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# The Discourses and Symbolism of Halal in Indonesian Public Communication

**Syarifuddin**
Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia.

* Corresponding author's e-mail: 501232151@ecampus.ut.ac.id

**ABSTRACT**
This study examines the evolving discourses and symbolism of "halal" in Indonesian public communication, focusing on its transformation from a primarily religious concept to a broader socio-cultural, political, and economic construct. Using a qualitative interpretive approach that integrates critical discourse analysis and semiotics, the research analyzes official certification logos, commercial advertising, and urban–rural perceptions to uncover how language and visual signs mediate power, identity, and trust. Data include visual materials (MUI and BPJPH logos), media content promoting a "halal lifestyle," and interviews with urban and rural respondents. Findings reveal a semiotic shift in halal certification—from clerical to state authority—signaling a transfer of legitimacy and regulatory power. Urban participants tend to interpret halal as a marker of quality, safety, and global competitiveness, while rural communities maintain its traditional role as a religious obligation. Commercial advertising further reframes halal as an aspirational lifestyle symbol, aligning piety with modern consumerism but also creating socio-cultural divides and class-based distinctions. The study contributes to understanding halal as a dynamic cultural signifier that operates at the intersection of religion, governance, and market forces. These insights have implications for policy development, branding strategies, and cultural engagement, highlighting the need for approaches that balance regulatory, commercial, and spiritual dimensions.

**Keywords:**
Halal; discourse analysis; semiotics; public communication; Indonesia

## Introduction

Derived from Islamic jurisprudence, the term "halal" describes deeds, goods, and behaviours that are allowed by Sharia law. In Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority nation in the world, halal has traditionally been mostly connected to ritual observance and food consumption (Widyaningrum, et al, 2021). But over the last 20 years, halal has evolved into a more comprehensive socio-cultural, political, and economic conversation that goes beyond religious dogma. The definition of halal in public discourse has changed due to the growth of the halal business, the official state engagement in certification, and the growing use of halal as a marketing strategy (Henderson, 2016; Wilson & Liu, 2011).

Several domains exhibit this change. First, halal's language and visual depiction has changed over time. The Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), a government organization created by Law No. 33/2014 on Halal Product Assurance, is now in charge of issuing official halal marks, which were formerly issued solely by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). The change from a religious to a governmental logo signifies a symbolic realignment of power and legitimacy in addition to a change in regulations. These shifts have an impact on how people view halal in daily life, particularly in light of market trust, religious identity, and state authority (Nasrullah et al., 2022).

Second, halal's semantic area is growing. Instead of only referring to religious tolerance, the phrase is increasingly being used in urban contexts to imply quality, safety, and modernity (Fitria, 2020). Halal may be linked by urban consumers to global norms, promotional tactics, and desired lifestyles. Rural populations, on the other hand, frequently uphold a traditional understanding that links halal to local norms and family practices, emphasizing it as a necessary component of religious practice. This contrast between urban and rural areas shows that halal is a socio-semiotic phenomenon that is influenced by economic, media, and educational settings rather than being a monolithic idea.

Third, the idea of a "halal lifestyle" has been promoted by commercial discourses. Halal is now a part of the brand narratives of advertisements for fashion, tourism, technology, cosmetics, and even finance. According to Fealy and White (2012), the phrase "halal lifestyle" suggests that religious observance can be incorporated into contemporary consumer behaviour, bringing piety into line with aspirational identities, global trends, and high-end goods. The monetization of religious symbols and the growing influence of media in turning theological ideas into marketable identities are both demonstrated by this discursive change (Mahliza & Prasetya, 2023).

The literature on the halal business is expanding, although there are still a number of gaps. Fewer studies look at halal from a linguistic and semiotic standpoint, with the majority concentrating on consumer behaviour, legal frameworks, and economic prospects (Tieman, 2017). It is necessary to examine the ways in which halal is expressed, represented, and understood as a cultural symbol as opposed to just a legal classification. Gaining knowledge of its discursive construction helps one to better understand how language and symbols mediate the interaction between market forces, religion, and the state. Thus, the following research issues are intended to be addressed by this study, (1) what is the construction and interpretation of halal symbols (logos) in Indonesian public discourse? (2) hat conceptual distinctions exist between how halal is viewed in urban and rural areas? and (3) what does advertising's portrayal of the "halal lifestyle" tell us about the relationship between religion, culture, and consumerism?

The theoretical framework integrates critical discourse analysis with semiotics, specifically Peirce's triadic model (representation, object, interpretant) (Fairclough, 2013). While CDA investigates the power dynamics, ideologies, and sociocultural settings that underlie the visual and linguistic signs seen in official logos and media texts, semiotics allows us to interpret these signs. Through the integration of these frameworks, the study investigates the symbolic, institutional, and commercial ramifications of halal in addition to its literal meaning.

