



## Constructing Halal Identity in Global Markets: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Halal Branding Practices

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### Article Information

<http://journal.unusia.ac.id/index.php/mozaic/>

### DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.47776/mozaic.v12i1.2056>

Submitted: 14 April 2026

Approved: 29 April 2026

Published: 30 April 2026

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis, Global Halal Market, Halal Discourse, Identity Construction, Linguistic Branding.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Analisis Wacana Kritis, Konstruksi Identitas, Merek Linguistik, Pasar Halal Global, Wacana Halal.*

### Abstract

This study examines how language constructs and communicates halal identity in global markets through an analysis of halal branding practices. While prior research has focused on certification, regulation, and consumer trust, limited attention has been given to the linguistic strategies shaping halal identity across cultural contexts. Employing a qualitative design and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study analyzes a corpus of 45 halal branding texts, including product labels, promotional slogans, and digital marketing content from Indonesia, Malaysia, and selected global brands. The findings reveal three dominant discursive strategies: (1) religious lexicalization (e.g., halal, tayyib, sharia-compliant), (2) hybrid identity framing that integrates Islamic values with global branding narratives, and (3) persuasive sloganization linking ethical consumption with lifestyle aspirations. The study also highlights cross-cultural tensions, where the universalization of halal values encounters challenges in local adaptation. This research contributes to sociolinguistics, marketing discourse, and halal studies by demonstrating the central role of language in constructing symbolic meanings of halal in the global economy. Practically, the findings offer insights for marketers and policymakers in designing culturally sensitive and linguistically effective halal branding strategies.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana bahasa mengonstruksi dan mengomunikasikan identitas halal di pasar global melalui analisis praktik branding halal. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya lebih banyak berfokus pada sertifikasi, regulasi, dan kepercayaan konsumen, perhatian terhadap strategi linguistik yang membentuk identitas halal lintas konteks budaya masih terbatas. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif dan pendekatan Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), penelitian ini menganalisis korpus sebanyak 45 teks branding halal, yang mencakup label produk, slogan promosi, dan konten pemasaran digital dari Indonesia, Malaysia, serta beberapa merek global. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan tiga strategi diskursif utama, yaitu: (1) leksikalisasi religius, (2) pembingkai identitas hibrida yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam dengan narasi branding global, dan (3) sloganisasi persuasif yang mengaitkan konsumsi etis dengan aspirasi gaya hidup. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti adanya ketegangan lintas budaya, di mana universalisasi nilai-nilai halal menghadapi tantangan dalam proses adaptasi lokal. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian sosiolinguistik, wacana pemasaran, dan studi halal dengan menunjukkan

peran sentral bahasa dalam membangun makna simbolik halal dalam ekonomi global. Secara praktis, temuan ini memberikan wawasan bagi pemasar dan pembuat kebijakan dalam merancang strategi branding halal yang sensitif secara budaya dan efektif secara linguistik.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid expansion of the global halal industry has transformed halal from a purely religious obligation into a multidimensional concept encompassing identity, lifestyle, and global economic engagement (Qazi, 2025); (Abrar & Pambudi, 2025). In contemporary markets, halal no longer functions solely as a marker of compliance with Islamic law but has evolved into a symbol of ethical consumption, quality assurance, and cultural identity (Rahman et al., 2024); (Makiah et al., 2022). As halal products circulate across diverse international contexts, the need to communicate halal values effectively has become increasingly important (Sakti, 2023). In this regard, language plays a crucial role, as halal products must simultaneously signal religious legitimacy while appealing to broader, multicultural audiences (Kamarulzaman et al., 2016); (Faisal et al., 2024); (Fitria, 2025).

Existing scholarship on halal has predominantly focused on certification systems, regulatory frameworks, and consumer trust, emphasizing the institutional and economic dimensions of the halal industry (Thani, 2025); (Aufi et al., 2024); (Tajul Urus et al., 2025). While these studies provide valuable insights into how halal standards are maintained and perceived, they often overlook the role of language as a strategic resource in shaping halal identity. From the perspective of Sociolinguistics, language is not merely a neutral medium of communication but a powerful tool for constructing social meaning, identity, and ideological positioning (Idrak et al., 2025); (Sholihah et al., 2026). Linguistic choices such as the use of religious terminology, hybrid expressions, and persuasive slogans can influence how halal is understood, negotiated, and consumed in different cultural settings (Takhim & Maksum, 2025).

