. The halal logo of LPPOM MUI has halal writing on it. Whether it is halal or not is currently not only seen based on its distribution in market share and product profitability, but

more importantly, the implementation of the production of a service or product itself.



Figure 2. Halal Logo 2

Source: LPOM MUI

On February 10, 2022, the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) of the Ministry of Religion determined the halal label based on the decree of the Head of BPJPH No. 40/2022 concerning Halal Labels. The new Halal logo published by BPJPH has received a lot of criticism from various circles of society in Indonesia. The design displayed in the logo has changed completely compared to the halal logo issued by LPPOM MUI which was previously widely known by the Indonesian people. Rachman, Abdul, Maemunah.

The new Halal logo has a shape similar to a puppet that depicts the characteristics of Indonesia. The shape and pattern of the new halal logo philosophically adapts from values to Indonesian. According to the explanation from the Chairman of BPJPH Muhammad Aqil Irham, the Indonesian Halal Label consists of two objects, namely the shape of the mountain and the motif of the surjan or mountain striated on the shadow puppet which is in the shape of a limas, pointed upwards, which symbolizes human life. The shapes and patterns used are cultural artifacts that have unique characteristics and character. The shape of the mountains is arranged in such a way as Arabic letter calligraphy consisting of the letters *ha*, *lam alif*, and *lam*, in a series so as to form the word "halal". The new halal logo in terms of its shape has a meaning, namely the higher the knowledge, the older the human age, the more condensed (*the milled class*) *the soul*, the sense of creation, *karsa*, and work in life. This means that humans will get closer to the creator. Meanwhile, the surjan motif, which is also called piety clothing, contains a deep meaning and philosophy. Among them, the neck of the shirt has 3 pairs of buttons (6 buttons) which all describe the pillars of faith. In addition to the surjan/triik motif that is parallel to each other, it also contains a meaning as a clear differential/boundary giver. This is in line with the goal of the Halal Product Assurance Provider in Indonesia to provide comfort, security, safety, and certainty of the availability of halal products for the public in using and consuming products. In terms of colors in the new halal labels, purple is the main color in the new halal labels. The color purple presents the meaning of faith, innate unity, and the culture of imagination. While the secondary color is toska green, which represents the meaning of wisdom, stability, and calm.(BPJPH 2022)



Figure 3. Halal Logo 3

Source: kemenag.go.id

General Perceptions and Symbolic Legibility of the New Halal Logo

All eight participants in this study—lecturers specializing in Islamic economics at IAIN Manado—demonstrated familiarity with the new halal logo introduced by Indonesia's Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) in 2022. Their awareness was rooted in professional engagement with halal-related discourse and policy developments, as well as their roles in educating future practitioners and scholars in the Islamic economics sector. Most respondents acknowledged the logo change as a significant shift in Indonesia's halal certification landscape; however, their responses reflected a clear division between functional recognition and symbolic interpretation. While all participants recognized the regulatory authority behind the new logo, five out of eight expressed strong reservations about its visual clarity and symbolic coherence, particularly in representing Islamic values to the broader Muslim public. The majority emphasized the previous logo's clear depiction of Arabic script—widely understood as the word "halal"—as an essential factor in enabling quick identification by diverse segments of Muslim consumers, including those with limited religious literacy or exposure to cultural symbolism.

This concern aligns with global scholarly discourse emphasizing that halal logos should function not merely as aesthetic elements but as unambiguous markers of religious compliance. Studies have shown that visual trust indicators such as recognizable Arabic calligraphy and Islamic typography significantly impact consumer trust and purchase intentions (Tieman, 2011; Mohd Suki & Mohd Suki, 2015). In contrast, when halal logos prioritize abstract visual elements or cultural symbols that are not universally legible to Muslim audiences, they risk diminishing their functional effectiveness (Ali, Tanakinjal, & Ratten, 2020). Several participants in this study described the new logo's design—featuring purple hues and stylized Arabic script resembling Javanese *gunungan* imagery—as “ambiguous,” “confusing,” and “aesthetic but not informative.” These findings echo concerns in the literature that when religious certification marks become overly stylized or culturally localized, they may compromise their primary function as tools of rapid recognition and moral assurance (Wilson & Liu, 2010; Bashir, Bayat, & Ariffin, 2022).