This study's interdisciplinary contribution is what makes it significant. From a linguistic perspective, it builds on conversations about how religious terms change to fit into secular and international communication settings. From the standpoint of cultural studies, it shows how Muslim consumer identities are shaped by the balancing act between tradition and modernity. Lastly, it emphasizes how state institutions, businesses, and the media have contributed to the construction of halal as a discourse of authority, trust, and lifestyle from the standpoint of public communication.

## Methods

*Research Design*

This study used a qualitative interpretive research design that was specifically chosen to support its main goal, which was to examine the underlying meanings, cultural symbols, and discursive practices related to halal in Indonesian public communication rather than numerical trends or statistically significant correlations. Instead of imposing predetermined categories or testing established hypotheses, the qualitative interpretative approach is especially suitable when the objective is to investigate phenomena as they are formed, interpreted, and negotiated by persons and institutions.

The current study was grounded on a constructivist epistemology rather than positivism, which generally aims to produce generalizable laws. According to this perspective, political, cultural, and historical processes have shaped social reality. Halal was therefore viewed as a linguistic and cultural signifier that was incorporated into larger socio-religious narratives, governmental regulations, and market dynamics, rather than only as a legal label or commercial marking.

Semiotic analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA), two complementary analytical frameworks, were incorporated into the research design in order to capture this complexity. Drawing from the traditions of Saussure and Peirce, semiotics offered instruments for dissecting the internal organization of signs, including their linguistic components (such as Arabic script, Indonesian translation, and other textual cues), visual components (such as typography, colour palettes, and graphic shapes), and symbolic associations (such as purity, trust, and divine legitimacy).

On the other hand, critical discourse analysis made it possible to investigate how these indicators operate in broader institutional and socio-political contexts. Whether they are influenced by market-driven branding strategies (Purwanto, Haque, Sunarsi, & Asbari, 2021), religious institutions looking to establish their moral legitimacy, or state authority and regulatory frameworks, the research could use CDA to uncover the power dynamics and ideological forces that shape the creation, regulation, and public reception of halal symbols.

A comprehensive view was provided by the combination of semiotic and CDA viewpoints. Semiotics examined the surface-level meanings of the halal symbol, while CDA examined how those meanings are ingrained in and support larger structures of power, economic interests, and cultural identity politics. By combining these methods, the design made sure that the study did not separate textual and visual components from their practical uses, but rather positioned them as active contributors to the formation of consumer behaviour, public opinion, and even state-religion interactions.

*A. Data Sources and Collection*

Data were collected from a variety of sources to guarantee that the study included both the symbolic form and the social function of halal. These comprised textual/media content, visual objects, and statistics on illustrative (speculative) community perception. A distinct layer of semiotic and discourse analysis was associated with each type of source.

1. Visual Information: Logos for Halal Certification

   Official halal certification marks representing Indonesian state and institutional authority (Ikhwan, 2024) made up the first dataset. We examined two main logos: Before BPJPH (*Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal*) was established, the MUI Halal Logo was the national standard. Following the implementation of Law No. 33/2014 on Halal Product Assurance, the BPJPH Halal Logo was introduced, signifying a change from a certification paradigm based on religious institutions to one governed by the state. Logos were gathered in a methodical manner from: official websites of the government and agencies, regulatory records from the archives, and packaging for products in retail settings. Since each logo was viewed as a multi-layered sign system, the following may be examined: visual components (colour, font, and geometric shapes), linguistic elements (such as Indonesian labels and Arabic writing), and Symbolic associations (state power, religious authority, legitimacy, and trust).

**Table 1.** Illustrative Visual Comparison

| **Feature** | **MUI Logo** | **BPJPH Logo** |
|---|---|---|
| Primary Colour | Green (religious connotation) | Purple (institutional/state branding) |
| Script | Arabic + Latin | Arabic + Indonesian |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Shape | Circular (seal-like) | Geometric (mandala-inspired) |
| Institutional Marker | "Majelis Ulama Indonesia" | "BPJPH – Kemenag RI" |
| Perceived Authority | Religious scholars | Government/state law |

2. Media and Textual Information: Halal Lifestyle Promotions
Texts from commercial media that specifically used the term "halal lifestyle" made up the second dataset. These were gathered from: advertisements on national television, significant social media initiatives (YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok), and Archives of digital advertising from 2020 to 2025. Included were only those sectors where halal certification is crucial to marketing: Food and Drinks, Skincare & Cosmetics, modest fashion (Fibrianti & Niravita, 2020), Travel & Hospitality in Halal, Financial Services in Islam.

