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ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON HALAL CERTIFICATION FOR PACKAGED FOOD PRODUCTS

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Information	Abstract:
<p>Article History:</p> <p>Received : 22.07.2024 Revised : 27.07.2024 Accepted : 06.08.2024</p> <p>Keywords: Certification; Consumer Perception; Packaging Products.</p>	<p><i>This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of Silou Paribuan Village residents regarding halal certification, enhancing the understanding of consumer behavior in rural settings. The research analyzes how these residents perceive halal certification when purchasing packaged food products. A qualitative descriptive method was used, drawing on consumer behavior theory and Sharia economic principles to explore these perceptions. Data was gathered through interviews and surveys, with 96 individuals selected from a total population of 2,375 using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error. Simple random sampling was employed to ensure representative participation. The data was collected via a questionnaire that utilized a Likert scale to gauge respondents' attitudes. The analysis applied consumer perception theories, including attribution, gestalt, product quality, and marketing communications. The results revealed that the perception of halal certification among Silou Paribuan Village residents is generally positive, with an average score of 74%. Most respondents recognized the importance of halal certification when choosing packaged food products. However, the study's focus on a single village may limit the generalizability of its findings to broader populations or different cultural contexts.</i></p>

A. INTRODUCTION

Silou Paribuan Village is located in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra Province. The area is predominantly agricultural, with most of the population engaged in farming. The village is home to 2,375 residents, the majority of whom are Muslim and deeply value religious principles in their daily lives, including the consumption of food and drink. For the people of Silou Paribuan, halal products are not just labels but a reflection of their adherence to religious teachings. However, perceptions and understanding of halal certification vary significantly within the community. While some residents are attentive to halal labels on packaged foods, others are less aware or do not fully grasp the importance of halal certification. These differences in perception can be attributed to various factors, including education levels, religious knowledge, and access to information (BPS, 2024).

Consumer perceptions of product quality also vary, often based on personal experiences or recommendations from the local community. However, for the Muslim community, halal certification provides a strong incentive to purchase a product. This certification instills confidence and assurance that the product aligns with their religious beliefs (Chairani, 2021). Despite the community's respect for religious values, challenges persist in understanding and implementing halal certification in Silou Paribuan Village. A significant issue is the lack of public knowledge regarding the procedures and benefits of halal certification. Although most villagers are devout Muslims, not all recognize the importance of halal certification in ensuring the legitimacy and quality of products. This lack of awareness can lead to inconsistent purchasing behavior, with some consumers neglecting to check for halal labels when shopping. Economic challenges also play a role; halal-certified products often come at a higher price, posing a barrier for consumers with financial constraints. This underscores the need to make halal products more affordable for rural communities.

The involvement of local authorities and religious leaders is essential in educating the public about the importance of halal products. Through integrated education and outreach programs, public awareness and understanding can be enhanced, encouraging more consistent choices of halal-certified products. This

research aims to provide stakeholders with comprehensive insight into how to improve education and distribution of halal products in village communities.

In analyzing the perceptions of the Silou Paribuan Village community regarding halal certification when purchasing packaged food products, it is important to consider how Sharia economic factors influence consumer views and behavior. For example, do villagers prefer products with halal certification even if they are more expensive, or do they opt for cheaper alternatives regardless of their halal status? It is also crucial to assess the extent of the community's knowledge about halal certification and their understanding of Sharia economics in the context of food purchases.

The study of perceptions regarding halal certification in Silou Paribuan Village is crucial. Questions to explore include the community's awareness of halal certification's importance, how often they check for halal labels while shopping, and the factors influencing their decision to choose halal products. Previous research by Iis Sutardi (2019) in Bengkalis District highlighted that consumers perceive halal labels on food products as providing safety and health benefits. Another study by Dianda Yengki Julianto (2019) found that Muslim MSME entrepreneurs in Kerinci Regency, Jambi Province, still lacked a full understanding of halal certification despite their certified products. Additionally, Yahya Putra Pratama's (2020) research in Makassar showed a lack of awareness among food stall owners regarding the necessity of halal certification, which is not yet seen as a requirement.

