

CONSUMER TRUST IN PRODUCTS WITHOUT HALAL LABELS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SHARIA COMPLIANCE

Hayu Alfian¹, Shinta Maharani², Ely Masykuroh³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo; Indonesia

Correspondence Email: hayualfian2710@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background/Introduction: In Indonesia, halal certification is an important instrument for ensuring product compliance with sharia principles. Brem Suling Istimewa Madiun remains widely consumed despite lacking halal certification, raising questions about consumer trust in products without halal labels. **Research Objectives:** This study aims to examine consumer trust in Brem Suling Istimewa, analyze it from a sharia compliance perspective, and identify producers' strategies for obtaining halal certification. **Methodology:** This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected from producers and consumers through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validity strengthened through source and method triangulation. **Results:** Consumer trust is shaped by consistent product quality, producer reputation and long-term relationships with retailers, and confidence in traditional production processes. However, the absence of halal certification creates *syubhat*, particularly among consumers with stronger sharia compliance orientations due to concerns about alcohol resulting from fermentation. Producers have demonstrated commitment through routine alcohol testing, hygiene-related standard operating procedures, and cooperation with halal raw material suppliers. **Unique Contribution:** This study integrates consumer trust and sharia compliance perspectives in the context of traditional fermented products. **Conclusion:** Halal certification is essential for strengthening Muslim consumer trust and ensuring sharia compliance. **Recommendations:** Further mentoring for MSME producers and greater public awareness of halal labeling are recommended.

Keywords

Consumer trust; Fermented traditional product; Halal certification; Muslim consumers; Sharia compliance.



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country with a majority Muslim population, places halal certification as an important instrument in ensuring the conformity of products with Sharia principles. Halal labels are understood not only as administrative markers but also as religious, ethical, and legal guarantees that affect consumers' sense of security when making consumption decisions. In the Muslim market, the clarity of halal status contributes to trust, loyalty, and product competitiveness, especially in the food sector, which is directly linked to daily needs. However, not all products in circulation and widely consumed by the public are halal-certified. This condition indicates that consumption behavior is determined not solely by formal certification but also by quality factors, producers' reputations, consumption experiences, and social constructs that develop in Muslim societies (Matsuki, 2020; Central Statistics Agency, 2023; Kahf, 2006; Halal Product Assurance Agency, 2024).

This phenomenon can be seen in the Madiun Special Distilled Brem, one of the traditional regional food products that remains in demand among consumers, even though it does not yet have official halal certification. Madiun Regency is an area with a majority Muslim population. At the same time, Brem has long been a local souvenir icon and continues to be marketed through physical stores and digital platforms. On the other hand, as a fermented product, brem has a sensitive halal dimension, so it requires greater clarity regarding its halal status. Interestingly, the absence of a halal label does not automatically eliminate consumer trust in the product. This situation raises important academic questions, namely, why consumers continue to trust and consume products without halal certification, and the extent to which this trust can be understood within the framework of sharia compliance and *halal thayyiban principles* (Central Statistics Agency of Madiun Regency, 2021; Madiun Regency Government, 2024; Kadi et al., 2021; Kahf, 2006).

Previous studies have shown that halal issues, consumer trust, and purchasing behavior have been extensively researched, but with diverse focuses. At the same locus, Nisaa (2021) found that the production process of Special Distilled Brem was in accordance with MUI Fatwa No. 4 of 2003, and the alcohol content of solid brem shrank by up to 0.2%, so that it was considered to meet the requirements of halal. Al Farisi (2020) shows that people's preferences in buying halal food are influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, with social factors as the dominant influence. Zenita and Restuti (2024) emphasized that Muslim influencer endorsements affect *consumer purchasing confidence*. Rojak et al. (2024) highlight the importance of fiqh of sharia entities as a framework for meeting consumer demands for halal products, while Sudarmi et al.

(2025) show that compliance with halal principles has positive implications for Muslim consumer trust and loyalty (Nisaa, 2021; Al Farisi, 2020; Zenita & Restuti, 2024; Rojak et al., 2024; Sudarmi et al., 2025).

In addition, several other studies emphasize the importance of halal certification as a factor shaping consumer perception and decision. Hartini (2024) explained that halal certificates have important implications for food and beverage business management, especially for increasing competitiveness and meeting the demands of consumers who are increasingly concerned about the halal status of products. Zhafirah (2022) found that religious beliefs and halal awareness have a significant effect on the intention to buy halal bakery products. From the theoretical side, consumer trust is also understood as a belief in the integrity, honesty, and ability of producers to meet consumer expectations, so that quality, reputation, and business ethics are important elements in its formation (Hartini, 2024; Zhafirah, 2022; Rafki et al., 2022; Hasibuan & Nawawi, 2023). However, these studies generally discuss products within the formal halal industry framework or focus on the influence of halal labels on consumer buying interest and preferences.