**Table 2.** Example Distribution of Media Samples by Industry (2020-2025)

| **Industry** | **Number of Ads Collected** |
|---|---|
| Food & Beverages | 45 |
| Cosmetics | 28 |
| Fashion | 20 |
| Travel/Hospitality | 12 |
| Financial Services | 15 |

3. Community Perception Data
This study involved 24 respondents, comprising 12 urban residents (from Jakarta, Bandung, and Semarang) and 12 rural residents (from Cirebon, Indramayu, and Kuiningan). Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted between May and June 2025. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded for subsequent transcription.

4. Sampling Strategy
Purposive sampling, a non-probability strategy, was used in this study's data selection process. It selects materials specifically for their relevance and capacity to shed light on the study's goals rather than for statistical representativeness. This method, which is consistent with the interpretive character of critical discourse analysis, places a higher priority on conceptual depth than quantitative generalization.

Two certified halal certification emblems were specifically added since they represent regulatory validity and institutional authority. Prior to the implementation of Law No. 33/2014, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, or MUI) issued the first logo, which has historically been the main indicator of halal status nationwide. In contrast, the Halal Product Assurance Agency (*Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal*, or BPJPH) introduced the second logo, which signifies the formalization and centralization of halal certification by the state. Their inclusion makes it possible to investigate how changes in official symbols may affect how the general public views religious authority, trust, and government participation in halal regulation.

Furthermore, commercial ads were specifically chosen because they were aired nationally and clearly placed their goods in a halal discourse, either by emphasizing certification logos or by presenting consumption habits as a component of a larger "halal lifestyle." Exploring how religious identifiers are used in marketing efforts to create consumer identities, negotiate cultural values, and appeal to both urban and rural audiences is made easier by these commercials.

The study aims to capture the relationship between corporate commodification of halal narratives, religious authority, and state regulation by combining these two forms of visual

data: commercial advertisements reflecting market dynamics and formal certification logos representing institutional power.

*B. Analytical Framework*

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), comparative perception analysis, and semiotic analysis were all incorporated into the analytical process. Three key aspects of the data—the form of the signs, their discursive production and circulation, and the audience's variability in interpreting them across various social contexts—are addressed by these frameworks, which is why they were selected.

1. Semiotic Analysis
   Peirce's triadic model was used for semiotic analysis in order to determine how each visual logo functions as a system of signs:
   - Representamen (Sign Vehicle): The physical characteristics of the halal logos, such as the geometric mandala-inspired BPJPH logo or the circular seal-like shape of the MUI logo, their colours (purple vs. green), and the Arabic calligraphy, were analysed as intentional design decisions meant to convey authority, tradition, or institutional modernity.
   - Object (Referent): The idea of halal itself is the fundamental referent of each logo, but it goes beyond the simple "permitted" status to incorporate associations of legitimacy, assurance of quality, and religious support.
   - Interpretant (Meaning): Depending on social context and cultural background, audiences create different meanings. For instance, some customers still identify the former MUI logo with spiritual trust and religious authenticity, while others view the BPJPH mark as a symbol of worldwide uniformity and governmental regulation.

   The analysis went beyond a straightforward description of visual characteristics to a more thorough investigation of how these signs mediate relationships between religion, commerce, and governance by utilizing this triadic framework.
2. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)
   CDA, which was based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model, addressed the power dynamics and ideological influences influencing the creation and reception of halal logos and commercials, while semiotics exposed their structural and visual dimensions:
   - Textual Level: looked at the overt language components ("Halal Certified," Arabic versus Latin characters), visual codes (colours that represent state identity, purity, or contemporary branding), and Words like "pure," "global," and "trusted" are examples of marketing language used in "halal lifestyle" advertisements.
   - Discursive Practice Level: examined how the institutional actors—state organizations (BPJPH), commercial companies, and clerics and religious councils (MUI)—affect the perceived validity of halal certification. examined the target markets, including international markets, domestic consumers, and Muslim versus non-Muslim purchasers.
   - Sociocultural Level: linked these verbal and visual components to more general discussions, like: the transfer of power from religious organizations to the government, as a component of consumer culture, the marketing of halal, and the conflict between contemporary global branding and traditional religious principles.
3. Comparative Urban-Rural Perception Analysis
   The purpose of this analysis was to demonstrate how sociocultural and regional variations could influence interpretations:
   - Urban Respondents: Often linked halal ads and logos to modern branding, quality control, and inclusion within a global lifestyle economy.
   - Traditional authority figures, family-based trust networks, and religious commitment were more strongly associated with rural respondents.

