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Halal Certification Efforts by Non-Muslim Business Actors as Protection of Muslim Consumers: A Study in the Multicultural Village of Klepu Sooko Ponorogo

Fahmya Nuha Tsabita [1*], Nur Kasanah[2]
[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Ponorogo, Indonesia, fahmya21yahoo.co.id@gmail.com
[2] Universitas Islam Negeri Ponorogo, Indonesia, nur.febi@iainponorogo.ac.id

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*Corresponding author email : fahmya21yahoo.co.id@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research explores the efforts of non-Muslim business actors in obtaining halal certification as a form of protection for Muslim consumers in Klepu, a multicultural village in Sooko, Ponorogo. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study examines how non-Muslim entrepreneurs perceive and implement halal principles, even without formal certification. Data were collected through interviews, field observations, and documentation, and analyzed using triangulation techniques. The findings reveal that: (1) although non-Muslim business actors have not officially obtained halal certification, they have begun aligning their business practices with halal standards; (2) these efforts are motivated by moral responsibility and respect for Muslim consumers, as well as business opportunities; and (3) consumers feel more secure when halal certification is present, while business owners view it as a way to enhance market access and build interfaith trust. The study concludes that halal certification, even when pursued voluntarily by non-Muslims, contributes significantly to consumer protection and inclusive economic growth.

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INTRODUCTION

The discourse on halal certification is gaining increasing attention both in academic studies and in public policy, as it intersects with religious practice, consumer protection, and economic development. In countries with large Muslim populations, such as Indonesia, halal certification serves not only as a religious necessity but also as a national economic strategy. It is embedded in broader efforts to strengthen the halal value chain and assert Indonesia's role as a global halal hub. Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance reflects the government's commitment to institutionalize halal certification and ensure that products consumed by Muslims are in full compliance with Islamic law (LPPOM MUI, 2019). The regulation stipulates that all products circulating in Indonesia must be halal-certified, a policy enforced by the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In practice, however, implementing this mandate is complex. Challenges persist, especially among small-scale businesses and entrepreneurs who are non-Muslim. These actors often encounter obstacles such as limited understanding of halal requirements, lack of technical support, fear of high costs, and the perception that halal certification is unnecessary or burdensome. This presents a paradox: while these businesses may already produce goods in accordance with halal standards, the absence of certification restricts their access to the growing halal consumer market.

The situation is particularly relevant in multicultural regions like Klepu Village, located in the Sooko subdistrict of Ponorogo Regency, East Java. Klepu is home to a unique demographic composition: approximately 55% of its residents are Muslim, while 45% are Catholic (Suprayitno, 2025). This demographic structure fosters a vibrant pluralistic environment in which religious, cultural, and economic interactions intersect on a daily basis. Within this context, a number of non-Muslim business actors have begun to engage voluntarily with the principles of halal, adopting halal-compliant practices in food production and service provision despite lacking formal certification. These efforts are motivated by a sense of moral responsibility, religious tolerance, and the desire to accommodate the needs of Muslim consumers. From a socio-economic perspective, this phenomenon is noteworthy. It challenges the assumption that halal is exclusively a Muslim concern and opens the possibility for halal to function as a universal ethic in consumer protection. For non-Muslim entrepreneurs, adopting halal principles becomes a strategic business move. They perceive halal not merely as a religious requirement but as a value-added certification that enhances product quality, increases consumer trust, and opens access to new markets. Furthermore, halal certification is increasingly associated with cleanliness, safety, and ethical responsibility—values that resonate across religious boundaries.

This study seeks to understand how non-Muslim business actors in Klepu Village respond to the growing demand for halal-certified products. Specifically, it examines (1) the efforts made by these actors to align their practices with halal standards, (2) the factors that influence their decisions regarding halal certification, and (3) the perceived impact of these efforts on consumer trust, business growth, and social cohesion. The research also considers how Muslim consumers in the village perceive the products of non-Muslim businesses and whether the absence or presence of formal halal certification influences their purchasing decisions. Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative, phenomenological approach to

capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and motivations of non-Muslim entrepreneurs. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The phenomenological lens allows the researcher to explore how participants construct meaning around halal practices in the absence of legal or theological obligation. It also enables a contextual understanding of how religious plurality shapes the interaction between producers and consumers in daily economic transactions.The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the broader academic discourse on halal economics, particularly in relation to non-Muslim participation in the halal industry (H.Zuchri Abdussamad and M. 2021). In addition, the research offers practical implications for policymakers, religious institutions, and certification bodies, particularly in designing inclusive frameworks for halal certification that accommodate the diversity of business actors in Indonesia. Finally, this study emphasizes that halal certification is not merely about religious formalism—it is a tool for building ethical business practices, strengthening consumer confidence, and fostering interfaith understanding in multicultural communities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to explore the experiences and perspectives of non-Muslim business actors in implementing halal practices as a form of consumer protection. The study was conducted in Klepu Village, Sooko District, Ponorogo Regency, a multicultural area where Muslims and Catholics coexist. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with non-Muslim entrepreneurs and Muslim consumers, supported by field observations and documentation. Secondary data were gathered from relevant literature, official halal certification documents, and previous research. The selection of Klepu Village was based on its unique religious composition and the absence of prior studies focusing on halal certification efforts by non-Muslim businesses in this area. Data collection was conducted over a period of several weeks using purposive sampling to identify participants who had direct experience with or insights into halal-related practices (Diana Setiyawati, 2024). Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, the researcher employed triangulation techniques using various sources and methods at different times. The analysis focused on describing the efforts, motivations, and perceived impacts of halal implementation by non-Muslim actors in a pluralistic social context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals several key findings regarding the efforts of non-Muslim business actors in Klepu Village to implement halal practices. Despite not having official halal certification, these entrepreneurs demonstrate a growing awareness of the importance of halal principles. Their initiatives reflect not only a form of ethical responsibility but also a strategic adaptation to consumer expectations in a multicultural and religiously diverse environment. The first finding shows that non-Muslim entrepreneurs are aware of what halal entails, especially in terms of ingredients, hygiene, and production processes. Several informants mentioned that although they had not formally registered for halal certification, they deliberately avoided using haram materials such as alcohol or pork-derived ingredients.