Furthermore, participants noted that the new logo's departure from traditional Islamic visual cues could affect consumer perceptions of authenticity and religious legitimacy. In the context of halal certification, consumers often rely on visual shortcuts to determine compliance, especially in fast-paced consumption settings like supermarkets or online marketplaces (Bonne, Vermeir, & Verbeke, 2007). The shift from a text-heavy, symbolically Islamic logo to an abstract cultural symbol may thus hinder the logo's practical usability. This supports prior findings that consumer interpretations of halal are not only influenced by textual information but also by culturally ingrained expectations of religious semiotics (Wilson, 2014). For many Indonesian Muslims, the Arabic script and green color palette of the previous logo served as immediate indicators of religious validity—elements that the new design has intentionally reimaged. While such redesigns may serve national branding objectives, they also risk alienating segments of consumers who rely on traditional visual markers for ethical assurance and religious comfort.

Cultural Identity vs Religious Universality

One of the most salient themes that emerged from the participants' narratives was the perceived tension between cultural identity and religious universality embedded in the visual design of the new halal logo. Several respondents expressed concern that the incorporation of *gunungan* imagery—an artistic motif rooted in Javanese wayang tradition—while culturally significant, may not represent the broader Muslim demographic in Indonesia. As Indonesia is a pluralistic Muslim-majority nation composed of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, privileging one regional aesthetic in a national religious symbol was viewed by some as exclusionary. This aligns with critiques found in broader literature on religious branding, which warn that cultural particularism, when embedded in religious certification, may hinder inclusivity and reduce trust among consumers from different ethnic or sectarian backgrounds (Wilson & Liu, 2011; Alserhan, 2010). Participants noted that while the government intended the logo to highlight Indonesia's cultural richness in the global halal economy, such an approach inadvertently introduced ambiguity and potentially undermined the symbolic universality required of halal logos.

From the standpoint of Muslim consumer behavior, the inclusion of culturally specific symbols in religious labeling complicates the semantic clarity that consumers expect from halal indicators. As halal is a religious injunction rooted in Islamic law, its representation must transcend local cultures to ensure global recognition and theological validity (Tiemann, 2015). The theoretical framework of Islamic branding emphasizes that a successful halal logo must achieve both *tawheedic alignment*—coherence with Islamic ethical principles—and *cross-cultural legibility* (Alserhan, 2010). In this study, many informants questioned whether the new logo adequately fulfilled these dual criteria. Some respondents argued that the aesthetic choice, while domestically meaningful, lacked the capacity

to communicate “Islamic-ness” across cultures and could be misinterpreted, particularly in regions outside of Java or among international Muslim audiences. These findings underscore the dilemma between *localization* and *standardization* in halal branding, where the need to reflect national identity must be balanced against the imperative of maintaining clear religious signification.

Moreover, respondents highlighted that cultural elements like *wayang* or *surjan* may carry ambiguous or even contested meanings within segments of the Muslim population. While the government has framed the design as symbolizing spiritual ascent and national heritage, some conservative Muslim groups may associate these cultural symbols with pre-Islamic traditions or syncretism, thereby challenging the religious integrity of the logo. This concern reflects what literature terms as “symbolic dissonance,” where consumers experience cognitive conflict between visual representation and religious expectations (Wilson, 2014; Musa, 2019). In halal consumption, symbolic dissonance can result in hesitation, rejection, or skepticism—even when products are technically certified. Thus, the religious neutrality and clarity of halal logos are not only aesthetic concerns but also central to their functional role in ensuring consumer confidence. This study confirms that while efforts to nationalize halal branding through cultural integration may serve geopolitical and economic objectives, they must be calibrated carefully to avoid eroding the religious universality that underpins Muslim consumer trust.