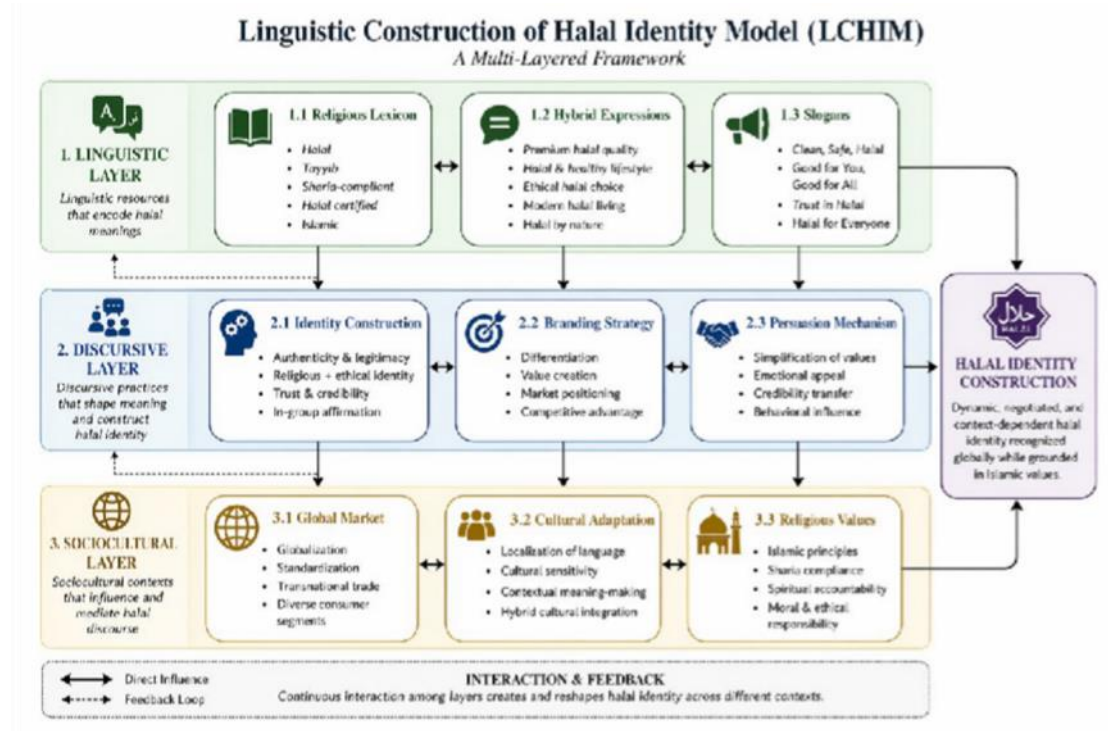
Recent discussions on halal branding suggest that halal has increasingly been integrated into global marketing strategies, where it is framed not only as a religious requirement but also as part of a modern lifestyle. However, research examining how linguistic elements contribute to this transformation remains limited. There is a lack of discourse-oriented studies that analyze how halal identity is constructed through language across different socio-cultural contexts (Raza & Ricento, 2025). Previous studies tend to prioritize certification and trust-building mechanisms, resulting in an under exploration of communication strategies embedded in branding practices (Holloway, 2024). Furthermore, the cross-cultural dimension of halal communication especially how halal meanings are adapted, negotiated, or potentially diluted in global markets has not been sufficiently addressed (Taufiqurrachman et al., 2025).

Addressing these gaps, this study aims to investigate how language functions as a tool for constructing halal identity in global markets. Specifically, it examines how lexical choices, slogans, and hybrid linguistic expressions are employed in halal branding to represent halal as both a religious and commercial identity. By integrating insights from discourse

analysis and halal studies, this research seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how halal is communicated in an increasingly globalized and multicultural marketplace. Ultimately, this study contributes to bridging the gap between halal studies and linguistic inquiry, highlighting the central role of language in shaping the meaning and perception of halal in contemporary society.

To provide a structured analytical lens for this study, a conceptual model is proposed to illustrate how linguistic elements interact with discursive practices in constructing halal identity across sociocultural contexts.

**Figure 1 Linguistics Construction of Halal Identity Model**



Source: Researcher's data

As shown in Figure 1, the model consists of three interconnected layers; linguistic, discursive, and sociocultural which collectively explain how halal identity is dynamically constructed in global markets.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary analytical framework, drawing on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which encompasses text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 2023); (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard, 2023). This framework allows for a systematic investigation of how halal identity is constructed linguistically at multiple levels, from textual features to broader socio-cultural meanings.