These classifications demonstrate that halal symbols are not static, universal signs but rather are interpreted differently based on cultural orientation, media accessibility, and social context.

## Results and Discussions

1. *Semiotic Transformation: From Religious Seal to State Symbol*

The first analytical dimension looks at the semiotic change between the more recent *Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal* (BPJPH) logo and the older *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI) halal logo. Although the practical purpose of both logos is the same—certifying that a product satisfies Islamic dietary and ethical standards—their institutional identifiers, textual choices, and visual language convey different levels of meaning that go beyond simple certification.

**Table 3.** Illustrative Visual Comparison

| Feature | MUI Logo | BPJPH Logo | Semiotic Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Primary Colour | Green (religious connotation) | Purple (institutional/state branding) | Green traditionally connotes spirituality, nature, and Islamic heritage; purple-white suggests institutional authority, neutrality, and administrative professionalism. |
| Script | Arabic + Latin | Arabic + Indonesian | The decreased prominence of Arabic script emphasizes national identity and localization, aligning the symbol with state rather than purely religious authority. |
| Shape | Circular (seal-like) | Geometric (mandala-inspired) | Represents a move from traditional "seal" imagery, associated with clerical authority, to a structured geometric form resembling a bureaucratic badge—signaling state formalization. |
| Institutional Marker | "Majelis Ulama Indonesia" | "BPJPH – Kemenag RI" | Formal reference |
| Perceived Authority | Religious scholars | Government/state law | Reflects a deliberate transfer of symbolic power from religious scholars (MUI) to governmental institutions (BPJPH), consistent with legal reforms. |

This change in language and visuals is not just a graphic design issue; rather, it is a conscious, institutionally driven change in the direction of regulations and ideology. The adoption of Law No. 33/2014 on Halal Product Assurance, which reorganized Indonesia's halal certification governance, serves as the fundamental foundation for the transformation. This legislation established a centralized bureaucratic apparatus under the auspices of the Halal Product Assurance Agency (*Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal*, BPJPH) to issue halal labels, replacing the previous primarily clerical, religion-centred framework that was associated with the Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI). Such a step places halal regulation within administrative rather than solely religious purview, reflecting a larger national desire to institutionalize it as a formal governmental role.

The change in the predominant colour from green to purple is among the most obvious aspects of this transition. This change has symbolic meaning in addition to being aesthetically pleasing. Green, which is well-known in Islamic cultural contexts, reinforces a sense of sacred legitimacy by connoting spirituality, tradition, and religious continuity. Purple, on the other hand, is more frequently associated with impartiality, authority, and government; it conveys a picture that is less obviously religious and more in line with contemporary administrative control and bureaucratic professionalism. This chromatic reorientation subtly conveys the idea that halal certification is now a part of state-managed regulatory policy, not only a

clerical act. It is intended to satisfy both international trade and standardization criteria as well as domestic religious needs.

The redesign of textual elements is equally important, especially the way Arabic lettering is less visually dominant and Indonesian is elevated as the main language on the logo. The state's larger nation-building discourse, which aims to standardize regulatory symbols as part of a cohesive national identity, is consistent with this language recalibration. The BPJPH emblem presents halal certification as a structured, legally enforceable instrument of state authority rather than just a matter of personal devotion by emphasizing the Indonesian language. Thus, the change represents a semiotic transition from a religious endorsement centred in the community to a certification process administered by the state that has international recognition and legal enforceability.

The reception of this transformation is not uniform across social contexts. Preliminary observations suggest that urban audiences—who are generally more exposed to governmental procedures, global market norms, and institutional branding—tend to interpret the BPJPH logo as a marker of regulatory professionalism, administrative reliability, and international credibility. For these consumers, the logo signals not only religious compliance but also a guarantee of quality control and export readiness. In contrast, anecdotal accounts indicate that rural audiences may perceive the BPJPH logo as less spiritually resonant and less personally reassuring than its predecessor. The MUI seal, with its green palette and prominent Arabic calligraphy, offered immediate visual cues of religious sanctity; its replacement may therefore diminish the instinctive trust that some consumers associate with clerical authority, potentially leading to a more cautious or emotionally distant response.

This change in semiotics emphasizes that visual symbols are active tools that negotiate identity, validity, and power in public discourse rather than being neutral things. Their design decisions recast cultural meanings, codify institutional agendas, and affect how various cultures view state government and religious authority.