Some reported using separate cooking utensils and storage areas to prevent cross-contamination. These practices were not formally required by law but were adopted voluntarily out of respect for Muslim customers. This supports the notion that halal awareness can develop outside formal legal mechanisms and that ethical business conduct may be driven by moral considerations as well as market incentives (Lukmanul Hakim, 2019).

Secondly, these entrepreneurs perceive halal compliance as part of their social responsibility. In their view, serving halal food to Muslim consumers is not only a religious accommodation but also a reflection of integrity, honesty, and professionalism. This aligns with the Islamic economic principles that emphasize transparency (al-shafafiyah), responsibility (al-mas'uliyah), and fairness (al-'adalah) in business transactions. Although the business actors in this study were not themselves Muslims, their actions reflect values that are consistent with Islamic ethical norms, indicating that halal values can transcend religious boundaries and be internalized as universal principles of consumer protection. Third, the study found that economic motives also play a significant role in encouraging halal compliance. Non-Muslim entrepreneurs recognized that a large portion of their consumer base in Klepu consists of Muslims. Thus, adopting halal practices—even informally—was seen as a way to increase customer trust and loyalty. Several business actors mentioned that their sales improved after they began applying halal principles more consciously, such as separating utensils, avoiding doubtful ingredients, and improving cleanliness standards. However, they also expressed concerns about the technical and financial burdens of pursuing formal certification. This highlights the need for government-supported halal certification facilitation, especially for micro and small enterprises.

On the consumer side, Muslim buyers in Klepu responded positively to these efforts. Many expressed that they did not strictly require a halal logo as long as they trusted the seller and knew the production process. Trust-based relationships, personal familiarity, and community reputation played a major role in consumption decisions (Sulaeman, Zulfikar, 2021). Nonetheless, some consumers, particularly younger and more educated individuals, expressed a preference for products with official halal certification as it offered legal and spiritual assurance. This confirms previous research that suggests halal consumption is influenced not only by religious doctrine but also by social context and perceived trustworthiness. These findings underscore the argument that halal certification, while important, should be seen as part of a broader ecosystem of ethical consumption and inclusive business practices. The behavior of non-Muslim entrepreneurs in this study shows that ethical commitment can exist even without legal enforcement. Their voluntary adoption of halal principles contributes to consumer protection, fosters interfaith harmony, and promotes inclusive economic development in multicultural communities.

Theoretically, this aligns with the consumer protection framework that emphasizes the right to safety, information, and religious freedom. In the context of Islamic economics, it also reflects the application of maqashid al-shariah, particularly the protection of religion (hifz al-din), life (hifz al-nafs), and wealth (hifz al-mal). Non-Muslim participation in the halal economy thus illustrates that ethical business conduct is not monopolized by any one religious group but can be embraced across beliefs when aligned with mutual respect, accountability, and shared benefit.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the efforts of non-Muslim business actors in Klepu Village to align with halal principles—despite lacking formal certification—represent a meaningful contribution to consumer protection in a multicultural society. These entrepreneurs voluntarily adopt halal-compliant practices as a form of moral responsibility, business strategy, and social inclusion. Their actions are driven by an understanding of Muslim consumer needs, market opportunities, and a desire to build trust across religious lines. The research also shows that Muslim consumers are generally responsive and appreciative of these efforts, especially when supported by personal trust and transparency. Although official halal certification remains an important factor for some consumers, especially in urban or educated segments, informal halal practices rooted in ethics and social relations also play a significant role in shaping consumer decisions.

Theoretically, these findings affirm that halal certification should be understood not merely as a legal-religious instrument, but also as an ethical framework that promotes integrity, accountability, and inclusiveness in business. The involvement of non-Muslim entrepreneurs in halal-oriented practices illustrates that values of consumer protection and ethical production can transcend religious boundaries and contribute to peaceful coexistence. Therefore, halal certification policies should adopt a more inclusive approach, especially in rural and mixed-religion communities. Government agencies and halal authorities are encouraged to facilitate access and education for non-Muslim entrepreneurs, particularly those from micro and small businesses, so that halal compliance can be realized not only as a regulatory obligation but as a shared commitment to fairness, trust, and social harmony.

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