The data consist of a corpus of halal branding texts (N = 45 items) collected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included: (1) explicit use of halal-related terminology, (2) availability in public domains, and (3) representation of diverse market

contexts. Data were collected from three main platforms: product packaging, official brand websites, and verified social media accounts like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. The data collection was conducted over a six-month period from September 2025 to February 2026 to ensure contemporaneity and relevance. This sampling strategy was designed to capture variation in how halal identity is communicated across different cultural and commercial settings.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, this study applied several qualitative validation techniques. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing data across multiple platforms (packaging, websites, and social media). Second, peer debriefing was employed to review coding consistency and interpretation. Third, an audit trail was maintained to document data selection, coding decisions, and analytical procedures, enhancing transparency and replicability.

The analytical procedure followed a systematic multi-step process. (1) Data familiarization: all texts were read repeatedly to identify initial patterns. (2) Initial coding: linguistic features were coded inductively and deductively. (3) Thematic categorization: codes were grouped into broader analytical categories. (4) CDA interpretation: findings were interpreted across Fairclough's three dimensions. At the textual level, the analysis focused on vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical features. At the discourse practice level, it examined how texts are produced and consumed within branding strategies. At the sociocultural level, it explored how halal discourse interacts with global market ideologies and local cultural values.

The coding framework was developed based on both theoretical grounding in CDA and prior studies in halal discourse and marketing communication, ensuring conceptual validity. Four main categories were established: Religious Lexicalization (RL), Hybrid Identity (HI), Persuasive Sloganization (PS), and Cross-cultural Adaptation (CC). Religious lexicalization refers to the use of Islamic terminology to signal religious compliance. Hybrid identity captures the integration of religious discourse with global branding language. Persuasive sloganization includes emotionally appealing and lifestyle-oriented expressions. Cross-cultural adaptation refers to the use of neutral or universal expressions (e.g., "ethical food choice") to appeal to broader audiences. These categories were iteratively refined during the coding process to ensure analytical rigor and internal consistency.

Through this operationalization of CDA, the study systematically demonstrates how linguistic elements function as strategic resources in constructing halal identity across different discursive and sociocultural contexts.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

To illustrate the coding process, selected examples from the dataset are presented in Table 1. These demonstrate how individual textual elements may simultaneously reflect multiple discursive strategies.

**Table 1 Coding Categories**

Text	Source	Code	Interpretation
“Halal Certified Premium Quality”	Product label	RL + HI	Combines religious legitimacy with quality branding
“Healthy and Ethical Halal Living”	Social media	HI + PS	Frames halal as lifestyle and ethical consumption
“Quality Food You Can Trust”	Website	CC	Uses neutral language for broader appeal
“Purely Halal”	Packaging	RL	Emphasizes authenticity and purity
“Worlds Cuisine, Halal Certified”	Branding	RL+ HI	Integrates global identity with Islamic compliance
“Good for You, Good for All”	Campaign	PS + CC	Universalizes halal values

Source: Researcher's data

Table 1 presents selected examples of coded textual data, illustrating how halal-related expressions operate across multiple linguistic and discursive dimensions. The findings indicate that halal discourse is constructed through overlapping strategies rather than isolated categories. For instance, the phrase “*Halal Certified Premium Quality*” reflects a combination of religious lexicalization (RL) and hybrid identity (HI), demonstrating how religious legitimacy is integrated with modern quality-oriented branding. Similarly, “*World Cuisine, Halal Certified*” reinforces this hybridization by merging global identity with Islamic compliance, suggesting that halal is positioned within an international consumer framework.

In contrast, not all data exhibit this hybridization. The phrase “*Purely Halal*” rely solely on religious lexicalization, emphasizing authenticity and doctrinal purity without incorporating broader marketing elements. This indicates that certain branding strategies still prioritize explicit religious signaling, particularly in contexts where trust and compliance are central. On the other hand, phrases like “*Healthy and Ethical Halal Living*” combine hybrid identity (HI) with persuasive sloganization (PS), framing halal as part of a lifestyle discourse that aligns with ethical and health-conscious consumption trends.

Moreover, the presence of cross-cultural adaptation (CC) is evident in expressions such as “*Quality Food You Can Trust*,” which employ neutral and universal language to appeal to a wider audience beyond Muslim consumers. Similarly, “*Good for You, Good for All*” integrates persuasive and cross-cultural elements (PS + CC), effectively universalizing halal values by associating them with inclusivity and general well-being. From the perspective of Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis, these patterns suggest that halal discourse is dynamically negotiated across textual and sociocultural levels, where meanings are strategically adapted to balance religious authenticity with global market appeal.

