

Navigating Halal Practices for Muslim Consumers in the Absence of State Regulation in Hong Kong

AM. Muh. Khafidz Ma'shum,^{1*} Sam'ani Sam'ani,¹ Makrum Kholil,¹ Taufiqur Rohman,¹ Abdul Rahim Albert Hsiu²

¹Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Pekalongan – Indonesia; ²ARA Halal Certification Services Center, Zhangzhou – China

*Corresponding Author. Email: hafidz.ms@uingusdur.ac.id

Abstract:

This study examines the socio-economic dynamics and governance of *ḥalāl* in Hong Kong, where a minority Muslim community faces an absence of specific regulations within a secular, *laissez-faire* market. Employing a qualitative-inductive approach, the research uses primary data gathered through interviews with consumers and community organizations, as well as field observations. The findings indicate that this regulatory gap pertains solely to religious standardization—rather than a total absence of law—as the state retains the authority to prosecute commercial fraud. A market-driven approach has led to institutional fragmentation, characterized by a diverse and non-uniform array of foreign *ḥalāl* logos. This situation shifts transaction costs and the cognitive burden of verification onto Muslim consumers, who respond by relying on heuristic-based trust and engaging in active auditing. Community organizations, such as the ITICFHK, fill this void through informal governance rooted in communal trust and moral authority. The study concludes that community-based governance can sustain the religious practices of a minority group through social legitimacy. Yet, it cannot substitute for the coercive power of formal public law.

Keywords:

community-based halal certification; consumer resilience; halal products in Muslim minorities; halal regulations

How to cite:

Ma'shum, AM. Muh. Khafidz, Sam'ani Sam'ani, Makrum Kholil, Taufiqur Rohman, Abdul Rahim Albert Hsiu. "Navigating Halal Practices for Muslim Consumers in the Absence of State Regulation in Hong Kong" *Al-Ahkam* 36, no. 2 (October, 2026): 273-302. <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2026.36.1.29713>.

Introduction

Muslim consumers, as citizens, ideally have government regulations protecting their pursuit of halal products. This protection is essential because consuming halal products fulfills their religious obligations and constitutional right to halal assurance. Effective government regulations provide legal clarity and a sense of security for individuals choosing products that align with their beliefs. However, the situation changes for Muslim consumers living in countries with Muslim minorities, such as Hong Kong. These consumers face challenges due to the absence of government regulations and policies, as well as a lack of understanding among both industry players and consumers regarding halal products.¹ In Hong Kong, as a Muslim-minority country, this issue has intensified because there are no standardized regulations governing halal product assurance. As a result, there is a lack of uniformity in halal certification, and the process can be complex.² This leads to confusion for both consumers and producers of halal products. Consequently, Muslim consumers abroad must adapt to ensure they can access halal products. This situation underscores the importance of protection that extends beyond national borders, ensuring that the principles of halal consumption can be upheld wherever individuals are located.

Government regulations on halal products are essential for effective consumer protection and help to reduce risks, prevent unethical practices, and foster public trust in business institutions.³ Clear guidelines ensure that every stage of production, distribution, and sale is monitored, guaranteeing strict compliance with recognized halal principles. Without these regulations, Muslim consumers confront uncertainty. They must depend on their own efforts to

¹ Khairul Akmaliah Adham et al., "Halal and Muslim-Minority Countries: A Systematic Literature Review," *Jurnal Institutions and Economies* 16, no. 4 (October 1, 2024): 41–77, <https://doi.org/10.22452/IJIE.vol16no4.2>.

² Yuhanza Othman, Muhammad Nizam Awang, and Hendun Abdul Rahman Shah, "Legal and Regulatory Challenges of Halal Certification: Insights from Cosmetic Manufacturers on Halal Built-In Implementation," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2023): 322–35, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i1/15785>.

³ John H. Shannon, Hector R. Lozada, and Richard J. Hunter, Jr., "Consumer Protection in a Regulatory Environment," *International Journal of Social Policy and Education* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2024): 44–61, <https://doi.org/10.61494/ijspe.v6n2a4>; Rahmat Rahmat, "Evaluation Of Company Compliance With Consumer Protection Standards," *Ipsa Jure* 1, no. 7 (September 27, 2024): 11–23, <https://doi.org/10.62872/35cabn69>.

assess the halal status of the products they choose.⁴ Weak enforcement and inconsistent implementation often undermine these objectives, creating gaps in legal certainty and eroding consumer confidence.⁵ In these circumstances, their resilience and adaptability are crucial for upholding halal consumption standards. Evidence from various countries shows that when the government fails to implement halal regulations, Muslim communities create informal mechanisms within their networks to verify the halal status of products. Thus, the presence of halal regulations is not just a reflection of the government's commitment to safeguarding the religious rights of its citizens; it is an indispensable tool for ensuring the peace of mind and confidence of Muslim consumers.

Across diverse contexts, research consistently demonstrates Muslims' active efforts to preserve their resilience to halal products despite varying levels of institutional or regulatory support. In Singapore, where Muslims represent a minority, all Theory of Planned Behavior variables—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—positively influence their intention to purchase halal-certified goods, indicating deliberate consumer agency in upholding halal consumption.⁶ A similar pattern appears in the United Kingdom, where the credibility of the halal logo and consumers' trust in it strongly shape their purchasing decisions, suggesting that confidence in certification functions as a personal strategy for ensuring religious compliance.⁷ In Malaysia, visual attention studies reveal that Muslim consumers' gaze is strongly fixated on halal logos compared with other product cues, reflecting a conscious verification

⁴ Brian Fina Marlina, Abdul Rokhim, and Farahwati, "The Urgency of Halal Certification in Ensuring Legal Certainty for Muslim Consumers," *Awang Long Law Review* 7, no. 2 (May 20, 2025): 301–6, <https://doi.org/10.56301/awlv7i2.1562>.

⁵ Nurul Fibrianti et al., "Legal Culture and Legal Consciousness of Consumers: The Influence on Regulation and Enforcement of Consumer Protection Laws," *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies* 8, no. 2 (November 24, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.15294/jils.v8i2.69336>; Fifik Wiryani, Mokh. Najih, and Abdul Haris, "An Analysis of Legal Protection of Halal and Thoyib Food Consumers in Court Judgments," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 175, no. 1 (July 24, 2018): 012195, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/175/1/012195>.

⁶ Mohd Fauzi Abu-Hussin et al., "Halal Purchase Intention Among the Singaporean Muslim Minority," *Journal of Food Products Marketing* 23, no. 7 (October 3, 2017): 769–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10454446.2016.1141139>.

⁷ Reham I. Elseidi, "Determinants of Halal Purchasing Intentions: Evidences from UK," *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 9, no. 1 (March 5, 2018): 167–90, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-02-2016-0013>.

process to secure halal assurance.⁸ Even in countries with weaker halal infrastructure, such as Australia and Russia, consumers exhibit adaptive behavior: Australians rely on brand and ingredient cues when halal information is limited. In contrast, Russian Muslims rely more on personal attitudes than on perceived value to maintain their halal commitment.⁹ Furthermore, halal certification itself serves not only as a religious marker but as a symbol of safety, quality, and ethical integrity that reinforces consumer resilience.¹⁰ Collectively, these findings illuminate how Muslim consumers, whether in majority or minority settings, actively exercise autonomy and strategic adaptability to safeguard their halal consumption practices within diverse social and regulatory environments.

Regulation of halal products in minority-Muslim countries varies significantly across different nations, primarily influenced by their political and institutional contexts. In the United States, the lack of a unified federal standard for halal products leads to fragmented certification systems and varying interpretations among producers.¹¹ A similar situation can be observed in Japan, where the government does not establish formal halal regulations. This has resulted in the emergence of numerous non-governmental certification bodies with inconsistent standards.¹² In Denmark, the governance of Muslim practices has evolved within a predominantly secular framework. The absence of national

⁸ M. Yunus Ali, Pervaiz K. Ahmed, and Simran N. Singh, "Muslim Consumers' Halal Product Choice Behaviour: An Eye-Tracking Investigation on Visual Choice Process," in *Marketing Transformation: Marketing Practice in an Ever Changing World*, ed. Patricia Rossi and Nina Krey (Springer International Publishing, 2018), 137–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68750-6_43.

