

# Roland Barthes' Semiotics on Halal Labels and Buyer Decisions

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## Abstract

The influence of halal labels on consumer purchasing decisions from the semiotic perspective of Roland Barthes. Halal labels, which are often found on food and beverage products, have a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions, especially among Muslim consumers. Through Barthes' semiotic approach, the halal label is understood as a sign consisting of two elements: signifier and signified. The signifier is a physical label displaying halal certification, while the signified includes the meaning of halal, hygiene, quality, and religious identity. This analysis is conducted by distinguishing two levels of meaning: denotative and connotative. Denotatively, the halal label indicates that the product meets halal standards. However, at the connotative level, the label relates to broader values, such as trust, safety, health, and compliance with Islamic law. The results show that the connotative meaning of the halal label has a strong influence on the purchasing decisions of Muslim consumers, who often see this label as a representation of Islamic identity and lifestyle. The halal label not only serves as a product information tool, but also plays an important role in shaping purchasing preferences and decisions through cultural and religious meanings.

**Keywords:** Halal, labelling, Muslim consumers, purchase decision, Roland Barthes, semiotics.

## 1. Introduction

In the industrial setting, halal certifications are becoming increasingly important, particularly in the food, beverage, and consumer goods industries. Halal labels exist to authenticate the halal status of products and significantly influence

consumer decisions in Indonesia, where Muslims constitute the majority of the population. Consequently, the significance of halal labels influences not only the quality of the product but also

consumer trust in selecting things that align with their religious convictions. When it comes to choosing a product, halal labels are crucial since they enlighten consumers and also influence their opinions and

actions(Kartika, 2020). According to semiotic theory, halal labels are signs with socially significant meanings. Renowned semiotician Roland Barthes proposed a theory that permits a bi-level examination of signs' meaning: the denotative, or straightforward, and the connotative, or reflecting more nuanced associations. The halal label plainly signifies that the product complies with the halal standards established by Islamic law. Simultaneously, at the connotative level, this designation encompasses a profound significance, incorporating religious values, notions of cleanliness, safety, quality, and the expression of the cultural identity possessed by Muslim customers. Consequently, the halal mark functions not just as evidence of adherence to regulations but also as a representation of diverse social and cultural values significant to the lives of Muslims. (Aeni & Lestari, 2021)The increasing demand for halal labels is driven by the increasing awareness of Muslim consumers regarding the importance of consuming

halal and thayyib products. Halal labels also serve as a differentiation element that gives consumers more confidence in choosing products that are in line with their religious and cultural values. Therefore, the existence of halal labels is becoming increasingly crucial in meeting the expectations and needs of the growing Muslim market. Amid increasing competition in the global market, companies targeting Muslim consumers must be aware of the importance of providing halal certification on their products.(Diah et al., 2023) This study aims to analyze the influence of halal labels on consumer purchasing decisions through the semiotic lens developed by Roland Barthes. With this approach, this study will explore the meaning contained in the halal label, both in literal and symbolic contexts. In addition, this study will also examine the impact of this meaning on preferences and purchasing decisions taken by consumers. This methodology is pertinent for examining both the practical significance of the halal designation and its wider social and cultural effects on Muslim consumer behavior.(Norma Sampoerno et al., 2022) This study will address the subsequent

inquiries:

1. What is the customer interpretation of the halal label from a semiotic standpoint?
2. To what degree does the connotative significance of the halal label affect the purchasing decision?
3. In what ways may companies utilize halal certifications in their marketing strategy to appeal to Muslim consumers?

This study seeks to enhance comprehension of the impact of halal labels within a wider framework. This study will examine how manufacturers and marketers can more effectively leverage halal labels to cultivate stronger ties with Muslim consumers. Consequently, the results of this study are anticipated to offer pragmatic contributions to marketing strategies focused on customer values.