Overall, the data demonstrate that halal identity is not constructed through a single linguistic strategy but through the interaction of multiple discursive elements. This interplay highlights the fluid and hybrid nature of halal communication, where religious, commercial, and cultural meanings converge to shape how halal is represented and understood in contemporary contexts.

To provide a broader overview of the distribution of linguistic strategies identified in the dataset, the frequency and percentage of each coding category are presented in Table 2. This quantitative summary complements the qualitative analysis by highlighting the relative prominence of each discursive pattern within the corpus. By examining the occurrence of Religious Lexicalization (RL), Hybrid Identity (HI), Persuasive Slogans (PS), and Cross-cultural Adaptation (CC), the table offers insights into how different linguistic elements contribute to the construction of halal identity across various contexts.

**Table 2. Coding Category Frequency**

Category	Source	Frequency	Percentage
RL (Religious Lexicalization)	Islamic Terminology	28	62%
HI (Hybrid Identity)	Religious + global language	22	49%
PS (Persuasive Slogans)	Marketing/emotional appeal	19	42%
CC (Cross-Cultural Adaptation)	Neutral/global phrasing	15	30%

Source: Researcher's data

As shown in Table 2, the variation in frequency across categories indicates that halal discourse is not dominated by a single strategy but rather shaped by the interaction of multiple linguistic and discursive practices. This distribution provides an empirical foundation for understanding the extent to which religious, hybrid, persuasive, and cross-cultural elements are utilized in halal branding and communication. The distribution of coding categories indicates that religious lexicalization (62%) is the most dominant

strategy, followed by hybrid identity construction (49%). This suggests that while halal discourse remains strongly rooted in religious terminology, it is increasingly combined with global marketing language to enhance broader appeal.

Figure 2 presents a conceptual model of halal identity construction, synthesizing the interaction between linguistic strategies and discursive practices. Importantly, the model should not be viewed as a static representation but as a dynamic process. The findings from Tables 1 and 2 empirically support this model: religious lexicalization anchors halal identity, hybridization expands it into global markets, and sloganization simplifies it for mass communication, while cross-cultural adaptation negotiates its accessibility across audiences.

**Figure 2 A conceptual model illustrating how linguistic elements (lexicalization, hybridization, and sloganization) interact with discursive practices to construct halal identity within global sociocultural contexts.**



Source: Researcher's data

Analytically, the model demonstrates that these strategies do not operate independently but are interdependent and context sensitive. For instance, hybrid identity often emerges only after religious legitimacy is established, while persuasive sloganization tends to amplify meanings already constructed through lexicalization and hybridization. At the sociocultural level, this interaction reflects a broader negotiation between global standardization and local adaptation, where halal identity is continuously redefined.

These linguistic features operate within discursive practices, where meanings are produced, circulated, and consumed across different communication channels such as product labels, advertising, and digital media. Drawing on the framework of Norman Fairclough, the model highlights how discourse functions at multiple levels: textual (word choices and phrases), discursive (branding and communication strategies), and

sociocultural (globalization, cultural adaptation, and religious values). The interaction of these levels results in the continuous construction and negotiation of halal identity.

At the sociocultural level, the model reflects the tension between global standardization and local adaptation. While linguistic strategies aim to universalize halal for broader markets, they simultaneously engage with specific cultural and religious contexts, leading to hybrid and sometimes contested meanings. Ultimately, the model demonstrates that halal identity is not fixed but dynamically constructed through the interplay of language, discourse, and global cultural forces, positioning language as a central mechanism in shaping how halal is understood and consumed worldwide.

### **Religious Lexicalization**

The analysis of the corpus reveals that halal discourse is prominently characterized by the strategic use of religious lexicalization to construct authenticity and trust. Across product labels, promotional slogans, and digital marketing content, terms such as *halal*, *tayyib*, and *sharia-compliant* are consistently employed as core linguistic markers that signal adherence to Islamic principles. For instance, product packaging from Wardah Cosmetics prominently displays the phrase “*Halal Certified*”, positioning halal as a visible guarantee of religious compliance. Similarly, Nestlé Malaysia incorporates expressions such as “*Halal Quality Assurance*” on its official website, reinforcing institutional credibility through standardized terminology. In the global context, brands such as Saffron Road use the slogan “*World Cuisine, Halal Certified*”, combining religious markers with global culinary appeal, while Al Islami Foods adopts the phrase “*Purely Halal*” to emphasize authenticity and purity.