⁹ Nur Asnawi et al., "Consumer Perceived Value and Halal Food Products Consumption in the Indonesia and Russia," *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology* 29, no. 5s (2020): 57–81, <http://sersc.org/journals/index.php/IJAST/article/view/7044>.

¹⁰ Rizal Justian Setiawan et al., "The Effects of Halal Labels on Packaged Ice Cream Purchase Interest Among Foreign Muslim Consumers - A Case Study in Taiwan," in *2024 International Conference on Sustainable Islamic Business and Finance (SIBF)* (IEEE, 2024), 319–23, <https://doi.org/10.1109/SIBF63788.2024.10883821>.

¹¹ Omar A. Al-Mahmood and Angela M. Fraser, "Perceived Challenges in Implementing Halal Standards by Halal Certifying Bodies in the United States," ed. Ismail Ayoade Odetokun, *Plos One* 18, no. 8 (August 31, 2023): e0290774, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0290774>.

¹² Zulifan Rasam, Muhammad Luthfi Zuhdi, and Shobichatul Aminah, "Fiqh Aqalliyah as a Legal Alternative to Halal Standardization in Japan as a Non-Majority Muslim Country," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 14, no. 1 (July 3, 2024): 177–202, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v14i1.177-202>; Norlena Hasnan and Youji Kohda, "Halal Supply Chain: Challenges of Halal Certification in Japan," in *Strengthening Governance, Enhancing Integrity and Navigating Communication for Future Resilient Growth*, ed. Norazah Mohd Suki et al. (Kuala Terengganu: European Publisher, 2023), 764–78, <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2023.11.02.60>.

halal regulations reflects broader political debates regarding religious expression and state neutrality.¹³ South Korea and India face additional challenges due to misconceptions about Islam and Muslim,¹⁴ social misunderstandings and political tensions surrounding halal certification, which limit access to halal options for Muslims.¹⁵ In the United Kingdom and Hong Kong, the lack of standardized halal regulations has caused confusion among consumers and producers, leading to inconsistencies in certification processes.¹⁶ Together, these examples illustrate that the regulation of halal products is deeply intertwined with each nation's political landscape. The level of state involvement—or the lack thereof—directly affects the accessibility, consistency, and legitimacy of halal certification systems worldwide.

Based on previous studies, it is established that existing research has extensively explored halal consumer behavior, trust in certification, and the role of state regulation in both Muslim-majority and minority contexts. However, there has been limited attention given to how halal systems function in environments without formal state regulation, even when halal consumption is sustained through community-led mechanisms. Specifically, there is little understanding of how Muslim consumers verify halal status, how community institutions establish legitimacy, and how trust is maintained in a regulatory vacuum, such as that found in Hong Kong. This study contributes to debates on informal governance and legal pluralism by examining how halal legitimacy is socially produced beyond formal state regulation.

This study explores halal governance in Hong Kong, focusing on a market environment where the state abstains from religious standardization. It examines how this specific regulatory vacuum drives market fragmentation, evidenced by a wide variety of foreign halal logos and labels. The study further

¹³ Johan Fischer, "Material Muslim Authority: Danish Debates about Religious Markets," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 11, no. 1 (February 16, 2022): 106–23, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-bja10044>.

¹⁴ Nur H Yasar, "Stereotyping Halal Food and Eating Halal Food in a South Korean Context," *European Journal of Korean Studies* 21, no. 1 (October 1, 2021): 259–90, <https://doi.org/10.33526/EJKS.20212101.259>.

¹⁵ Sara Elias, "Improving Halal Accessibility in India: Identifying Barriers, Adopting Mobile Technology Solutions," *Interantional Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management* 08, no. 04 (April 6, 2024): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.55041/IJSREM30208>.

¹⁶ Awal Fuseini, Phil Hadley, and Toby Knowles, "Halal Food Marketing: An Evaluation of UK Halal Standards," *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 12, no. 5 (June 8, 2021): 977–91, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-02-2020-0037>.

analyzes how Muslim consumers navigate this market friction, adopting specific resilience strategies to ensure their consumption remains compliant. Crucially, it highlights the role of Islamic community organizations that step in to offer informal certification and moral authority outside of formal state structures. Overall, the paper delves into the complex relationship between regulatory absence, market fragmentation, consumer resilience, and community-driven governance within Hong Kong's halal ecosystem.

The study is based on qualitative research, with primary data collected in Hong Kong. This location was chosen due to its unique political context, characterized by "one country, two systems," a growing Muslim minority,¹⁷ and an increasing demand for halal products.¹⁸ The units of analysis in this study include Muslim consumers in Hong Kong who meet specific criteria, Muslim community organizations in Hong Kong authorized to issue halal certifications, and the Indonesian government, which has a significant number of citizens living in Hong Kong. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and observations. To ensure the validity and credibility of the collected data, various assessment methods were employed, including source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. The data analysis followed an inductive approach, consisting of stages for data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, utilizing domain analysis techniques. This research contributes to the literature on halal governance and legal pluralism by demonstrating how a community-based halal governance model can operate autonomously and attain social legitimacy in the absence of a formal legal framework. In doing so, it extends community-based governance scholarship by illustrating how religious legitimacy and collective trust can sustain governance practices in the absence of formal state regulation.

State–Community Relations in Halal Governance: An Economic Sociology Framework

In today's socio-economic context, the relationship between the state and communities in regulating public life is not always hierarchical. While

¹⁷ Laiba Adnan, "Hong Kong Emerges as the Most Promising Muslim Friendly Destination in 2025," www.halaltimes.com, 2025, <https://www.halaltimes.com/hong-kong-emerges-as-the-most-promising-muslim-friendly-destination-in-2025/>.

¹⁸ Roy Ying, "HK Needs to Tap into \$2 Trillion Halal Economy," www.chinadailyhk.com, 2025, [https://www.chinadailyhk.com/hk/article/622875#HK-needs-to-tap-into-\\$2-trillion-halal-economy-2025-11-03](https://www.chinadailyhk.com/hk/article/622875#HK-needs-to-tap-into-$2-trillion-halal-economy-2025-11-03).

alternative governance arrangements are frequently studied in extreme contexts of state collapse,¹⁹ when the state does not introduce specific regulations—often due to secular, *laissez-faire* market policies—communities act as entities that fill the specific regulatory void. Therefore, in this study, the community does not entirely replace the state; rather, it complements the state's limited functions by constructing alternative governance arrangements. To interpret the Hong Kong case effectively, this study operationalizes several key concepts: the nature of regulatory gaps in the halal market; the basis of community authority; compliance and reputational mechanisms for credence goods; sources of social legitimacy; and forms of market accountability in the absence of public law.

Community-Based Governance Theory posits that communities can collectively create and enforce rules without relying solely on state authority. While Elinor Ostrom originally developed this framework for common-pool resource management,²⁰ it can be conceptually adapted to halal certification through the lens of economic sociology. In this context, Ostrom's principles of social trust and shared responsibility are highly relevant to regulating *credence goods*—such as halal food—where consumers face extreme information asymmetry because they cannot visually verify product integrity. To overcome this, legitimacy is derived not from formal power, but from consensus and trust established among community members. Social norms and reputation-based compliance mechanisms ensure accountability and protect individuals' interests.²¹ As Dixit notes, these community networks lower transaction costs, thereby compensating for the limited economic governance provided by the state.²² Thus, market predictability is achieved through horizontal collaboration rather than vertical regulation.

¹⁹ Ken Menkhaus, "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping," *International Security* 31, no. 3 (January 2007): 74–106, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2007.31.3.74>.

²⁰ Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²¹ Antonio C. Pedro, "Ending Institutions: Rule Enforcement in Self-Governance Systems," *Rationality and Society* 30, no. 1 (February 26, 2018): 80–107, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043463117734176>.

²² Avinash K. Dixit, *Lawlessness and Economics: Alternative Modes of Governance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7t9hw>.

Meanwhile, Socio-Legal Theory provides a framework for understanding law not just as a set of normative texts but also as a social practice embedded in society. Roger Cotterrell argues that law interacts continuously with the values, culture, and power structures that influence it.²³ From this perspective, social norms often complement legal norms, forming a socio-normative complex that supports an overarching order.²⁴ In a commercial setting, this means that regulatory legitimacy is negotiated through everyday social practices. Consequently, this theory allows for a more nuanced understanding of authority, recognizing that the rules governing consumption can be plural, layered, and rooted deeply in community morality.