2. *Urban vs. Rural Discourse on Halal*

The conceptualization of halal in urban and rural areas differs significantly, according to empirical evidence gathered from in-depth interviews conducted between May and June 2025. The percentage of respondents in each category who agreed with particular statements about the meaning and purpose of halal is summarized in Table 4:

**Table 4.** Urban vs. Rural Perceptions of Halal (% Agreement)

| Category | Urban (%) | Rural (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Halal as basic obligation | 40 | 92 |
| Halal as quality assurance | 85 | 50 |
| Halal as lifestyle | 72 | 25 |

Table 4 shows three different ways that respondents from both urban and rural areas interpreted the purpose and meaning of halal certification. These trends show how halal symbols are interpreted and incorporated into daily life, revealing not just variations in perception but also more profound social forces at play.

When it comes to halal as a basic religious obligation, there is the biggest difference.

According to a startling 92% of rural respondents, halal certification is primarily seen as a required symbol of faith. This reflects a worldview that views halal compliance as an integral part of religious practice. Only 40% of respondents from metropolitan areas show the same degree of agreement, which is a stark disparity. This discrepancy implies that halal logos serve mainly as holy symbols associated with religious observance and social mores in rural areas. However, halal may be seen as one factor among many rather than as the primary factor influencing consumer behaviour in urban settings where exposure to secularized consumption patterns and global market dynamics is higher.

Compared to just 50% of respondents in rural areas, 85% of urban respondents are significantly more likely to view halal certification as a stand-in for product safety, hygienic practices, and regulatory compliance. This suggests that halal labelling in urban environments transcends its theological meaning and enters the realm of contemporary consumer rationality (Ismail, et al, 2023), as urban customers are more inclined to confuse religious certification with more general concepts of quality control. Urban markets may encourage a belief that official certification indicates not only religious compliance but also scientific testing, supply-chain transparency, and institutional accountability due to the influence of industrial production, international trade, and more stringent regulatory oversight. Rural respondents seem to value the spiritual aspect more than the technical guarantees included in the certification procedure, even though they do not discount these qualities.

A further layer of differentiation emerges in the interpretation of halal as part of a broader lifestyle trend. Urban respondents (72%) frequently associate halal with an aspirational identity encompassing fashion, travel services, financial products, and social branding (Atiah & Fatoni, 2020). This reflects the increasing commercialization of halal within urban markets, where companies actively promote a "halal lifestyle" as a marker of modernity, sophistication, and global Muslim identity. In contrast, only 25% of rural respondents report making such associations, suggesting that for many rural communities, halal remains grounded in its original function as a religious requirement for food and basic consumables, rather than as an expansive cultural or economic brand (Sosianika & Amalia, 2020).

These results show that there is a clear and complex discourse gap between urban and rural populations on how they perceive and interact with halal certification and the symbolism that goes along with it. Beyond simple physical distance, this divergence reflects larger sociocultural, economic, and infrastructure differences that influence how people understand the significance and applicability of halal in daily life.

The idea of halal is frequently incorporated by urban respondents into a contemporary consumerist framework (Yulita & Fauziah, 2019). For them, halal certification serves as a guarantee of product quality, worldwide competitiveness, and sophisticated branding in addition to serving as a religious symbol. Their frequent exposure to various mass media and commercial advertising probably supports this viewpoint. In cities, halal is commonly seen through billboards, internet marketing, television ads, and online shopping sites (Puspita, 2024), all of which create halal as a component of a global identity—presenting it as both a religious requirement and a way of life linked to modernity, upward mobility, and global norms.

This more comprehensive institutional perspective is further supported by occupational backgrounds and educational attainment. Higher levels of formal education and more exposure to foreign markets—whether via work in multinational businesses, international trade, or digital entrepreneurship—are common among urban people. Beyond its initial theological basis, such exposure fosters a concept of halal certification that places an emphasis on export preparedness, regulatory dependability, and universal quality standards.

Because of this, urban customers are more likely to see halal as a component of a market regulatory and governance system rather than just a religious need.

Rural responses, on the other hand, constantly place halal in a more conventional, religiously oriented conversation. For them, halal is still largely a spiritual necessity that cannot be compromised and is ingrained in religious teachings, cultural customs, and family traditions. Fulfilling societal responsibilities and upholding individual piety are prioritized over branding or institutional credibility.

This perception is further supported by the means by which people in rural areas obtain information regarding halal certification. Rural populations are more likely to learn about halal from local religious leaders, mosque sermons, community events, and unofficial word-of-mouth networks than from commercial advertising or digital marketing. Instead of using halal as a means of lifestyle branding or commercial differentiation, some sources present it as a spiritual obligation. As a result, the concept of a "halal lifestyle," which includes domains like fashion, tourism, and finance, has not been as prevalent in rural discourse. Because they don't fit with the cultural frames of reference that are already in place, marketing initiatives that try to position halal as a contemporary identity identifier may find it difficult to connect in these settings (Nafis, 2019).