Based on this description, there appears to be an important research gap. Previous research tends to highlight compliance in the production process, the influence of halal labels, purchase intentions, or consumer preferences, while studies on consumer trust in local traditional food products without halal labels remain relatively limited, especially when analyzed simultaneously from a sharia compliance perspective. This is where the novelty of this research lies: integrating the dimensions of consumer trust and Sharia compliance to interpret the consumption phenomenon of Madiun Special Distilled Brem. This study aims to describe the level of consumer trust in Brem products without halal certification, analyze this trust from the perspective of Sharia compliance, and identify producer strategies in participating in halal certification programs. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of sharia economic studies and provide practical input for traditional food MSMEs, Muslim consumers, and halal policy makers (Rojak et al., 2024; Nisaa, 2021; Hartley, 2024; Halal Product Assurance Agency, 2024).

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to in-depth describe and analyze the level of consumer confidence in Brem products without halal certification in Madiun Regency. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with manufacturers and consumers, direct observation of production and marketing processes, and analysis of relevant documents. The selection of

informants is carried out using *the snowball sampling* technique, starting with key consumers and continuing until data saturation is reached. An analytical descriptive approach is used to identify the relationship between producers' efforts to describe consumer beliefs and consumer beliefs and sharia compliance, and to relate producers' strategies to the two above.

The data used are qualitative, both primary and secondary. Primary data are obtained directly through interviews with manufacturers and consumers of Brem, while secondary data are drawn from official documents, research reports, scientific articles, and online sources. Data collection techniques consist of semi-structured interviews, planned observations of production and marketing activities, and documentation to strengthen the validity of the information. The data collected was analyzed in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and inductive conclusion drawing based on patterns in the field.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the researcher applied triangulation of sources, methods, and time. Source triangulation compares data from producers and consumers; triangulation of methods combines interviews, observations, and documentation, while time triangulation involves collecting data at different times to validate the consistency of information. The final stage of data interpretation involves linking field findings to relevant theories and attending to the local context in Madiun Regency. This process results in a comprehensive understanding of the manufacturer's strategy in building consumer trust without halal certification, as well as providing practical recommendations to improve the sustainability of the Brem business in the future.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the results of interviews and field findings, consumer trust in Brem Suling Istimewa is not formed in isolation but is influenced by several interrelated factors. The findings of the study show that consumers still have confidence in these products because they believe product quality is consistent, the retailer has a good reputation, and a long-term relationship has been built between the manufacturer and the retailer. In addition, the traditional production process is also perceived as the basis for consumer confidence in product quality. However, some consumers still expect official halal certification so that the trust that has been formed socially can be strengthened by formal guarantees. Details of the factors that shape consumer confidence in Special Distilled Brem are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Factors That Shape Consumer Trust in Special Flute Brem

No	Aspects	Findings
1	Product quality	Consumers and retailers rate the taste and quality of brem consistently over time
2	Retailer reputation	Consumers feel safe buying from wholesale stores that have been selling the product for a long time
3	Long-term relationships	Long-standing producer-retailer relationship strengthens trust
4	Traditional process	Consumers consider the use of glutinous rice and yeast as well as traditional production methods as the basis of belief
5	Halal certification expectations	Some consumers still hope for official halal certification

Remarks: The table is compiled from consumer and retailer interview data on quality, reputation, distribution relationships, and expectations regarding halal labels.

The results show that consistent consumption experiences primarily shape consumer trust in Specialty Distilled Brem, retailers' good reputation, and long-term relationships between manufacturers and distribution channels. Consumers who have been buying this product for a long time tend to assess the taste quality and whether the brew's quality is maintained, so they are confident that the product is reliable. In addition, wholesale stores that have long sold Special Distilled Brem serve as intermediaries of trust, as consumers feel safer buying from sellers they already know. These findings show that trust is not born solely from the product's formal attributes, but also from repeated positive experiences and stable social relations within the distribution chain. In the thesis analysis, this pattern is explained by the categories of ability, kindness, and integrity, as formulated by Mayer et al. (1995), and by the importance of loyalty in customer relationships (Laely, 2016).