The synthesis of these theories offers an analytical framework for examining the shift in authority from the state to the community. Community-Based governance emphasizes the significance of social capacity in lowering transaction costs and mitigating market risks. At the same time, Socio-Legal Theory elucidates how these mechanisms attain authoritative significance. When considered together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how social legitimacy compensates for—rather than standing completely "on par" with—legal legitimacy. While community institutions successfully garner social trust and fulfill religious needs, they inherently lack the binding force, formal public sanctions, and statutory consumer protection inherent in state regulation. Thus, this framework illustrates how alternative socio-economic orders are constructed to protect minority consumers, while acknowledging the structural limits of community-led governance.

The Absence of Government Regulation of Halal Products in Hong Kong

Hong Kong has a unique political history as a former British colony, having been returned to China in 1997. The "One Country, Two Systems" framework is the cornerstone of the territory's governance, granting Hong Kong significant autonomy in legal, economic, and social matters, which is distinct from the system in mainland China. This principle ensures freedom of religion and other fundamental rights for its citizens, including the Muslim community. However,

²³ Roger Cotterrell, *The Sociology of Law: An Introduction* (London: Butterworths, 1992).

²⁴ Svinin EV, "Law as a Multidimensional Legal Order: Whether an Integrative Concept of a Normative Understanding of Law Is Possible?," *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, no. 2 (2025): 50–59, <https://doi.org/10.31857/S1026945225020054>.

since 1997, political dynamics have strained relations between Hong Kong and the central government in Beijing, particularly concerning civil liberties and democracy.²⁵ Currently, Hong Kong lacks formal regulations governing halal products, meaning there are no laws established for halal certification or oversight. Consequently, businesses are not legally obligated to comply with halal standards, and products labeled "halal" rely solely on manufacturers' or distributors' claims.

The Hong Kong government operates on free-market principles, viewing overly specific regulations as at odds with its liberal policies. While this approach provides flexibility for businesses, it also raises concerns about the authenticity of halal claims. The government only authorizes non-governmental organizations, such as the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong (ITICFHK),²⁶ to manage halal certification. The Hong Kong government does not have specific regulations on halal products, as noted by representatives from ITICFHK and the Indonesian General Consulate (KJRI) in Hong Kong. They explained:

"In Hong Kong, there are no regulations specifically governing religious matters. Therefore, there are no rules or regulations governing halal products. The Hong Kong government only authorizes Islamic organizations to carry out halal certification independently."²⁷

"To date, there are no regulations from the Hong Kong government specifically regarding halal food and beverages. Unlike Indonesia, which has its own law concerning halal products, we do not find anything similar in Hong Kong."²⁸

These statements confirm that there is no legal framework explicitly regulating halal products in Hong Kong. This situation indicates that the government leaves halal matters entirely to non-governmental organizations, without direct intervention from public authorities. This approach reflects the Hong Kong government's liberal stance, which treats religion as a private matter rather than a regulatory domain of the state. However, it is crucial to distinguish

²⁵ Louis Ho, "From 'No Cultural Policy' to 'Centralised Market Orientation': The Political Economy of Hong Kong Cultural Policy (1997–2015)," *Global Media and China* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 57–73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436417693007>.

²⁶ <https://islamictrusthk.org/halal-certification>.

²⁷ Interview with Abdul Muhaimin, ITICFHK, November 11, 2024, Hong Kong.

²⁸ Interview with Yomi E. Saputra, Indonesian General Consulate, November 7, 2024, Hong Kong.

between this absence of specific halal legislation and a total lack of legal protection for consumers. While the government does not codify theological standards for halal certification, halal claims are not entirely exempt from legal scrutiny. Such claims fall under the jurisdiction of general consumer protection and trade laws.

Such claims fall under the jurisdiction of general consumer protection and trade laws. Specifically, as it is written in Section 7 of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362),²⁹ it is an offense “*to apply a false trade description to any goods*” and “*supplies or offers to supply any goods to which a false trade description is applied.*” Similarly, Section 61 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) penalizes the subjects who:

“gives with any food or drug sold by him, or displays with any food or drug exposed for sale by him, a label, whether or not the same is attached to or printed on the wrapper or container, which falsely describes the food.”³⁰

It means that if a vendor displays a fraudulent halal logo or misrepresents non-halal ingredients, it is prosecutable not as a religious violation, but as a deceptive commercial practice under these general provisions. This distinction clarifies the exact nature of the regulatory gap: the state does not intervene in defining what constitutes 'halal,' yet it retains the authority to penalize fraudulent market behavior. Consequently, the legal void exists solely in the realm of religious standardization. At the same time, basic market integrity is still governed by secular consumer protection mechanisms.

Rather than merely presenting varied geographical practices, this study situates Hong Kong within a broader typology of state involvement in halal governance. In Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia,³¹ Indonesia,³² Egypt

²⁹ <https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap362>

³⁰ https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap132?xid=ID_1438402660124_001

³¹ Evrin Lutfika, Feri Kusnandar, and Dase Hunaefi, “Comparative Analysis and Harmonization of Global Halal Standards,” *International Journal of Halal Research* 4, no. 1 (April 25, 2022): 29–39, <https://doi.org/10.18517/ijhr.4.1.29-39.2022>.

³² Esther Masri et al., “Halal Product Assurance as Legal Protection for Muslim Consumers in Indonesia,” *Al-Ahkam* 35, no. 1 (April 28, 2025): 205–34, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2025.35.1.26384>.

and the Gulf states³³ halal governance operates under a state-led model. In this model, certification bodies function as public authorities or quasi-state organs, ensuring that consumer protection is strictly guaranteed and enforced through formal public law. Conversely, in Western Muslim-minority contexts like Europe³⁴ and the United States,³⁵ governance primarily follows a market-driven model. Here, the state abstains from religious standard-setting, leaving certification to fragmented, competing private entities and inaccurate labeling and traceability to maintain consumer confidence.³⁶ This status of certification bodies often results in harmonization challenges. It relies heavily on industry self-regulation, which can complicate international trade and consumer certainty.

Hong Kong presents a distinct community-driven model. Similar to Europe and the US, the state maintains a secular, non-interventionist stance. However, unlike the highly fragmented Western markets, Hong Kong's certification is largely centralized through a civil society organization such as ITICFHK, relying on social recognition and moral authority rather than on market competition. Consequently, the actual nature of the regulatory 'void' in Hong Kong is strictly theological rather than legal. In this regulatory vacuum, the Muslim community subsequently performs the state functions of standard-setting, auditing, and trust-building. Yet, because the community lacks statutory authority, it cannot enforce the law coercively—such as penalizing businesses for fraudulent claims. That specific function remains inherently bound to the state's general consumer protection mechanisms. Thus, the community effectively sustains the market's moral integrity, while the state passively guards its legal boundaries.

The lack of halal regulations in Hong Kong reflects a political and ideological framework that prioritizes market freedom over governmental intervention. This non-interventionist approach allows businesses to operate with significant

³³ Endy Muhammad Astiwaru, "Halal Certification Regulation on Health Products: A Global Comparative Study," *International Journal of Science and Society* 5, no. 3 (June 29, 2023): 470–83, <https://doi.org/10.54783/ijssoc.v5i3.1422>.

³⁴ Laura Kurth and Pieter Glasbergen, "Serving a Heterogeneous Muslim Identity? Private Governance Arrangements of Halal Food in the Netherlands," *Agriculture and Human Values* 34, no. 1 (March 25, 2017): 103–18, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-016-9698-z>.

³⁵ Mian N. Riaz and Nooran M. Riaz, "Requirements for Halal Food Production," in *Encyclopedia of Food Safety* (Elsevier, 2024), 588–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-822521-9.00003-4>.

³⁶ Jeremy A. Rovinsky and Hal S. Cohen, "The Standard Procedures for Animal Slaughtering in the Industry," in *Preparation and Processing of Religious and Cultural Foods* (Elsevier, 2018), 325–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-101892-7.00017-1>.

flexibility; however, it also introduces uncertainty for Muslim consumers about the halal status of the products they purchase. In this context, organizations such as the ITICFHK emerge as a response to community needs, independent of government mandates. This development demonstrates that halal governance in Hong Kong is fundamentally community-driven, with halal legitimacy established through social trust and moral authority rather than through formal legal instruments. In comparison to Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, which have established comprehensive legal frameworks for halal practices, Hong Kong's model relies on the cohesion and solidarity of its minority communities. This reality highlights that, within a political system that emphasizes economic freedom and secularism, religious practices must navigate their own space through autonomous social mechanisms. Therefore, the absence of halal regulations in Hong Kong is not merely a legal shortcoming; it also serves as an illustration of how the Muslim community negotiates its religious identity and adherence in a political context that lacks explicit regulatory support.