This disparity reflects systemic disparities in media access, educational possibilities, and economic priorities and cannot be attributed solely to physical location (Mejova, Bankhedda, & Khairani, 2017). Halal is constantly being redefined in urban settings to conform to contemporary governance frameworks, global trade standards, and consumerist narratives. In contrast, rural communities continue to define halal in a way that is primarily based on faith, socially reinforced, and unaffected by commercialization. The intricacy of putting into practice national policies or marketing plans meant to integrate public conceptions of halal under a single narrative is shown by the coexistence of these two discursive orientations.

3. *Halal Lifestyle in Advertising: Commodification and Identity*

In recent years, commercial marketing strategies in Indonesia have increasingly positioned the notion of a "halal lifestyle" as a central brand identity rather than merely a compliance statement. This evolution signifies a shift from viewing halal certification as a technical or religious requirement to treating it as a symbolic asset with cultural and aspirational value. Through this lens, halal becomes not only a marker of religious permissibility but also an instrument for shaping consumer identities, lifestyle choices, and perceptions of social status (Susilawati, Joharudin, Abduh, & Sonjaya, 2023).

A thematic analysis of purposively selected advertisements—spanning television, digital platforms, print media, and outdoor billboards—identified five dominant thematic clusters. Each cluster demonstrates how the concept of halal is embedded within different consumer categories:

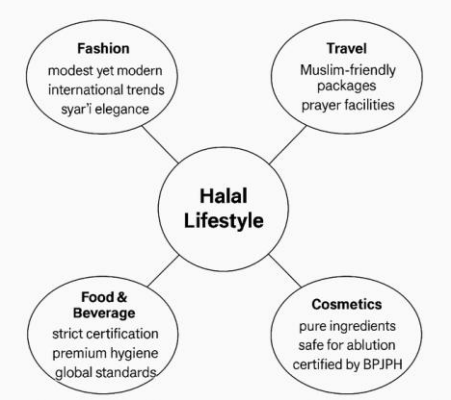



**Figure 1.** Concept Map of "Halal Lifestyle" Advertising Themes

Ads usually use terms like "modest yet modern," "international trends," and "syar'i elegance," portraying halal-compliant apparel as not just religiously acceptable but also fashionable and globally relevant. By promoting "Muslim-friendly packages," ensuring access to "prayer facilities," and highlighting "certified cuisine," tourism advertising incorporate halal principles into leisure activities and present them as seamless elements of convenience and pleasure.

By using phrases like "ethical banking," "profit-sharing," and "trustworthy," the banking and investment industries present Sharia-based financial solutions as both ethically sound and competitively priced. Beauty advertising emphasize "pure ingredients," "safe for ablution," and "certified by BPJPH," indicating a convergence of health knowledge, personal care sophistication, and religious purity. Halal is in line with contemporary industrial quality requirements and worldwide trade competitiveness thanks to marketing that places an emphasis on "strict certification," "premium hygiene," and "global standards."

**Table 5.** Aspects positive and critical implications

| Aspects | Positive Implications | Critical Implications |
|---|---|---|
| Industry Compliance | Encourages broader adherence to halal certification standards, improving overall product quality. | May incentivize superficial labelling rather than genuine adherence to ethical principles. |
| Economic Growth | Expands domestic and international markets, boosting trade and creating new business opportunities. | Benefits are often concentrated in urban, higher-income sectors, potentially widening economic disparities. |
| Cultural Visibility | Promotes a modern Muslim identity globally, enhancing cultural representation. | Risks reducing religious values to commercial symbols, detaching them from their spiritual foundations. |
| Consumer Choice | Increases the variety of certified products, giving consumers more options aligned with their beliefs. | May create social pressure to purchase "premium" halal-branded goods, reinforcing class distinctions. |
| Global Competitiveness | Aligns domestic industries with | Focus on global markets can |

| Aspects | Positive Implications | Critical Implications |
|---|---|---|
| | international halal standards, improving export potential. | overshadow local needs and rural perspectives. |

The debate around the "halal lifestyle" suggests that halal has evolved beyond its original use as a straightforward sign of religious observance. Today, it functions as a multidimensional identity marker that places Islamic customs in a globalized economy and combines piety and materialism. Halal is increasingly portrayed in advertisements as attractive, high-end, and aspirational rather than just as "permissible." By doing this, businesses reach a rising market of buyers, especially middle-class urban consumers, who are looking for goods that support their cosmopolitan lifestyles and religious beliefs.