Based on consumer interviews, attitudes towards sharia compliance in Brem Suling Istimewa products show clear variation. These differences can be seen in social background, experience with product consumption, and the level of consumer attention to aspects of fiqh muamalah. Consumers who have known this product for a long time tend to trust it more because they believe Brem has been proven safe, high-quality, and made from natural ingredients. On the other hand, consumers who are younger, more critical, or more attentive to Islamic law tend to demand formal halal certification to avoid syubhat. A more cautious attitude is also seen in consumers outside the region

who do not have close experience with producers and retailers. These findings show that consumer trust in products without halal certification is not uniform, but is influenced by the level of social proximity, religious knowledge, and the need for official halal assurance. Details of the variation in consumer attitudes are presented in Table 2

Table 2. Variations in Consumer Attitudes to Sharia Compliance

No	Consumer Groups	Findings
1	Old/traditional consumers	Tend to believe because the product has been known for a long time and is considered natural
2	Younger/more critical consumers	More demands for formal halal certainty
3	Fiqh-oriented consumers	Avoiding the element of syubhat and viewing the halal label as a guarantee of tranquility
4	Out-of-region consumers	Be more careful if there is no clarity on the halal status

Description: The table shows differences in consumer attitudes by social background, experience, and level of attention to fiqh muamalah.

The next finding shows that the level of consumer trust is not uniform when viewed from the perspective of Sharia compliance. Older consumers, or those who have long been familiar with the product, tend to believe it because they consider basic ingredients such as sticky rice and yeast to be natural and safe to consume. On the other hand, consumers who are younger or have greater attention to fiqh muamalah show a more cautious attitude and place halal certification as a source of inner peace. For this group, the absence of halal labels is not just an administrative problem but also a matter of certainty to avoid syubhat. Even consumers outside the region tend to be more selective when they lack clarity about the safety and halal status of products. These findings show that consumer trust in products without halal labels is greatly influenced by social background, intensity of religious knowledge, and relational experiences with producers and retailers (Al Farisi, 2020; Aldabena, 2022).

To obtain a more objective picture of the Sharia compliance aspects of Special Distilled Brem products, this study relies not only on interviews and observations but also on data from laboratory tests of alcohol content in samples of water tape and solid Brem. This test is important because the fermentation process in brewing can produce alcohol, so it must be verified through laboratory testing. The results of the test provide an empirical basis for assessing differences in alcohol content between ingredients and the final product, as well as a foothold for understanding why some consumers still believe. In contrast, others still demand formal halal certainty. Thus, this laboratory

data serves as a complement to the field findings, so that the analysis relies not only on perception but also on measurable evidence of the product's alcohol content. Details of laboratory test results of alcohol content in water tape and solid brem are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Alcohol Levels Laboratory Test Results

No	Sample	Test parameters	Units	Test results	Test method
1	Air tape	Alcohol	Presses	3,9	Distillation
2	Solid broom	Alcohol	Presses	0,2	Distillation

Description: Data was taken from the report of laboratory test results of the Surabaya Industrial Research and Standardization Center on samples of water tape and solid brakes.

Laboratory data show a significant difference between the ingredients and the final product. In air tape, the alcohol content was recorded at 3.9%, while in solid brem it was 0.2%. These findings show that the fermentation process yields a relatively high alcohol content in the tap-water phase. Still, after going through the advanced processing stage, these levels decrease significantly in the final product. This decline is an important finding because it shows that the issue of halal in Bremen cannot be seen only through consumers' traditional perceptions, but also through the production process and technical verification. Although the 0.2% content in solid brem is lower, this thesis still emphasizes that the alcohol aspect must be a critical point in the halal certification process. Thus, laboratory results provide an objective basis for explaining why some consumers still believe, while others view this product as requiring further clarification under Sharia (Nisaa, 2021; Rojak et al., 2024).

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis, the manufacturer of Special Distilled Brem shows a clear commitment to move towards halal certification. This commitment is reflected not only in the intention to obtain formal halal recognition but also in the practical steps already being prepared in the production and business management processes. The findings of the study show that producers have participated in halal certification assistance, have begun to prepare submission documents, and plan to strengthen technical aspects such as routine alcohol tests, the preparation of hygiene SOPs, and cooperation with halal-certified raw material suppliers. In addition, this business has an initial legal status as an SPP-PIRT, while cost barriers are beginning to decrease with the introduction of a free halal certification program for MSMEs. This condition indicates that efforts towards halal certification have been gradually and more

systematically directed. Details of producer strategies in moving towards halal certification are presented in Table 4

Table 4. Manufacturers' Strategies Towards Halal Certification

No	Strategy	Findings
1	Halal assistance	Manufacturers have participated in halal certification assistance
2	Document preparation	Manufacturers start preparing documents for submission
3	Routine alcohol tests	Planned alcohol testing for each production batch
4	Hygiene SOPs	Preparation of more formal sanitation SOPs is planned
5	Raw material supplier	Planned cooperation with halal certified raw material suppliers
6	Initial legality	Businesses already have SPP-PIRT
7	Financing support	Cost constraints are starting to be overcome with the free halal certification program for MSMEs