Proliferation of Halal Logos and Institutional Fragmentation

Many halal food products available in the Hong Kong market are imported, resulting in a proliferation of diverse halal logos on product packaging. Because these products originate from various countries—such as Malaysia, Indonesia, or the Middle East—they inherently carry the certification symbols of their respective nations. Consequently, the marketplace is flooded with a wide array of halal labels featuring completely different shapes, designs, and text descriptions, as illustrated in Figure 1. This situation underscores the absence of a universally recognized, centralized halal certification body in Hong Kong to filter or harmonize these imports. As a result, this array of visually inconsistent halal symbols often confuses Muslim consumers about product authenticity. Thus, the proliferation of diverse halal logos is not solely a technical labeling concern; it also reflects the complex social and economic dynamics associated with cross-border halal regulation.

In Hong Kong, various halal logos can be found on product packaging, each featuring different shapes, designs, and descriptions. This variation depends on the manufacturer, the country of origin (for imported products), and the type of product. As illustrated in Figure 1, the halal logos on the four product packages differ significantly. This variation indicates that there is no single official halal

logo in Hong Kong. However, these visual discrepancies do not indicate fundamental differences in *fiqh* standards, as all issuing bodies fundamentally agree on core Islamic prohibitions such as pork and alcohol. Rather, the presence of distinct logos on these products illustrates cross-border institutional fragmentation. Without a centralized state filter to evaluate and harmonize these religious labels, the market operates openly to various international certification bodies. As a result, the retail environment becomes flooded with a multitude of certification claims originating from completely diverse foreign jurisdictions.

Figure 1

Four different halal logos on food product packaging in Hong Kong
(source: author)



This study identified various halal logos and standards in Hong Kong. For some consumers, a halal logo provides a sense of security when selecting a product; however, the variety of logos can also impact their trust. This conclusion is heavily supported by field data, which illustrates how consumers assess logo credibility in a fragmented market. As informants stated:

“The presence of the halal logo does help me recognize whether a product is halal or not. But the logos are different, with different images. I trust it if it's there, but it would increase my trust even more if the logo were consistent and standardized.”³⁷

“Halal logos here in Hong Kong really do vary; they aren't always the same from one restaurant to another. The same goes for the labeling

³⁷ Interview with Miftahul Jannah, Muslim Consumer, November 11, 2024, Hong Kong.

on packaging—there is such a wide variety. Sometimes, it leaves me a bit confused.”³⁸

This testimony is critical; it demonstrates that while consumers rely on these symbols, institutional fragmentation creates a cognitive burden. Consumers do not unquestioningly accept all logos equally; instead, they long for the certainty of a unified standard. In its absence, they are forced to navigate a 'hierarchy of trust,' effectively shifting the burden of verification away from state regulators and directly onto the consumers themselves.

Several studies indicate that halal logos play a significant role in influencing consumer decisions. The presence of a halal logo can greatly enhance consumer attitudes toward products, thereby affecting their purchase intentions,³⁹ purchase decisions,⁴⁰ and trust in the product's credibility.⁴¹ Conversely, some studies indicate that having multiple halal logos can confuse consumers and undermine their trust in the certification. Consumers tend to prefer well-known, credible logos, and the proliferation of logos may dilute the perceived trustworthiness of halal certification.⁴² This results in confusion not only for consumers but also for industry stakeholders.⁴³ Therefore, in the absence of a unified global standard, the proliferation of diverse logos in minority contexts like Hong Kong perpetually forces consumers to rely on heuristic trust rather than institutional certainty.

The diversity of logos in Hong Kong powerfully illustrates the broader social and economic dynamics in global halal product governance. This situation underscores that consumer trust is essential in determining a product's halal

³⁸ Interview with Pangestutik, Muslim Consumer, November 7, 2024, Hong Kong.

³⁹ Sri Rahayu Hijrah Hati et al., “Looking at the Beauty of Halal Through the Stimulus-Organism-Response Model and Gender Perspectives: The Case of Indonesian Muslim,” *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 16, no. 9 (November 24, 2025): 2465–88, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-12-2023-0424>.

⁴⁰ Nazlida Muhamad, Vai Shiem Leong, and Normalisa Md Isa, “Does the Country of Origin of a Halal Logo Matter? The Case of Packaged Food Purchases,” *Review of International Business and Strategy* 27, no. 4 (November 6, 2017): 484–500, <https://doi.org/10.1108/RIBS-06-2017-0049>.

⁴¹ Mahdi Borzooei and Maryam Asgari, “Discovering Perceptions of Muslim Consumers toward the ICRIC Halal Logo,” *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 7, no. 4 (September 5, 2016): 304–17, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-07-2013-0023>.

⁴² M.H.M. Maifiah et al., “Malaysian Muslim Consumers' Awareness, Confidence, and Purchase Behaviour on Halal Meat and Its Products After the Meat Cartel Scandal,” *Food Research* 6, no. 6 (December 27, 2022): 273–79, [https://doi.org/10.26656/fr.2017.6\(6\).714](https://doi.org/10.26656/fr.2017.6(6).714).

⁴³ Yunes Ramadan Al-Teinaz and Hani Mansour M. Al-Mazeedi, “Halal Certification and International Halal Standards,” in *The Halal Food Handbook*, ed. Y.R. Al-Teinaz, S. Spear, and I.H.A. Abd El-Rahim (Wiley, 2020), 227–51, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118823026.ch15>.

legitimacy, especially in the absence of uniform regulations. The variations in halal logos are not merely technical labeling issues; they reflect how the governance of religious credence claims is, in practice, exercised by community-based and transnational certification bodies, given the state's secular regulatory posture. While this diversity enables producers to navigate the international market successfully, it also inevitably creates confusion and uncertainty for Muslim consumers. Nonetheless, this reality highlights the critical importance of halal awareness and literacy in maintaining consumer trust and market predictability for credence goods.

Muslim Consumer Resilience in Hong Kong

In this study, consumer resilience is operationally defined not merely as foundational religious observance, reactive individual caution, or basic halal literacy. Rather, it is a sustained and proactive capacity to navigate market uncertainties, mitigate consumption risks, and ensure the continuity of halal practices in an environment devoid of formal state protection. The dimensions of this resilience include continuous information-seeking behavior, the practical application of halal knowledge to decode ambiguous market signals, and active reliance on community networks. Therefore, everyday adaptation strategies—such as reading packaging or scanning codes—are not resilience in themselves, but rather the behavioral indicators of a broader resilient capacity deployed to overcome systemic regulatory voids.

Due to the lack of halal regulations in Hong Kong, Muslim consumers have developed various strategies to ensure that their food is genuinely halal. The manifestation of this resilience is not monolithic; it varies significantly across the community based on individual halal literacy and verification habits. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 12 Muslim informants—including social workers, civil servants, migrant workers, and long-term residents—the field data indicate a spectrum of resilient behaviors. While the qualitative nature of this study relies on a selected number of accounts and thus limits broad statistical generalizability, these narratives provide a critical conceptual snapshot of everyday consumption tactics. For a segment of consumers, resilience relies heavily on visual cues, spatial markers, and institutional trust. They navigate the market by seeking explicit signs, as illustrated by these informants regarding their dining choices:

"To avoid eating something that is haram (forbidden), I ensure that my food is pork-free. Restaurants and food stalls usually display halal signs or logos, which gives me confidence in their offerings."⁴⁴

Another consumer further echoes this reliance on explicit spatial and certified markers:

"To ensure that what I consume is halal, I buy food at canteens or restaurants that have halal certification, or are specifically for Muslims."⁴⁵

Conversely, consumers with seemingly higher levels of halal literacy exhibit a more investigative and proactive dimension of resilience. Rather than relying solely on surface-level logos or the general identity of a venue, they engage in secondary verification, demonstrating a deeper cognitive effort to mitigate risk:

"I check the packaging before making a purchase. There's a food code, such as a barcode or number, that I sometimes verify. If a product is labeled halal, I will buy it. However, if I scan the barcode and it does not appear on the halal list, I will not make the purchase."⁴⁶

This research also identified several canteens, food stalls, and restaurants that proudly declare their menus as halal. As illustrated in Figure 2, the image on the left displays the halal logo written in Arabic. In contrast, the image on the right indicates that the canteen caters specifically to Muslims.