These lexical choices function not merely as descriptive labels but as discursive resources that establish religious authority and legitimacy within the marketplace. In line with the framework of Norman Fairclough, such terms operate at the textual level as symbolic signifiers, while at the discursive level they reinforce institutional trust and credibility associated with halal certification bodies. The repetition of these terms across different branding contexts suggests a process of normalization, in which halal becomes a standardized linguistic marker easily recognized by consumers.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that religious lexicalization serves a dual function by bridging spiritual values and consumer expectations. For example, the term *tayyib*, often implicitly embedded in expressions emphasizing quality and wholesomeness, extends the meaning of halal beyond legal compliance to encompass ethical and health-related dimensions. This is evident in phrases such as “*Halal and Healthy Lifestyle*” and “*Premium Halal Quality*”, which merge religious terminology with modern consumer-oriented language. Such patterns align with previous studies indicating that halal branding increasingly integrates religious authenticity with broader notions of safety, hygiene, and ethical consumption.

However, the analysis also reveals that the widespread standardization of religious lexical items may lead to a degree of semantic simplification. Complex theological meanings

embedded in terms such as *halal* and *tayyib* are often reduced to concise and marketable expressions, functioning as recognizable branding cues rather than deeply interpreted religious concepts. This suggests that while religious lexicalization enhances trust and global recognizability, it simultaneously contributes to the commodification of halal as a linguistic and symbolic resource within global market discourse. Overall, these findings demonstrate that religious terminology plays a central role in the construction of halal identity, functioning both as a marker of religious legitimacy and as a strategic tool for market positioning.

### **Hybrid Identity Construction**

The analysis reveals that halal discourse is not constructed solely through religious lexicalization but increasingly through hybrid identity formations that merge Islamic values with global consumerist language. This hybridization is evident in the integration of religious markers with modern branding expressions, resulting in phrases such as “*Premium Halal Quality*,” “*Halal and Healthy Lifestyle*,” and “*Trusted Halal Choice for Modern Living*.” For example, Wardah Cosmetics combines its halal positioning with the slogan “*Inspiring Beauty*,” subtly aligning Islamic compliance with contemporary ideals of self-expression and empowerment. Similarly, Saffron Road employs the phrase “*World Cuisine, Halal Certified*,” which situates halal within a cosmopolitan culinary narrative, appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, as proposed by Norman Fairclough, these hybrid expressions operate at the intersection of discourse practice and sociocultural practice. At the discursive level, they recontextualize halal from a strictly religious obligation into a flexible and marketable identity. At the sociocultural level, they reflect broader processes of globalization, where local religious values are adapted to fit global consumption patterns. The co-occurrence of terms such as *halal*, *premium*, *healthy*, and *lifestyle* illustrates how halal is discursively repositioned as part of a modern, aspirational identity rather than merely a set of dietary restrictions.

Importantly, this hybrid identity construction enables halal products to transcend their traditional market boundaries. By embedding halal within universal values such as quality, wellness, and sustainability, brands can appeal to a wider audience beyond Muslim consumers. This is evident in expressions like “*Ethical Halal Food*” and “*Halal for Everyone*,” which frame halal as inclusive and globally relevant. Such findings resonate with recent studies highlighting the convergence between religious branding and lifestyle marketing in the halal industry (Noor, 2025); (Yusran et al., 2025).

However, the findings also suggest a tension inherent in this hybridization process. While the integration of global marketing language enhances accessibility and market expansion, it may simultaneously dilute the specificity of halal as a religious concept. The incorporation of secular terms such as *lifestyle*, *premium*, and *wellness* risks shifting the focus from religious compliance to consumer desirability, thereby transforming halal into a flexible branding category rather than a fixed doctrinal standard. This tension reflects a

broader negotiation between authenticity and adaptability, where halal identity is continuously reconstructed to balance religious integrity with global competitiveness.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that hybrid identity construction plays a crucial role in redefining halal within contemporary market discourse. Rather than representing a static religious label, halal emerges as a dynamic and negotiable identity shaped by the interplay between Islamic values and global consumer culture.