This research offers several novel insights compared to previous studies, particularly in its regional and demographic focus on Silou Paribuan Village in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra. Unlike earlier research, which was broader or centered on imported products and food stalls, this study specifically examines public perceptions of halal certification for packaged food products. It also emphasizes community awareness and knowledge, aiming to measure the extent to which the villagers understand halal certification and its implications in Sharia economics. It is essential to understand the factors that encourage or hinder them in choosing halal-certified products. This research broadens the understanding of public perceptions of halal certification in different geographical contexts and provides an in-depth view of how religious values and Sharia economics influence consumption decisions. The

findings are expected to offer valuable insights for stakeholders in enhancing education and distribution of halal products in rural communities.

This study analyzes Silou Paribuan Village residents' perceptions of the importance of halal certification and its impact on their consumption habits. By understanding these perceptions, we can gauge the community's awareness and knowledge about halal certification and identify the factors that encourage or discourage the choice of halal-certified products. This approach aims to provide insights for stakeholders to improve education and distribution of halal products in village communities

B. LITERATUR REVIEW

Understanding Perception

Philip Kotler defines perception as the process by which an individual gathers, organizes, and interprets information to create a meaningful understanding of the world (Wahyuni & Sarkawi, 2023). In consumer behavior, perception involves the process by which individuals search for, select, purchase, use, and evaluate products to meet their needs and desires (Harahap et al., 2020). High-quality consumer perceptions can significantly influence purchasing decisions (Sulistiyani & Umi, 2021). Several factors shape consumer perceptions, including past experiences, available information, religion, values, and attitudes. For instance, customers with positive experiences with a product are more likely to develop favorable perceptions and are more inclined to purchase it again. This highlights how initial perceptions can shape ongoing consumer behavior. Perception is influenced by physical cues and interactions with the environment (Dewi & Gosal, 2020).

Both internal and external factors shape perception. Internal factors include an individual's experiences, knowledge, and values, while external factors encompass the characteristics of the stimulus, the situational context, and social influences. For example, a person with positive brand experiences will likely maintain a favorable perception of that brand. Perception is crucial in everyday life, influencing social interactions, decision-making, and consumer behavior. For instance, consumers' perception of a brand or product can heavily influence their purchasing decisions. It's important to note that perception is subjective and can vary greatly between

individuals due to differences in their backgrounds, experiences, and values. Therefore, understanding the target audience's perceptions in marketing or communication contexts is vital for effectively conveying messages or promoting products.

In psychology, several theories explain how perceptions are formed and influenced. Gestalt theory, for example, suggests that humans naturally organize stimuli into meaningful patterns or wholes. Attribution theory posits that individuals tend to attribute others' behaviors to personal or situational factors. Understanding perception can enhance consumer experiences, improve communication effectiveness, and optimize decision-making. By understanding how perceptions are formed and influenced, individuals and organizations can take strategic actions to achieve their goals.

The perception process is a cognitive activity shaped by individual experience and knowledge. When exposed to sensory stimuli, individuals focus on interpreting and organizing this information, often influenced by their learning and teaching experiences. Knowledge equips individuals with tools to navigate their environments, and they typically use their resources—such as time and energy—strategically to achieve their goals. Perceptions arise from motivational interactions and are uniquely interpreted by individuals due to the diverse ways people process information (Muawwanah & Makhtum, 2022).

Halal Certification

Halal certification is a systematic process determining whether a product from a particular company meets Islamic dietary laws. Products that meet the necessary safety and quality standards are granted halal certification (Lendy et al., 2021). This certification is the outcome of a rigorous evaluation process. According to Republic of Indonesia Law Number 33 of 2014, "Halal certification is the process of verifying the authenticity of a product, issued by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), based on a legally binding halal statement from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)" (Wajdi & Susanti, 2021).