Figure 2
The "halal" and "for Muslims" signs are displayed in front of the canteen or restaurant
(source: author)



⁴⁴ Interview with Fajar Shofari N., Muslim Consumer, November 4, 2024, Hong Kong.

⁴⁵ Interview with Maryuni, Muslim Consumer, November 5, 2024, Hong Kong.

⁴⁶ Interview with Muryati, Muslim Consumer, November 7, 2024, Hong Kong.

Reports from informants and field observations indicate that Muslim consumers in Hong Kong have developed specific methods to ensure the halal status of the food they consume. These different behaviors conceptually illustrate two distinct typologies of minority resilience. Drawing on behavioral economics, the first two informants demonstrate heuristic trust—using visual shortcuts and spatial markers to bypass complex verification and minimize friction in daily consumption. In contrast, reflecting a shift in governance roles, the third informant exhibits active auditing. This 'zero-trust' approach utilizes digital tools to perform micro-level verifications. However, it must be emphasized that neither heuristic trust nor active auditing inherently guarantees absolute accuracy in determining halal status. Both verification strategies are heavily constrained by the consumer's varying levels of halal literacy, unequal access to transparent supply chain information, and the questionable credibility of informal verification sources. Together, these practices reveal a critical socio-economic reality: in the absence of state intervention, the temporal and cognitive burdens of ensuring halal integrity—what economists term transaction costs—are completely offloaded onto the minority consumers. Overall, the experiences of Muslim consumers in Hong Kong show that their resilience is built on a combination of individual knowledge, community solidarity, and a moral commitment to maintaining the halal status of their consumption.

Research findings on the resilience of Muslim consumers in Hong Kong, as a Muslim-minority country, support several previous studies that highlight the importance of halal certification in ensuring trust and compliance with Islamic dietary laws. This is particularly crucial in non-Muslim countries, where the authenticity of halal products may be questioned,⁴⁷ as adherence to religious beliefs is paramount.⁴⁸ This issue is significant because the rising demand for halal products is driven by increasing awareness and acceptance of halal food

⁴⁷ Kiyoto Kurokawa, "Challenge of the Halal Food Certificate for Food Marketing: Implications from the Local Branding Strategy of Thailand," *Studies in Regional Science* 41, no. 4 (2011): 1045–54, <https://doi.org/10.2457/srs.41.1045>; Adhi Kusnadi et al., "Designing Halal Product Traceability System Using UML and Integration of Blockchain with ERP," *Register: Jurnal Ilmiah Teknologi Sistem Informasi* 9, no. 1 (February 27, 2023): 29–41, <https://doi.org/10.26594/register.v9i1.3045>.

⁴⁸ Hasnain Abbas et al., "Sustainable Elements of the Ongoing Growth in the Demand for Halal Products in OBOR Regional Markets," *Frontiers in Nutrition* 12 (May 1, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2025.1533322>.

among non-Muslim consumers.⁴⁹ On the other hand, community-based resilience, such as the authority of the ITICFHK as a community-based religious institution that provides halal certification, exemplifies resilience among Muslim consumers in Australia,⁵⁰ Poland,⁵¹ and the UK.⁵² However, this resilience can be compromised if there is a lack of understanding about halal among both industry players and consumers in minority countries,⁵³ as it is indicated in South of Korea which Muslim migrant workers face challenges due to limited access to accurate halal information and legal support.⁵⁴ Thus, this study confirms that the sustainability of Muslim consumer resilience relies heavily on the synergy among individual awareness, community support, and sufficient halal literacy to maintain the authenticity of consumption practices in a secular and pluralistic environment. This finding is consistent with research in Indonesia showing that educated Muslim consumers generally demonstrate strong support for halal initiatives, while differences in interpretation, accessibility, and perceptions of government policy can still lead to inconsistent implementation. The study further emphasizes that standardization and continuous public education are necessary to strengthen the effective implementation of halal practices.⁵⁵

The findings on the resilience of Muslim consumers in Hong Kong reveal how faith and religious awareness can serve as powerful sources of social strength in the face of structural challenges. In the absence of formal halal

⁴⁹ Amir Hamzah Sharaai, Mohammad Firdaus Masri, and Somayeh Rezaei Kalvani, "The Social Impact Study through the Life Cycle of Rice Production at Selangor, Malaysia," *Chemical Engineering Transactions* 97 (2022): 517–22, <https://doi.org/10.3303/CET2297087>.

⁵⁰ Helen McLaren et al., "Community Cultural Wealth among a South Australian Muslim Population: A Reflective Evaluation of Strengthening Family Health and Wellbeing," *Religions* 15, no. 3 (March 14, 2024): 351, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030351>.

⁵¹ Maria Stojkow and Ahmet Yasuntimur, "The Dynamics of Social Networks Among Muslim Students in Kraków: Experiences of Cultural Interaction and Integration," *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* 21, no. 3 (August 29, 2025): 60–75, <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.21.3.04>.

⁵² Mara Miele et al., "Situating Halal: Religiosity, Identity and Lifestyle in Halal Consumption in the United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates," *Consumption and Society* 3, no. 1 (January 2024): 37–55, <https://doi.org/10.1332/27528499Y2023D000000001>.

⁵³ Adham et al., "Halal and Muslim-Minority Countries: A Systematic Literature Review."

⁵⁴ Nur Chanifah et al., "The Understanding of Halal Products Among Indonesian Muslim Migrant Workers in South Korea," *Jurisdictie: Jurnal Hukum dan Syariah* 16, no. 1 (July 1, 2025): 1–54, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j.v16i1.29462>.

⁵⁵ M. Nurul Irfan et al., "The Urgency of the Halal Industry in Light of Islamic Legal Philosophy," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 19, no. 2 (September 25, 2025): 227–46, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v19i2.14029>.

regulations, the Muslim community has demonstrated remarkable adaptability by creating self-sustaining mechanisms through solidarity, halal literacy, and community initiatives. This phenomenon illustrates that religious resilience transcends spirituality; it embodies social intelligence born from the desire to maintain identity in a secular and pluralistic environment. From a social perspective, this resilience highlights the community's vital role as a substitute for the state in safeguarding the authenticity of halal practices. Furthermore, it shows that adherence to religious values can thrive even without legal protection, as long as there is collective awareness and strong moral support.

Community-Based Halal Certification

When formal regulations on halal products are lacking, communities play a crucial role in filling that gap. In Hong Kong, the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong (ITICFHK) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to meeting the religious needs of the Muslim minority. ITICFHK not only issues halal certifications but also serves a symbolic role, demonstrating the presence and independence of Muslims in a secular public space. Through the moral authority and social trust it has established, this institution creates a halal assurance mechanism recognized by the community without relying on state intervention. The existence of ITICFHK demonstrates that social legitimacy can effectively fill gaps in standardization and religious assurance, even though it cannot replace the state's law-enforcement functions. Therefore, the existence of this institution not only addresses regulatory gaps but also highlights the resilience and adaptability of the Muslim community in upholding their religious principles within a diverse social environment.

To understand the institutional procedures behind this community-based governance, this study relies on primary data obtained directly from the Islamic Union of Hong Kong, the parent organization of ITICFHK. According to Ali Tuet Sui-hong,⁵⁶ a representative of the institution, ITICFHK applies rigorous standards and procedures to evaluate halal product certification, ensuring that every certified product fully complies with Islamic principles. The assessment is comprehensive and covers all stages of production, from raw material procurement and processing to final distribution. The certification process is grounded in Islamic law (*fiqh*). It evaluates halal certification based on the origin

⁵⁶ Interview with Ali Tuet Sui-hong, Islamic Union of Hong Kong, November 12, 2014, Hong Kong.

of the ingredients, processing methods, and the cleanliness and separation from haram elements. The audit begins with an inspection of the raw materials and supporting documentation, including certificates of origin and supplier declarations. It also includes a thorough investigation of questionable ingredients, such as gelatin or enzymes.