Remarks: The table illustrates the administrative, technical, and commitment of producers in the process towards halal certification

The study's results also show that producers are not in a passive position. Brem Suling Istimewa has taken concrete steps towards halal certification through mentoring, document preparation, routine alcohol-testing plans, sanitation SOP development, and efforts to ensure raw materials come from halal-verified sources. This business also has an SPP-PIRT, so it has an initial administrative legal basis, even though it has not yet obtained full halal certification. Interestingly, this thesis notes that cost constraints that were previously obstacles began to decline due to the availability of free halal certification programs for MSMEs. This data shows that manufacturers have religious motivations as well as market motivations: they want to produce good, halal products and increase consumer trust. Thus, producer strategies move from the stage of intention to concrete action, although there remains a need to strengthen technical standards and to develop more systematic documentation (Hartini, 2024; Sudarmi et al., 2025).

Discussion

The first finding confirms that consistent product quality is the main foundation for building consumer trust in Brem Suling Istimewa. In the framework of Mayer et al. (1995), this condition can be interpreted as the ability dimension, which is producers' ability to maintain quality so that consumers and retailers feel safe continuing to buy and sell the same products. In the case of Brem Suling Special, the consistency of taste and quality, along with a positive consumption experience, leads consumers to develop relatively stable confidence, even without formal halal certification.

These findings are also in line with Laely's (2016) argument that customer loyalty is strongly supported by satisfying repeat experiences. In other words, trust in the early stages is not always born of the label, but of the product's performance, which can be proven by experience. In the context of this article, product quality serves as empirical evidence that temporarily replaces the function of formal guarantees, although it cannot completely resolve Sharia doubts among certain consumers (Ebrahimi&Azar, 2025; Hidayah et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2023; Shamsudin, 2025)

The second finding suggests that retailer reputation and the long-term relationship between producers and wholesalers serve as a social mechanism for trust-building. Consumers not only judge the product, but also judge who sells it. In the case of Brem Suling Istimewa, retailers who have established long-term cooperation with manufacturers serve as a kind of social guarantor of the quality of goods in circulation. This pattern strengthens Al Farisi's (2020) view that social factors can be the dominant determinant of the decision to purchase halal products. In this study, social factors take the form of proximity, recognition, and relational comfort among consumers, retailers, and producers. These findings also confirm the study by As Syifa' Khoirun N et al. (2023), which emphasized that consumer trust is related not only to product attributes but also to interactions that demonstrate concern and responsibility on the part of business actors. Thus, the distribution relationship here functions not just as a trade channel but as a trust infrastructure that supports the sustainability of the traditional local product market (Didi et al., 2023; Grivins & Tisenkopfs, 2018; Nakandala et al., 2020).

The third finding corroborates the view that traditional production processes and perceptions of natural ingredients are an important basis for long-standing consumer beliefs. Many informants believe that the use of sticky rice and yeast, along with the manufacturing process that has been going on for generations, indicates that the product is relatively safe to consume. Substantively, these results confirm Nisaa's (2021) research at the same locus, which shows that the production process of brem is in accordance with MUI Fatwa No. 4 of 2003, and the alcohol content in solid brem is at 0.2%. However, this article goes further: it does not stop at the production process; it also examines how that process shapes consumer perceptions. So, while Nisaa (2021) emphasizes process compliance, this study demonstrates how traditionally perceived compliance can foster social trust. Thus, the traditional process is understood not only as a production technique but also as a symbol of the producer's integrity in consumers' eyes.

However, high social trust is not automatically synonymous with certainty under Sharia.

This is where the critical point of this research's findings lies. Kahf (2006) emphasized that Muslim consumption should be based on the *principle of halalan thayyiban*, which is not only materially good but also legally clear. In line with that, Rojak et al. (2024) place sharia compliance as a normative framework that demands evidence, not just assumptions. Therefore, the results of this study present a kind of antithesis to the view that reputation and tradition are enough to legitimize consumption. For certain consumers, relationship-based trust is adequate, but for consumers who pay closer attention to the dimensions of Islamic law, social relations cannot replace the formal verification process (Junaidi et al., 2022; Khaerani & Nasution, 2023; Nora, 2029). In other words, the study makes a clear distinction between *social trust* and *sharia assurance*: the former is sufficient to sustain purchases, while the latter is necessary to bring about a more complete religious tranquility.