As businesses from a variety of industries, including fashion and banking, strive to achieve certification requirements, the commercialization of halal has encouraged broader industry compliance (Jan, Marimuthu, Hassan, & Mehreen, 2019). By providing access to global halal markets, this in turn improves product safety, fortifies regulatory enforcement, and stimulates economic growth. Furthermore, halal has become more commonplace in mainstream commerce as a result of its congruence with ideas like quality, hygiene, and moral corporate conduct, turning it from a niche designation to a competitive advantage.

However, there are possible dangers associated with the commercialization of religious ideals. First, it might diminish the theological relevance of intricate spiritual concepts by turning them into little more than promotional tools. Second, urban and affluent populations that can afford to purchase "halal lifestyle" items, like high-end vacation packages or name-brand cosmetics, are typically the ones who find this commercial framing most appealing (Immawati, et al, 2023). As a result, these aspirational tales may unintentionally leave out lower-income areas and rural populations, further entrenching already-existing socioeconomic divides. Moreover, the portrayal of halal as "premium" runs the risk of linking religious observance to social standing, which could change the cultural significance of halal from a moral requirement for equality to a marker of class differentiation.

4. *Interplay of Language, Power, and Authority*

A wider reorganization of power dynamics in Indonesia's halal governance environment is revealed by the change that can be seen in the certification logos and the linguistic framing of advertisements connected to halal. Two crossing trajectories can be used to conceptualize this shift: The Halal Product Assurance Agency (*Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal*, BPJPH) would assume bureaucratic supervision after the Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) relinquished its clerical supremacy.

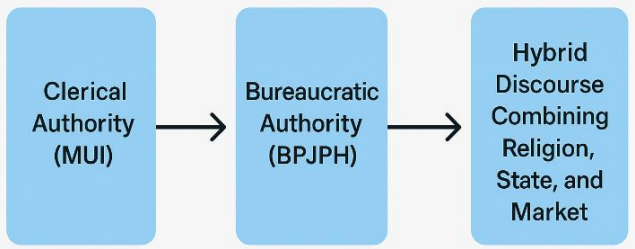



**Figure 2.** Interplay of language, power, and authority

A shift from a strictly religious register to a hybrid discourse that incorporates aspects of the state, the market, and religion is known as discursive realignment. These modifications are neither coincidental nor purely aesthetic from the standpoint of critical discourse analysis (CDA), especially when using Fairclough's paradigm. Rather, they represent a methodical

exercise in linguistic and semiotic decision-making that transforms the way in which authority is established, validated, and conveyed to the general public.

The official logo's intentional switch from Arabic to Indonesian represents state intervention in a formerly clerically governed area. Arabic denotes spiritual power and continuity and has historically been linked to religious books and international Islamic identity. Instead of remaining a symbol of purely religious legitimacy, the state intends to integrate halal certification into the national bureaucratic apparatus, as evidenced by its diminished prominence and substitution of standardized Indonesian typography. This decision essentially shifts the authority from religious experts to state institutions by bringing halal regulation into line with the language of governance, legal compliance, and administrative standardization.

The official logo's intentional switch from Arabic to Indonesian represents state intervention in a formerly clerically governed area. Arabic denotes spiritual power and continuity and has historically been linked to religious books and international Islamic identity. Instead of remaining a symbol of purely religious legitimacy, the state intends to integrate halal certification into the national bureaucratic apparatus, as evidenced by its diminished prominence and substitution of standardized Indonesian typography. This decision essentially shifts the authority from religious experts to state institutions by bringing halal regulation into line with the language of governance, legal compliance, and administrative standardization.

Similarly, phrases like "premium halal," "certified quality," and "international standards" are being used more and more in commercial ads. These vocabulary choices combine ideas of consumer value, economic modernity, and global competitiveness with religious obedience. Advertisers—and, consequently, regulatory bodies—contribute to the reframing of halal in the public domain by portraying it not only as a religious duty but also as a symbol of quality control and an aspirational way of life. The state's function as the guarantee of both religious and market legitimacy is subtly supported by this hybrid discourse.

A more extensive redistribution of symbolic power is reflected in these language techniques. The BPJPH framework introduces the state as a middleman that converts religious criteria into bureaucratic, legal, and economic categories, in contrast to the MUI era, which placed clerical experts at the forefront of determining halal validity. Halal certification is increasingly viewed as a component of the architecture of national governance, connecting individual acts of religious adherence to institutional systems of trade, policy, and international commerce. This shift not only unifies regulatory authority but also changes public expectations.

5. *Comparison with Previous Studies*

The majority of existing research has analysed halal certification from the perspective of economic potential and market dynamics. Henderson (2016) and Tieman (2017), for instance, highlight halal as a new global market category and stress its function in international standardization, branding tactics, and trade facilitation. Although these studies offer important insights into the economic aspects of halal, they don't go far enough in analysing the social and semiotic changes that underlie its modern evolution.