Another member of the ITICFHK, Abdul Muhaimin,⁵⁷ further explained that to examine raw materials, ITICFHK sends some *imams* to investigate and to audit the slaughtering, processing, and storage processes to ensure that qualified individuals conduct all stages in accordance with Islamic law and that cross-contamination with non-halal ingredients is prevented. Strict oversight is maintained through document reviews, physical inspections, and, when necessary, laboratory testing to ensure that the entire supply chain adheres to halal standards. Through this structured and expertise-based approach, ITICFHK provides reliable halal assurance to Muslim consumers in Hong Kong and strengthens public trust in halal-certified products.

This series of processes was confirmed by a statement from one of the owners of Warung Makan Malang, a halal food stall in Indonesia.

"Yes, there is supervision from Chai Wan (ITICFHK - Researcher). He comes here to check how we process the meat, how we cook it, how we store it, the ingredients we use, and where we obtain the meat (then the owner shows the receipt for the meat purchased for their stall).⁵⁸

The community-based halal certification in Hong Kong illustrates how religious institutions attempt to fill the regulatory void rather than completely replace the state in ensuring compliance with Islamic principles. The ITICFHK serves not only as a moral authority but also as a technical institution, executing the certification process professionally and thoroughly. This process adheres to strict standards, including audits of raw materials, processing methods, storage, and product distribution, to ensure that there is no contamination with haram elements. The oversight conducted by the ITICFHK, as experienced by the owner of Warung Makan Malang, demonstrates an active certification system based on social accountability. However, while this social accountability effectively addresses religious needs, it inherently lacks the coercive

⁵⁷ Interview with Abdul Muhaimin. ITICFHK. November 11, 2024. Hong Kong.

⁵⁸ Interview with Sri Yuni, Owner of Certified Food Stalls, November 11, 2024, Hong Kong.

enforcement power, public sanctions, and formal consumer redress guarantees that state regulation provides. Despite these legal limitations, this mechanism shows the balance between the religious, professional, and social dimensions of halal governance in an environment where state regulation is lacking. Therefore, the ITICFHK serves as concrete evidence that the Muslim community has the institutional capacity to uphold halal integrity through autonomous and credible governance.

Figure 3

From left: Malang Food Stalls in Hong Kong; Meat Purchasing Documents for Certification; Halal Certificate from ITICFHK for Malang Food Stalls
(source: author)



To clarify the theoretical contribution of the Hong Kong experience, it is necessary to contextualize ITICFHK within the broader spectrum of minority halal governance. Rather than constituting formal legal pluralism—which requires state recognition—the Hong Kong model is best defined as community-based halal governance. While it shares foundational similarities with institutions in other Muslim-minority countries, a comparison based on specific structural indicators—namely economic drivers, market scope, and sources of authority—reveals distinct differences. For instance, organizations such as the Japan Halal Association (JHA), the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), and the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) serve as private regulators deeply integrated into global trade and export markets. JHA supports certification to boost Japanese products in the

international market⁵⁹ and develop halal tourism.⁶⁰ Similarly, AFIC⁶¹ and IFANCA⁶² leverage technical expertise to ensure compliance primarily to expand their respective countries' lucrative halal export industries and enhance global competitiveness.

In stark contrast, the ITICFHK model is not driven by international trade or multi-national corporate compliance, but by domestic socio-religious survival. In Hong Kong, religious authority, technical expertise, and social trust interact intimately to protect the local minority from everyday consumption risks. However, as the challenges faced by Halal Certification Europe (HCE) highlight, the lack of uniform standards and state backing poses significant obstacles to maintaining systemic accountability.⁶³ Consequently, while ITICFHK successfully relies on moral legitimacy and public trust to govern the local sphere, its lack of coercive power and standardized integration identifies the exact point where this community model still fundamentally requires state support.

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that community-based halal certification serves not merely as a substitute for state oversight but rather as a tangible representation of the social and spiritual autonomy of the Muslim community. Through institutions such as the ITICFHK, Muslims in Hong Kong have effectively demonstrated that religious governance can be established based on public trust, professional standards, and moral solidarity.

⁵⁹ Wataru Nojiri, "An Attempt to Apply Actor-Network Theory to Halal Food Production and Supply in Japan," *Japanese Journal of Human Geography* 68, no. 4 (2016): 421–41, https://doi.org/10.4200/jjhg.68.4_421; Yuna Seo et al., "Cultural Familiarity and Religious Adherence: Exploring Muslim Consumers' Willingness to Purchase Halal Food from Non-Islamic Countries – A Case Study of Japan," *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 16, no. 12 (November 25, 2025): 3591–3611, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-10-2024-0464>.

⁶⁰ Nurul Faezawaty Jamaludin and Kosei Sugawara, "Halal Logistics Certification and Regulations in Japan," in *Halal Logistics and Supply Chain Management* (London: Routledge, 2022), 196–210, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003223719-20>; Indun Roosiani and Erni Puspitasari, "Perkembangan Industri Halal dan Peranan Badan Sertifikasi Halal Jepang dalam Meningkatkan Industri Halal pada Masa Pemerintahan Shinzo Abe," *Media Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya Wahana* 27, no. 2 (December 30, 2021): 566–75, <https://doi.org/10.33751/wahana.v27i2.4544>.

⁶¹ Mohd Zulfakar et al., "Halal Accreditation and Certification in a Non-Muslim Country Setting: Insights from Australia Halal Meat Supply Chain," *International Journal of Supply Chain Management* 8, no. 1 (2019): 10–17.

⁶² Amro Maher, "The Effect of a Muslim Endorsement on Non-Muslim's Attitudes and Purchase Intentions," in *Marketing Dynamism & Sustainability: Things Change, Things Stay the Same...*, ed. Leroy Robinson Jr. (Cham: Springer, 2015), 113–113, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10912-1_31.

⁶³ Fuseini, Hadley, and Knowles, "Halal Food Marketing: An Evaluation of UK Halal Standards."

This experience highlights that while social legitimacy cannot replace the state's role in imposing sanctions and consumer redress, it provides an effective framework for ensuring halal compliance and maintaining consumer trust within the minority community. Moreover, this model showcases the capacity of minority Muslim communities to convert structural constraints into opportunities for reinforcing their collective identity. In the context of a secular political framework and a liberal marketplace, the role of the ITICFHK exemplifies how religious values can operate harmoniously within the principles of pluralism. Consequently, the practice of community-based halal certification in Hong Kong reflects the resilience of faith, social innovation, and moral steadfastness among Muslims in upholding halal values within a contemporary, diverse public sphere.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the regulatory vacuum for halal products in Hong Kong is strictly theological rather than a complete legal void, as the secular state abstains from religious standardization while maintaining jurisdiction over general commercial fraud. Consequently, the government's *laissez-faire* approach leaves the specific governance of religious credence claims entirely to non-state actors, fostering an unrestricted environment for international trade. Within this import-driven retail landscape, the absence of a centralized regulatory filter led to cross-border institutional fragmentation, characterized by the proliferation of diverse, visually inconsistent foreign halal logos. This influx of varying certification symbols severely complicates market predictability, flooding the marketplace with ambiguous signals that create profound confusion for minority Muslim consumers. Forced to navigate these systemic uncertainties, consumers actively deploy resilience strategies by absorbing the cognitive burdens and transaction costs of verification themselves to ensure dietary compliance. Although they utilize both heuristic trust through spatial markers and the zero-trust approach of active auditing, neither strategy guarantees absolute accuracy, highlighting the vulnerability of verifying credence goods without unified institutional backing. To mitigate these inherent market frictions, community-based organizations like the ITICFHK emerge to fill the regulatory void through informal governance, providing moral authority and technical oversight driven by domestic socio-religious survival. Ultimately, while this grassroots governance successfully establishes social legitimacy and trust to sustain minority religious practices, it

simultaneously reveals the structural limits of compensating for state functions without the coercive enforcement power of formal public law.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the economic sociology of credence goods by demonstrating how cross-border institutional fragmentation in a laissez-faire market shifts the transaction costs and cognitive burdens of verification entirely onto minority consumers, forcing the deployment of heuristic trust and active auditing. Furthermore, the research extends community-based halal governance frameworks by illustrating that, while local institutions can partially manufacture social legitimacy to mitigate localized uncertainties, their regulatory capacity remains structurally constrained by an inherent lack of coercive public enforcement power. In practice, for minority Muslim communities navigating secular markets, community-based certification bodies must actively consolidate grassroots verification networks and expand public halal literacy programs to alleviate the severe cognitive burdens placed on everyday consumers effectively. Furthermore, this informal, community-driven governance provides a practical blueprint for other Muslim-minority populations globally, demonstrating how religious civil society can strategically leverage social trust and collaborate with secular trade authorities to safeguard market integrity without demanding formal state intervention.[a]

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank and appreciate the Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia, for facilitating funding for this research, and Dompot Dhuafa Hong Kong, as a research partner.