### **Persuasive Slogonization**

The analysis indicates that persuasive sloganization plays a pivotal role in translating complex halal principles into concise, memorable, and market-friendly messages. Across the corpus, slogans are strategically crafted to simplify doctrinal meanings and render them accessible to a broad audience. Rather than explicitly emphasizing religious obligations, many slogans reframe halal through universally appealing values such as cleanliness, safety, and ethical consumption. For instance, expressions such as *“Clean, Safe, and Halal,”* *“Trusted Halal for Healthy Living,”* and *“Ethical Food You Can Trust”* demonstrate how halal is discursively linked to modern consumer concerns, particularly health and product reliability.

From the perspective of Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis, these slogans function at the textual level through simplified and repetitive linguistic patterns, while at the discursive level they serve as persuasive tools that align halal branding with consumer expectations. The use of short, rhythmical, and emotionally resonant phrases enhances memorability and facilitates the circulation of halal meanings across media platforms, including packaging, advertisements, and digital campaigns. This process reflects what can be understood as the commodification of meaning, where complex religious values are condensed into easily consumable linguistic units.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that persuasive sloganization contributes to the universalization of halal identity. By associating halal with widely accepted values such as hygiene, safety, and ethical responsibility, these slogans extend the relevance of halal beyond Muslim consumers to a more global audience. This is evident in phrases like *“Good for You, Good for All”* and *“Quality You Can Trust,”* which minimize explicit religious references while retaining the implicit assurance of halal standards. Such strategies resonate with contemporary marketing trends that emphasize inclusivity and lifestyle orientation, positioning halal as part of a broader ethical consumption movement.

However, this simplification also introduces a critical tension. While sloganization enhances accessibility and market appeal, it may simultaneously obscure the theological depth and specificity of halal as a religious concept. The reduction of halal to generalized values risks detaching it from its doctrinal roots, transforming it into a flexible branding label rather than a strictly defined religious guideline. This tension highlights the dual function of persuasive sloganization as both an enabling and constraining force in the construction of halal identity.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that persuasive sloganization is a key discursive strategy in halal branding, enabling the transformation of religious values into universally intelligible and commercially viable messages. Through this process, halal is not only communicated but actively reconstructed as a dynamic and globally resonant identity.

### **Cross-Cultural Communication Challenges**

The findings reveal a persistent tension between the global standardization of halal language and its local cultural interpretation across different market contexts. On the one hand, the increasing globalization of the halal industry encourages the use of standardized terminology such as *halal certified*, *sharia-compliant*, and *halal assurance* to ensure consistency, recognizability, and regulatory alignment across borders. These standardized expressions function as globally legible markers of trust and compliance, enabling halal products to circulate efficiently within international markets. On the other hand, local contexts demand adaptation, where linguistic expressions are modified to align with specific cultural expectations, consumer preferences, and levels of familiarity with Islamic concepts.

This tension becomes particularly evident in non-Muslim markets, where halal is frequently reframed using neutral, secular, or health-oriented language. For example, instead of explicitly emphasizing religious compliance, brands may adopt expressions such as “*healthy choice*,” “*ethical food*,” or “*clean and safe products*” to appeal to a broader consumer base. While such strategies enhance accessibility and inclusivity, they also shift the semantic focus of halal from a religious framework to a more universal, lifestyle-oriented discourse. From the perspective of Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis, this reflects a process of recontextualization, in which meanings are selectively transformed as they move across different sociocultural environments.

Moreover, the analysis suggests that this process may lead to partial semantic dilution, where the theological depth and normative dimensions of halal are reduced to generalized notions of quality, hygiene, or ethical consumption. While such reinterpretation enables halal products to gain wider acceptance in global markets, it also raises concerns regarding the potential erosion of religious specificity. In some cases, the absence of explicit religious terminology may create ambiguity, particularly for Muslim consumers who rely on clear markers of compliance. Conversely, overly explicit religious language may limit market reach in contexts where consumers are less familiar with or sensitive to Islamic terminology.

These findings highlight the inherently negotiated nature of halal communication in cross-cultural settings. Rather than being a fixed or uniform concept, halal emerges as a flexible and context-dependent identity shaped by the interplay between global market demands and local cultural meanings. These dynamic underscores the need for a balanced communication strategy that maintains religious authenticity while enabling cultural adaptability. Ultimately, the challenge lies in managing this tension without

compromising the core values that define halal, ensuring that its meaning remains both globally communicable and religiously grounded.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that halal identity is not merely certified but discursively constructed through language. Linguistic strategies play a central role in shaping how halal is perceived, understood, and consumed in global markets. The findings highlight the importance of integrating sociolinguistic perspectives into halal studies, particularly in the context of globalization.

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