Halal certification positively and significantly impacts consumer interest in purchasing and using products, as it gives consumers confidence in their purchasing

decisions. Halal labels appeal to Muslim consumers and attract non-Muslims who value safety and quality assurance (Desmayonda & Trenggana, 2019). The term "halal" encompasses three meanings: First, it refers to something that does not incur punishment for its use. Second, it denotes something permissible according to Sharia law. Third, it signifies something that is allowed and lawful. Conversely, "haram" refers to something that is prohibited (Tarigan, 2016).

Products with halal certification typically display a logo on their packaging, indicating that the product complies with Islamic law. The halal certification process generally takes up to four years unless there is a change in the product's composition, in which case the process can be expedited to three months before the product's expiration (Wajdi & Susanti, 2021).

The halal certification process involves several steps to ensure that raw materials, production processes, and finished products adhere to the standards set by the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Research Institute of the Indonesian Ulema Council (LPPOM MUI). Halal certification is critical for informing consumers about a product's status based on their purchasing history. It helps alleviate consumer concerns about the legitimacy of certain food products, particularly in an environment where trust in product authenticity may be lacking (Akim et al., 2019).

There are several key indicators of halal certification: 1) a halal logo on food packaging is a vital consideration. 2) Consumers should be able to differentiate the authentic MUI halal logo from non-authentic ones. 3) The product must be of high quality and halal-certified. 4) Products with the halal logo have undergone stringent testing processes to ensure compliance. 5) Consumers should feel confident in consuming food labeled as halal (Setyaningsih & Marwansyah, 2019).

Packaging Products

"Packaging factors play an important role in consumer purchasing decisions" (Iranita, 2020). Packaging, often referred to as the product's container or wrapping, is crucial in ensuring that a product remains stable, safe, and undamaged. Beyond protection, packaging also positively influences the consumer's experience. Effective packaging design should serve as a communication tool between producers and

consumers, focusing on three key elements: product name, composition, and visual appeal or branding (Live, 2021).

Vachel and Radianto emphasize that product quality significantly influences customer satisfaction. For instance, a product like honey donuts that is attractively packaged, easy to use, and stylish gives consumers confidence in its quality. High-quality products provide utility and satisfaction and offer aesthetic value, enhancing consumer safety and confidence in the product (Imtihan & Irwandi, 2021).

Halal-certified products should be integral to global trade and economic practices, meeting international standards to gain consumer trust across different countries. This ensures smoother goods, services, capital, and knowledge flows between nations. International trade substantially impacts the economies of participating countries, fostering a mutually beneficial and efficient environment for producing and marketing goods.

Packaging involves creating containers or wrappers for products. Manufacturers design packaging to meet consumer expectations, ensuring quality control and differentiating their products from competitors in the same market (Herudiansyah et al., 2019).

Promotion and product quality also play a significant role in purchasing decisions, even if pricing does not always have a direct impact. Factors like promotion, product quality, and price collectively influence consumer purchasing behavior (Sani et al., 2022).

The influx of imported packaged food and beverage products in Indonesia has revealed that some products still lack halal labels. For example, certain foods and drinks from other countries, such as Samyang U-dong, Samyang Ramen Kimchi, Nongshim Shin Ramyun Black, and Kracks Potato Chips Original, do not carry halal labels (Husna et al., 2022).

C. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of individual perceptions and subjective experiences of the people of Silou Paribuan Village concerning halal certification for packaged food products. The study focuses on the population of Silou Paribuan Village, which totals 2,375 people

according to data from BPS. The Slovin formula determined a sample size of 96 individuals for this research. A simple random sampling technique was employed, ensuring that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. Data collection involved distributing questionnaires to the selected sample of respondents representing the broader population. The survey utilized a Likert scale to gather data, allowing for the measurement of respondents' attitudes and perceptions.