Author Contribution Statement

AM. Muh. Khafidz Ma'shum: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Analysis, Methodology, Writing Original Draft, Validation, Review & Editing.

Sam'ani Sam'ani: Conceptualization, Analysis, Methodology, Validation, Review & Editing.

Makrum Kholil: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Review & Editing.

Taufiqur Rohman: Conceptualization, Project Administration, Methodology, Review & Editing.

Abdul Rahim Albert Hsiu; Conceptualization, Analysis, Methodology, Validation, Review & Editing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbas, Hasnain, Gang Tian, Narmeen Faiz, Mengyin Jiang, and Hafeez Ullah. "Sustainable Elements of the Ongoing Growth in the Demand for Halal Products in OBOR Regional Markets." *Frontiers in Nutrition* 12 (May 1, 2025). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2025.1533322>.
- Abu-Hussin, Mohd Fauzi, Fuadah Johari, Aminuddin Hehsan, and Mohd Saiful Anwar Bin Mohd Nawawi. "Halal Purchase Intention Among the Singaporean Muslim Minority." *Journal of Food Products Marketing* 23, no. 7 (October 3, 2017): 769–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10454446.2016.1141139>.
- Adham, Khairul Akmaliah, Nur Sa'adah Muhamad, Mohd Fuaad Said, and Nadiyah Mahmad Nasir. "Halal and Muslim-Minority Countries: A Systematic Literature Review." *Jurnal Institutions and Economies* 16, no. 4 (October 1, 2024): 41–77. <https://doi.org/10.22452/IJIE.vol16no4.2>.
- Adnan, Laiba. "Hong Kong Emerges as the Most Promising Muslim Friendly Destination in 2025." www.halaltimes.com, 2025. <https://www.halal-times.com/hong-kong-emerges-as-the-most-promising-muslim-friendly-destination-in-2025/>.
- Al-Mahmood, Omar A., and Angela M. Fraser. "Perceived Challenges in Implementing Halal Standards by Halal Certifying Bodies in the United States." Edited by Ismail Ayoade Odetokun. *Plos One* 18, no. 8 (August 31, 2023): e0290774. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0290774>.
- Al-Teinaz, Yunes Ramadan, and Hani Mansour M. Al-Mazeedi. "Halal Certification and International Halal Standards." In *The Halal Food Handbook*, edited by Y.R. Al-Teinaz, S. Spear, and I.H.A. Abd El-Rahim, 227–51. Wiley, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118823026.ch15>.
- Asnawi, Nur, Abdul Haris, Nariman Shamakov, and Muhammad Asnan Fanani. "Consumer Perceived Value and Halal Food Products Consumption in the Indonesia and Russia." *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology* 29, no. 5s (2020): 57–81. <http://sersc.org/journals/index.php/IJAST/article/view/7044>.
- Astiwaru, Endy Muhammad. "Halal Certification Regulation on Health Products: A Global Comparative Study." *International Journal of Science and Society* 5, no. 3 (June 29, 2023): 470–83. <https://doi.org/10.54783/ijsoc.v5i3.1422>.
- Borzooei, Mahdi, and Maryam Asgari. "Discovering Perceptions of Muslim Consumers toward the ICRIC Halal Logo." *Journal of Islamic Accounting*

- and Business Research* 7, no. 4 (September 5, 2016): 304–17. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-07-2013-0023>.
- Chanifah, Nur, Siti Hamidah, Siti Rohmah, Syaikhoni Syaikhoni, Ria Anjani, and Abu Samsudin. "The Understanding of Halal Products Among Indonesian Muslim Migrant Workers in South Korea." *Jurisdictie: Jurnal Hukum dan Syariah* 16, no. 1 (July 1, 2025): 1–54. <https://doi.org/10.18860/j.v16i1.29462>.
- Cotterrell, Roger. *The Sociology of Law: An Introduction*. London: Butterworths, 1992.
- Dixit, Avinash K. *Lawlessness and Economics: Alternative Modes of Governance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7t9hw>.
- Elias, Sara. "Improving Halal Accessibility in India: Identifying Barriers, Adopting Mobile Technology Solutions." *Interantional Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management* 08, no. 04 (April 6, 2024): 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.55041/IJSREM30208>.
- Elseidi, Reham I. "Determinants of Halal Purchasing Intentions: Evidences from UK." *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 9, no. 1 (March 5, 2018): 167–90. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-02-2016-0013>.
- EV, Svinin. "Law as a Multidimensional Legal Order: Whether an Integrative Concept of a Normative Understanding of Law Is Possible?" *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, no. 2 (2025): 50–59. <https://doi.org/10.31857/S1026945225020054>.
- Fibrianti, Nurul, Budi Santoso, Ro'fah Setyowati, and Yuli Rindyawati. "Legal Culture and Legal Consciousness of Consumers: The Influence on Regulation and Enforcement of Consumer Protection Laws." *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies* 8, no. 2 (November 24, 2023). <https://doi.org/10.15294/jils.v8i2.69336>.
- Fischer, Johan. "Material Muslim Authority: Danish Debates about Religious Markets." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 11, no. 1 (February 16, 2022): 106–23. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-bja10044>.
- Fuseini, Awal, Phil Hadley, and Toby Knowles. "Halal Food Marketing: An Evaluation of UK Halal Standards." *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 12, no. 5 (June 8, 2021): 977–91. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-02-2020-0037>.
- Hasnan, Norlena, and Youji Kohda. "Halal Supply Chain: Challenges of Halal Certification in Japan." In *Strengthening Governance, Enhancing Integrity and Navigating Communication for Future Resilient Growth*, edited by Norazah Mohd Suki, A. R. Mazlan, R. Azmi, N. A. Abdul Rahman, Z. Adnan, N. Hanafi, and R. Truell, 764–78. Kuala Terengganu: European Publisher, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2023.11.02.60>.

- Hati, Sri Rahayu Hijrah, Rakotoarisoa Maminirina Fenitra, Adlin Masood, Hapsari Setyowardhani, Alina Abdul Rahim, and Ujang Sumarwan. "Looking at the Beauty of Halal Through the Stimulus-Organism-Response Model and Gender Perspectives: The Case of Indonesian Muslim." *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 16, no. 9 (November 24, 2025): 2465–88. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-12-2023-0424>.
- Ho, Louis. "From 'No Cultural Policy' to 'Centralised Market Orientation': The Political Economy of Hong Kong Cultural Policy (1997–2015)." *Global Media and China* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 57–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436417693007>.
- Irfan, M. Nurul, Maskur Rosyid, Kamaluddin Nurdin Marjuni, and Mashilal. "The Urgency of the Halal Industry in Light of Islamic Legal Philosophy." *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 19, no. 2 (September 25, 2025): 227–46. <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v19i2.14029>.
- Jamaludin, Nurul Faezawaty, and Kosei Sugawara. "Halal Logistics Certification and Regulations in Japan." In *Halal Logistics and Supply Chain Management*, 196–210. London: Routledge, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003223719-20>.
- Kurokawa, Kiyoto. "Challenge of the Halal Food Certificate for Food Marketing: Implications from the Local Branding Strategy of Thailand." *Studies in Regional Science* 41, no. 4 (2011): 1045–54. <https://doi.org/10.2457/srs.41.1045>.
- Kurth, Laura, and Pieter Glasbergen. "Serving a Heterogeneous Muslim Identity? Private Governance Arrangements of Halal Food in the Netherlands." *Agriculture and Human Values* 34, no. 1 (March 25, 2017): 103–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-016-9698-z>.
- Kusnadi, Adhi, Yandra Arkeman, Khaswar Syamsu, and Sony Hartono Wijaya. "Designing Halal Product Traceability System Using UML and Integration of Blockchain with ERP." *Register: Jurnal Ilmiah Teknologi Sistem Informasi* 9, no. 1 (February 27, 2023): 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.26594/register.v9i1.3045>.
- Lutfika, Evrin, Feri Kusnandar, and Dase Hunaefi. "Comparative Analysis and Harmonization of Global Halal Standards." *International Journal of Halal Research* 4, no. 1 (April 25, 2022): 29–39. <https://doi.org/10.18517/ijhr.4.1.29-39.2022>.
- Maher, Amro. "The Effect of a Muslim Endorsement on Non-Muslim's Attitudes and Purchase Intentions." In *Marketing Dynamism & Sustainability: Things Change, Things Stay the Same...*, edited by Leroy Robinson Jr., 113–113. Cham: Springer, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10912-1_31.
- Maifiah, M.H.M., A.N. Ahmad, M.S.E. Azam, A.R.M. Norazmi, and K.A. Nawawi. "Malaysian Muslim Consumers' Awareness, Confidence, and Purchase