The generational difference and the level of understanding of fiqh in this study are also very important to discuss. Older consumers tend to judge products through consumption experiences and personal relationships, while younger consumers are more demanding of halal labels as a formal guarantee. This finding expands on the results of Al Farisi (2020), who identified social factors as the dominant element in purchasing decisions, as social influence was not uniform across all groups in the case of Brem Suling Istimewa. In the more critical consumer segment, halal certainty occupies a stronger position than social proximity does. This result is also consistent with Aldabena (2022), which emphasizes the importance of Sharia compliance in transactions to avoid dubious elements. Thus, the study shows that Muslim consumer beliefs are multi-layered: some are satisfied with social proof, while others demand normative proof (Algamdy, 2026; Mulla & Caupe, 2026; Sabah & Rahman, 2025). From this, it can be seen that the halal product market is increasingly shifting towards consumers who are more aware of regulations and more sensitive to syubhat.

The results of laboratory tests on alcohol content became the most decisive finding in the discussion of sharia compliance. Data shows that water tape contains 3.9% alcohol, while solid brom 0.2%. These findings confirm Nisaa's (2021) findings regarding the low alcohol content of solid brom final products. Still, this article makes an additional contribution by explicitly distinguishing between the conditions of intermediate and final products. On the other hand, the 3.9% data on air tape shows that the halal critical point cannot be ignored in the certification process. Therefore, this study supports Hartini's (2024) view that halal certification in the food industry is not sufficient to rely solely on market trust, but must be accompanied by strengthened procedures, testing, and documentation. This result is also in line with Rojak et al. (2024), who state that the sharia framework

for halal products requires process traceability, ensuring that compliance is not limited to perception but can be proven both technically and normatively.

The findings on the manufacturer's strategy suggest that Special Distilled Brem is in a transition phase from informal compliance to documented compliance. Halal certification assistance, document preparation, routine alcohol test plans, sanitation SOPs, and cooperation with halal raw material suppliers show that producers have moved from mere intention to action. These results confirm the findings of As Syifa' Khoirun N et al. (2023), which showed that mentoring can increase sharia compliance and consumer trust in MSMEs. This finding is also consistent with Sudarmi et al. (2025), who state that process integrity, transparency, and compliance with halal principles are important elements in strengthening producers' position in the Muslim market. This means that halal certification in this study not only functions as a label but also as a mechanism to improve production management (Al-Shami & Abdullah, 2023; Aufr et al., 2024). From this angle, the strategy of the Special Distilled Brem producer can be read as a form of modernization of business governance without abandoning the product's traditional identity.

Compared with previous research, the results of this study are both affirming and antithetical. He confirmed Nisaa (2021) on aspects of the production process and solid brake alcohol content, strengthened Al Farisi (2020) on the importance of social factors, and supported As Syifa' Khoirun N et al. (2023) and Hartini (2024) regarding the urgency of halal assistance and certification for MSMEs. However, this study also presents a counterpoint to the tendency in previous studies to assume that consumer trust in halal products will automatically strengthen if quality is maintained. In the case of Brem Suling Istimewa, quality does build trust, but it does not automatically remove Sharia doubts. Thus, the novelty of this study lies in the explanation that, in traditional food products without halal labels, consumer trust is formed in two layers: the social layer that underpins purchase, and the normative layer that demands formal halal verification to achieve full religious tranquility.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that consumer trust in Madiun Special Distilled Brem that lacks halal certification is driven by three factors: consistent product quality, retailer reputation, and long-term relationships between producers and distribution channels. This trust grows from positive, repeated consumption experiences, so consumers still consider the product worth purchasing even without an official halal label. In this context, the research findings reinforce the idea that consumer trust is

not always born of formal guarantees but also of producers' ability to maintain quality, business integrity, and long-standing social relations. However, this study also confirms that experience- and reputation-based trust has not fully replaced the role of halal certification, especially for Muslim consumers who require normative certainty in consuming food products.

From the perspective of Sharia compliance, the absence of halal certification puts Brem Suling Istimewa in an area that has not completely provided peace of mind for all Muslim consumers. Although traditional raw materials and processes foster confidence in some consumers, the results of alcohol content tests and the absence of formal verification still raise the potential for syubhat, especially for consumers who are more critical of the fiqh aspects of muamalah. Therefore, halal certification is important not only as a legal instrument but also as a means of strengthening security, sharia legitimacy, and product competitiveness in the Muslim market. In this study, producers have also demonstrated a commitment to halal certification through mentoring, document preparation, routine alcohol testing plans, and strengthened hygiene SOPs. Thus, the main conclusion of this study is that halal certification serves as a meeting point among social trust, sharia compliance, and the strengthening of the market position of traditional local products.

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