The current study adds to this body of work by showing that halal is a discursive construct whose verbal, visual, and symbolic elements actively influence how the public views authority, trust, and identity. It is not only a commercial category or regulatory label. Three contributions are particularly noteworthy.

It is about semiotic Shifts and Public Trust. Prior research tended to view certification markings and logos as immobile proof of compliance. This study, on the other hand,

demonstrates how seemingly insignificant visual changes—like variations in language, font, and colour scheme—can have a big impact on how various social groups perceive religious legitimacy and institutional authority. These results support the claim made by Fairclough (1995) that visual design and language are social action tools that rebalance power dynamics.

It is also related to media exposure, urbanization, and meaning diversification. Previous research frequently uses the assumption that different people have similar understandings of halal. According to our findings, the perceived meanings of halal have become more diverse as a result of urbanization and extensive media exposure. While rural communities continue to emphasize halal's position as a basic religious obligation, metropolitan contexts are increasingly framing it as a sign of quality assurance, global competitiveness, and lifestyle identity. Prior market-oriented research has mostly ignored the additional levels of complexity that this divergence brings.

Lastly, it shows cultural stratification and the Halal lifestyle. Although earlier research acknowledges the financial advantages of halal branding, it rarely discusses how it may exacerbate socioeconomic and cultural disparities. This study shows how "halal lifestyle" advertising, which are frequently aimed at wealthy metropolitan customers, might unintentionally contribute to cultural inequality by charting responses in urban and rural areas. These advertisements incorporate halal into aspirational themes of luxury, travel, and modernity—narratives that may not be relatable or available to rural communities. This implies that halal runs the risk of becoming an implicit indicator of social status as well as a sign of religious observance as it becomes more marketed.

**Conclusion**

With a focus on three interconnected analytical domains, this study examined the changing discourses and symbolic constructions surrounding halal in Indonesian public communication: (1) the semiotic shift from MUI to BPJPH certification logos, (2) the disparate urban–rural perceptions of halal, and (3) the commercial framing of the "halal lifestyle" within modern advertising narratives. The methods by which halal has evolved from a strictly religious designation to a more comprehensive socio-political and economic signifier are reflected in each of these sectors, which are separate yet related.

The results imply that the term "halal" is no longer sufficiently grasped as a theologically exclusive or unchanging concept. Rather, it operates as a complex semiotic construct that is influenced by the interaction of market forces, sociocultural dynamics, and institutional authority. Moving from clerical institutions that are typically associated with religious expertise to formal state agencies embedded within bureaucratic governance structures, the visual shift from the MUI to BPJPH logos signifies more than just a graphic redesign. This reallocation marks a shift from a community-based spiritual endorsement to a standardized, government-regulated certification regime, changing the way authority and trust are negotiated in the public domain.

An additional conceptual division between urban and rural inhabitants is shown by the examination of audience responses. Urban respondents increasingly link halal certification to ideas of product quality, safety, and aspirational lifestyle branding due to increased media exposure, formal education, and interaction with worldwide markets. Rural respondents, on the other hand, define halal largely in terms of its original religious context, considering certification to be a spiritual necessity that is ingrained in family and community customs and cannot be compromised. These contrasting viewpoints highlight the ways in which social location, media accessibility, and economic orientation influence the meaning and purpose of halal in daily life.

By integrating halal into a consumerist framework, advertising discourse exacerbates this shift. In addition to portraying halal as acceptable, commercial marketing aggressively position it as high-end, appealing, and contemporary—commodifying Islamic principles and associating them with consumerism that is focused on status. Such storylines present significant hazards in

addition to beneficial prospects, such as improved export potential, increased regulatory compliance, and wider industry alignment with international standards. These include the possible erosion of the spiritual aspect of halal, the reinterpretation of religious devotion as a business characteristic, and the resulting socioeconomic and cultural divisions. For example, the discourse surrounding the "halal lifestyle" disproportionately appeals to middle-class urban audiences while being less relevant or accessible to rural populations, which may reinforce cultural stratification patterns.

Future studies should go beyond discursive analysis and use empirical fieldwork to confirm and improve these patterns in light of these complexity. Larger, more demographically varied samples may show how perceptions of halal are influenced by differences in income, education, and geographic location. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are needed to examine how the institutionalization and commercialization of halal shape its role in Indonesia's sociopolitical landscape over time. To get a more complex picture of halal as a dynamic cultural symbol in modern Indonesian culture, future research might also look at gendered and generational aspects as well as the impact of regional cultural identities.

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