- Behaviour on Halal Meat and Its Products After the Meat Cartel Scandal." *Food Research* 6, no. 6 (December 27, 2022): 273–79. [https://doi.org/10.26656/fr.2017.6\(6\).714](https://doi.org/10.26656/fr.2017.6(6).714).
- Marliana, Brian Fina, Abdul Rokhim, and Farahwati. "The Urgency of Halal Certification in Ensuring Legal Certainty for Muslim Consumers." *Awang Long Law Review* 7, no. 2 (May 20, 2025): 301–6. <https://doi.org/10.56301/awl.v7i2.1562>.
- Masri, Esther, Sigit Irianto, Yulies Tiena Masriani, and Syauqi Muhammad Shobibul Falah. "Halal Product Assurance as Legal Protection for Muslim Consumers in Indonesia." *Al-Ahkam* 35, no. 1 (April 28, 2025): 205–34. <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2025.35.1.26384>.
- McLaren, Helen, Renee Taylor, Emi Patmisari, Carla McLaren, Michelle Jones, and Mohammad Hamiduzzaman. "Community Cultural Wealth among a South Australian Muslim Population: A Reflective Evaluation of Strengthening Family Health and Wellbeing." *Religions* 15, no. 3 (March 14, 2024): 351. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030351>.
- Menkhaus, Ken. "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping." *International Security* 31, no. 3 (January 2007): 74–106. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2007.31.3.74>.
- Miele, Mara, John Lever, Adrian Evans, and Awal Fuseini. "Situating Halal: Religiosity, Identity and Lifestyle in Halal Consumption in the United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates." *Consumption and Society* 3, no. 1 (January 2024): 37–55. <https://doi.org/10.1332/27528499Y2023D000000001>.
- Muhamad, Nazlida, Vai Shiem Leong, and Normalisa Md Isa. "Does the Country of Origin of a Halal Logo Matter? The Case of Packaged Food Purchases." *Review of International Business and Strategy* 27, no. 4 (November 6, 2017): 484–500. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RIBS-06-2017-0049>.
- Nojiri, Wataru. "An Attempt to Apply Actor-Network Theory to Halal Food Production and Supply in Japan." *Japanese Journal of Human Geography* 68, no. 4 (2016): 421–41. https://doi.org/10.4200/jjhg.68.4_421.
- Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Othman, Yuhanza, Muhammad Nizam Awang, and Hendun Abdul Rahman Shah. "Legal and Regulatory Challenges of Halal Certification: Insights from Cosmetic Manufacturers on Halal Built-In Implementation." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2023): 322–35. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i1/15785>.
- Pedro, Antonio C. "Ending Institutions: Rule Enforcement in Self-Governance Systems." *Rationality and Society* 30, no. 1 (February 26, 2018): 80–107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043463117734176>.

- Rahmat, Rahmat. "Evaluation Of Company Compliance With Consumer Protection Standards." *Ipsa Jure* 1, no. 7 (September 27, 2024): 11–23. <https://doi.org/10.62872/35cabn69>.
- Rasam, Zulifan, Muhammad Luthfi Zuhdi, and Shobichatul Aminah. "Fiqh Aqalliyah as a Legal Alternative to Halal Standardization in Japan as a Non-Majority Muslim Country." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 14, no. 1 (July 3, 2024): 177–202. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v14i1.177-202>.
- Riaz, Mian N., and Nooran M. Riaz. "Requirements for Halal Food Production." In *Encyclopedia of Food Safety*, 588–98. Elsevier, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-822521-9.00003-4>.
- Roosiani, Indun, and Erni Puspitasari. "Perkembangan Industri Halal dan Peranan Badan Sertifikasi Halal Jepang dalam Meningkatkan Industri Halal pada Masa Pemerintahan Shinzo Abe." *Media Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya Wahana* 27, no. 2 (December 30, 2021): 566–75. <https://doi.org/10.33751/wahana.v27i2.4544>.
- Rovinsky, Jeremy A., and Hal S. Cohen. "The Standard Procedures for Animal Slaughtering in the Industry." In *Preparation and Processing of Religious and Cultural Foods*, 325–48. Elsevier, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-101892-7.00017-1>.
- Seo, Yuna, Kazuya Yamaguchi, Fitri Aprilianty, and Niken Prasasti Martono. "Cultural Familiarity and Religious Adherence: Exploring Muslim Consumers' Willingness to Purchase Halal Food from Non-Islamic Countries – A Case Study of Japan." *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 16, no. 12 (November 25, 2025): 3591–3611. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-10-2024-0464>.
- Setiawan, Rizal Justian, Khakam Ma'ruf, Nur Azizah, Amna Rusmala, Nur Evirda Khosyati, and Syukri Fathudin Achmad Widodo. "The Effects of Halal Labels on Packaged Ice Cream Purchase Interest Among Foreign Muslim Consumers - A Case Study in Taiwan." In *2024 International Conference on Sustainable Islamic Business and Finance (SIBF)*, 319–23. IEEE, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1109/SIBF63788.2024.10883821>.
- Shannon, John H., Hector R. Lozada, and Richard J. Hunter. Jr. "Consumer Protection in a Regulatory Environment." *International Journal of Social Policy and Education* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2024): 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.61494/ijspe.v6n2a4>.
- Sharaai, Amir Hamzah, Mohammad Firdaus Masri, and Somayeh Rezaei Kalvani. "The Social Impact Study through the Life Cycle of Rice Production at Selangor, Malaysia." *Chemical Engineering Transactions* 97 (2022): 517–22. <https://doi.org/10.3303/CET2297087>.
- Stojkow, Maria, and Ahmet Yasuntimur. "The Dynamics of Social Networks Among Muslim Students in Kraków: Experiences of Cultural Interaction

- and Integration." *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* 21, no. 3 (August 29, 2025): 60–75. <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.21.3.04>.
- Wiryani, Fifik, Mokh. Najih, and Abdul Haris. "An Analysis of Legal Protection of Halal and Thoyib Food Consumers in Court Judgments." *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 175, no. 1 (July 24, 2018): 012195. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/175/1/012195>.
- Yasar, Nur H. "Stereotyping Halal Food and Eating Halal Food in a South Korean Context." *European Journal of Korean Studies* 21, no. 1 (October 1, 2021): 259–90. <https://doi.org/10.33526/EJKS.20212101.259>.
- Ying, Roy. "HK Needs to Tap into \$2 Trillion Halal Economy." www.chinadailyhk.com, 2025. [https://www.chinadailyhk.com/hk/article/622875#HK-needs-to-tap-into-\\$2-trillion-halal-economy-2025-11-03](https://www.chinadailyhk.com/hk/article/622875#HK-needs-to-tap-into-$2-trillion-halal-economy-2025-11-03).
- Yunus Ali, M., Pervaiz K. Ahmed, and Simran N. Singh. "Muslim Consumers' Halal Product Choice Behaviour: An Eye-Tracking Investigation on Visual Choice Process." In *Marketing Transformation: Marketing Practice in an Ever Changing World*, edited by Patricia Rossi and Nina Krey, 137–52. Springer International Publishing, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68750-6_43.
- Zulfakar, Mohd, Caroline Chan, Ferry Jie, and Veera Pandiyan Kaliani Sundram. "Halal Accreditation and Certification in a Non-Muslim Country Setting: Insights from Australia Halal Meat Supply Chain." *International Journal of Supply Chain Management* 8, no. 1 (2019): 10–17.