Table 1. Likert Scale Value Weights

No	Answer	Score
1	Strongly Agree	5
2	Agree	4
3	Neutral	3
4	Do not Agree	2
5	Strongly Disagree	1

According to (Hasan, 2009), there are several steps in determining grouped percentage data, as follows:

Table 2. Percentage of Data

Very Good	Very good analysis of public perceptions of Halal Certification in purchasing packaged food products in Silou Paribuan Village with a score of 81% - 100%.
Good	Good Analysis of public perceptions of Halal Certification in purchasing packaged food products in Silou Paribuan Village with a 61% - 80% score.
Currently	There is an analysis of public perceptions of Halal Certification in purchasing packaged food products in Silou Paribuan Village, with a 41% - 60% score.
Bad	Bad Analysis of public perceptions of Halal certification in purchasing packaged food products in Silou Paribuan Village with a 21% - 40% score.
Very Bad	Very Bad Analysis of Public Perceptions of Halal Certification in Purchasing Packaged Food Products in Silou Paribuan Village with a 0% - 20% score.

D. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The respondents for this research were 96 people from Silou Paribuan Village. From the processed data, information about the respondents is obtained to serve as a reference for the characteristics of the respondents sampled in this research. In this

study, the characteristics of the respondents were gender, religion, age, and occupation of each respondent.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Respondent Profile	Amount	Percentage
Gender		
Man	28	29%
Women	68	71%
Religion		
Islam	77	80%
Christian	19	20%
Buddha	0	0%
Hindu	0	0%
Confucian	0	0%
Age		
15-20	27	28%
21-30	48	50%
31-40	21	21%
>40	0	0%
Work		
Student	57	59%
Government Employees	6	6%
Private Sector employee	15	16%
No/not yet working	5	5%
Housewife	4	4%
Other	9	10%

Source: Processed by Research, (2024)

Based on the table above, information was obtained that the respondents from the Silou Paribuan Village community, in terms of gender, were identified as the majority of respondents being 71% female and 29% male. In terms of age, most of the respondents from the people of Silou Paribuan Village were aged between 21-30 years, with a percentage of 50%. For their work, the people of Silou Paribuan Village have jobs; most of them are students the percentage is 59%, and the largest religion is Islam namely 80%.

The questionnaire results revealed nine statements filled in by 96 respondents via Google Form.

Table 3. Percentage of Questionnaire Results

No.	Statement	SA	A	N	NA	SNA	Total	Average Answer
1	Have good knowledge about halal certification of packaged food products	60	31	5	0	0	96	91%
2	Halal certification is an important factor in choosing packaged food products	80	15	1	0	0	96	96%
3	Packaged products that have a halal label are safer to consume	81	13	2	0	0	96	96%
4	Regularly check the halal label when purchasing packaged products	61	26	9	0	0	96	90%
5	Halal certification is only important for Muslim communities	55	20	12	7	2	96	85%
6	Halal labels on packaged food products influence consumer purchasing decisions	74	17	5	0	0	96	94%
7	Consumers tend to prefer packaged food products that are halal-certified	70	22	4	0	0	96	94%
8	Knowledge about halal certification can help me make better decisions when choosing packaged products	69	24	3	0	0	96	94%
9	Halal certification on packaged products can help increase consumer confidence in these products	76	19	1	0	0	96	96%
Average								74%

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that most respondents perceive halal certification positively, with an average score of 74%, categorizing their perception as "Good." This research demonstrates a high level of awareness among the residents of Silou Paribuan Village regarding the significance of halal certification in purchasing packaged products. The findings confirm that the public recognizes the importance of halal certification in ensuring the halalness of their food. These insights can inform producers and policymakers on enhancing public understanding and awareness of halal certification and contribute to the literature on public perceptions of halal.

Despite the high regard for religious values, public awareness and understanding of halal certification remain relatively low. This aligns with Dianda Yengki Julianto's (2019) research, which highlighted a similar lack of understanding among Muslim entrepreneurs in Kerinci. Conversely, research by Yahya Putra Pratama (2020) in Makassar found low awareness among food stall owners. In contrast, this study identified a strong community desire for further education on halal certification, provided adequate outreach is available. This underscores the need for targeted educational interventions in rural areas and suggests that more affordable halal-certified products could enhance consistent purchasing behavior in line with Sharia economic principles.

Several factors influence the awareness of halal certification among the people of Silou Paribuan Village. First, the religious factor, given that the majority of the residents are Muslim, leads them to prefer products with halal certification. Second, the information factor, as knowledge about halal certification is widely disseminated through various media. Third, the value and attitude factors, where the community's strong religious values drive their preference for products that align with these values.