Institutional Trust and Legitimacy

Another recurring theme that emerged from participants' responses concerned the shift in institutional authority over halal certification in Indonesia—from the long-standing religious body, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), to the state-run Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). While some respondents appreciated the government's attempt to centralize and streamline the halal certification process, many expressed ambivalence or skepticism regarding the legitimacy and efficiency of this institutional change. This divergence reflects broader debates on the role of religious versus governmental authority in certifying halal compliance—a topic widely discussed in global halal governance literature (Fischer, 2020; Tieman, 2011). Several participants viewed MUI as possessing *religio-historical capital* due to its longstanding involvement with halal rulings, *fatwas*, and community-level religious education. By contrast, BPJPH, though legally mandated by the state, was seen by some as lacking theological depth and community embeddedness, potentially undermining consumer confidence in its religious rulings.

This finding echoes the principle that institutional trust in halal certification is not merely a matter of formal legal authority, but also of perceived religious legitimacy and spiritual credibility. According to Bonne and Verbeke (2008), Muslim consumers often rely on recognized religious bodies rather than state agencies when evaluating halal authenticity. Trust in halal logos is strongly linked

to the certifier's reputation, transparency, and religious credibility (Bashir et al., 2022). In this study, participants who supported the transition to BPJPH often cited potential benefits such as bureaucratic efficiency, national standardization, and broader international recognition. However, even among supporters, there was a consistent concern about the state's capacity to maintain theological rigor and engage religious scholars meaningfully in the certification process. Some feared that the bureaucratization of halal might reduce its spiritual integrity, turning a sacred obligation into a mere administrative label.

Moreover, the interplay between institutional trust and logo recognition further complicates consumer interpretation. A few respondents noted that the absence of the MUI name or script in the new logo design potentially weakens the perceived religious backing of the certification, especially for communities accustomed to associating halal assurance with ulama-endorsed organizations. This concern is consistent with literature indicating that the effectiveness of religious certification depends not only on legal enforcement but also on symbolic association with authoritative religious figures or institutions (Wilson & Liu, 2010; Fischer, 2020). In this light, the transition from MUI to BPJPH—if not accompanied by strategic communication and collaboration with recognized religious authorities—may generate institutional dissonance and confusion among consumers. The findings therefore underscore the importance of maintaining continuity, transparency, and religious consultation in halal governance to preserve both public trust and the spiritual legitimacy of the certification process.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceptions of Islamic economics lecturers regarding Indonesia's new halal logo through the analytical lens of Muslim consumer behavior theory. The findings revealed that while all participants were aware of the logo change introduced by BPJPH in 2022, a majority expressed reservations concerning its symbolic clarity, cultural representativeness, and religious legibility. Specifically, five out of eight respondents viewed the logo as visually ambiguous and lacking the Islamic semiotics necessary for easy recognition by the broader Muslim public. These concerns reflect a broader tension between aesthetic innovation and religious universality, suggesting that the current design—while culturally meaningful—may not fulfill the core function of halal logos as unambiguous indicators of religious compliance.

Furthermore, the study highlighted participants' divided views on the institutional shift from MUI to BPJPH. While some supported the transition for its potential in regulatory efficiency and international standardization, others questioned the spiritual legitimacy and religious authority of a government-managed certification system. This underscores the critical role of institutional trust and symbolic continuity in shaping consumer acceptance of halal assurance frameworks. Drawing from the theory of Muslim consumer behavior, the findings

affirm that halal consumption is not driven solely by product content but also by perceived religious alignment, visual accessibility, and institutional credibility.

To ensure broad acceptance and functional clarity, policymakers are encouraged to implement public education campaigns that enhance familiarity with the new logo while addressing concerns over symbolic accessibility. Additionally, integrating religious scholars into the design and dissemination process may help bridge the gap between regulatory innovation and spiritual legitimacy. Future research could expand this inquiry to diverse consumer demographics or conduct cross-national comparisons to assess how cultural-religious branding strategies influence trust and behavior in halal markets globally.

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