These findings resonate with Sulistyani and Umi's (2021) theory, which posits that high-quality consumer perceptions impact purchasing decisions. Here, perceptions of halal quality are considered high, suggesting that the more a product is perceived as halal, the more likely it is to be purchased. To improve public understanding, efforts should focus on enhancing the quality and accessibility of information regarding halal certification with broader and more intensive outreach.

Applying Gestalt theory, this study reveals that perceptions of halal certification are shaped by an overall view rather than isolated aspects. Halal certification serves as a comprehensive indicator of product quality and trust. This underscores the importance of strategically presenting and positioning halal-certified products to foster positive consumer perceptions. By integrating Gestalt theory, the research provides a nuanced analysis of how public perception of halal certification is influenced by the entirety of their experiences, information received, and religious values.

The study highlights that consumer perceptions are influenced not only by the halal label but also by their overall experience, the information available, and their adherence to religious values under Gestalt theory. Effective dissemination of information about halal certification through accessible media is crucial for shaping public perception. Frequent and consistent information helps integrate halal certification into societal norms, while consumers with strong religious values tend to have a more positive perception of halal-certified products. This demonstrates how aligning consumer values with product attributes influences perceptions and underscores the importance of a holistic approach in understanding how perception is formed and the role of knowledge, values, and information in consumer decision-making regarding halal certification.

From an Islamic economics perspective, the research highlights the critical role of halal certification in aligning consumer behavior with Sharia principles. The high level of awareness among the residents of Silou Paribuan Village reflects an understanding of the importance of adhering to religious guidelines in their consumption choices. This awareness is a positive indicator of integrating Islamic values into everyday economic practices, reinforcing that halal certification is not merely a label but a fundamental aspect of ensuring compliance with Sharia law. Such adherence underscores the ethical dimension of consumer behavior in Islamic economics, where the alignment of purchasing decisions with religious principles is paramount.

However, the research also reveals a gap between awareness and practical understanding, suggesting that despite strong religious values, there is a need for enhanced education and improved accessibility to halal-certified products. This gap

highlights the importance of addressing informational and economic barriers to ensure halal certification effectively influences purchasing behavior. From an Islamic economics standpoint, addressing these barriers is crucial for fostering a market environment where halal products are recognized and readily available, thereby supporting the broader goal of integrating Sharia principles into economic activities and promoting ethical consumerism in line with Islamic values.

E. CONCLUSION

This research provides a clear picture of the people of Silou Paribuan Village's perceptions of halal certification when purchasing packaged food products. From the analysis results, the majority of respondents, around 74%, had a "Good" perception of halal certification. These results show the high awareness of the people of Silou Paribuan Village regarding the importance of halal certification in ensuring the halalness of the products they consume.

The awareness of the people of Silou Paribuan Village about the importance of halal certification can be influenced by several factors. The religious factor is one of the main reasons why the majority of the residents of Silou Paribuan Village are Muslims, so they tend to choose packaged food products that are halal certified. Apart from that, the information factor also plays an important role, where information about halal certification has been widely spread and easily accessed by the public through various media. Value and attitude factors also influence where society lives

For producers, these results show the importance of paying attention to halal certification in producing packaged food products to increase consumer purchasing interest. For the government, these results show the importance of increasing public understanding and awareness of halal certification through various relevant programs and policies.

This research shows that the people of Silou Paribuan Village understand that halal certification is necessary to ensure the halalness of the food products they consume. These findings confirm that awareness of the importance of halal certification has penetrated the consumption culture of the people of Silou Paribuan Village. The implication of these results is the important role of producers and the government in increasing public understanding and awareness about halal

certification, as well as the importance of conducting in-depth research on public perceptions of halal to produce more comprehensive findings. Overall, this research shows that the Silou Paribuan community in Simalungun Regency has a positive perception of halal certification for packaged food products. The high level of approval shows that the community considers it important to guarantee halalness in the products they consume, and this provides strong support for the halal certification program in the area.

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