## **2. Literatur Review**

The examination of the impact of halal labeling on consumer purchasing behavior is grounded in several key

concepts and theories. Numerous significant texts examine halal labeling, consumer purchasing behavior, and the semiotic theory articulated by Roland Barthes. This literature review will analyze these studies to establish a robust theoretical framework for this topic. (Ulya et al., 2020)

1. The halal label signifies assurance that a product complies with the halal standards established by an accredited religious authority. In the food, cosmetics, medicines, and other consumer product sectors, the halal designation is essential for Muslim customers in evaluating a product's appropriateness for eating or use. The halal mark signifies adherence to Islamic law and is also associated with product safety and elevated quality requirements. (Ilham et al., 2023) Many Muslims associate the halal label with *thayyib*, the belief that a product meets strict health and sanitation requirements in addition to being halal. Because the certification guarantees compliance with their religious norms, Muslim shoppers are more likely to choose products with the halal label, as it provides assurance that the product is in line with their religious principles. (Kurniawan et al.,

n.d.)

2. Purchasing decisions refer to consumer behavior in the process of searching for, selecting, using, evaluating, and spending money on products and services that are expected to satisfy their needs. In this context, consumer purchasing decisions relate to selecting the most preferred brand among the various alternatives available. This decision-making process can be viewed as a problem-solving approach that allows individuals to purchase products to satisfy their wants and needs.

3. Semiotic studies focus on the analysis of signs and the meanings produced through the use of those signs. Roland Barthes, a semiotician, developed a theory that allows the analysis of signs on two layers of meaning, namely denotative and connotative.

In his work entitled *\*Mythologies\** (1972), Barthes argues that cultural signs not only have literal meanings (denotation), but also carry deeper

meanings in a cultural context (connotation). In this study, the halal label can be analyzed as a sign that reflects both levels of meaning. (Kediklatan et al., 2023a)

Denotation At the denotative level, the halal label simply indicates that the product is halal, that is, it meets the criteria set by Islamic law. On the other hand, at the connotative level, the halal label not only describes the halalness of a product, but also relates to various other concepts such as quality, cleanliness, safety, religious identity, and consumer trust. In addition, Barthes introduced the concept of myth in semiotics, which states that certain signs can have broader meanings in the context of society; thus, the halal label can be seen as a modern myth that relates to the Islamic lifestyle and carries implications that go beyond the mere halal aspect of the product. (Kediklatan et al., 2023b)

4. Several studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between halal labels and consumer purchasing decisions. One study showed that in Iran, halal labels have a significant impact on product preferences among Muslim consumers. This finding indicates that halal labels are not only

relevant in Muslim-majority countries, but also play an important role in Muslim communities located in other countries.

5. The semiotic approach, especially the theory developed by Barthes, has been widely applied in marketing research to understand the process of consumer interpretation of signs. Barthes' work offers an analytical framework that helps in understanding how consumers create meaning from the various signs they encounter in a marketing context. Semiotic research helps elucidate the reasons behind Muslim consumers' preference for products bearing halal labels. This decision is informed not just by explicit facts on halal but also by profound cultural and religious connotations. (Nurulita Danty Intan Pratiwi & Ida Afidah, 2022)



Fig. 1 Halal logo placemen.



Fig. 2 New Halal Logo .

### 3. Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative methodology utilizing the semiotic analysis technique proposed by Roland Barthes. The data utilized in this study are secondary, sourced from many materials, including scholarly literature, case studies, and publications pertaining to halal labels. The researcher examined the presentation of halal labels on product packaging and assessed their influence on purchasing decisions, contingent upon the significance conveyed by the label. Additionally, the researchers spoke with several Muslim shoppers to find out how they felt about the halal designation and how it affected their shopping habits. Barthes' semiotic method was used to evaluate the interview data in order to find the important signs and

meanings linked to the halal label. This study's overarching goal is to decipher the significance of the halal label for shoppers and their decision-making processes.

#### **4. Discussion Results**

The research demonstrates that the halal label signifies that the product satisfies the halal requirements, providing a clear denotative meaning. However, the halal mark has a more nuanced connotative connotation that pertains to religious identity, cleanliness, safety, and conformity with Islamic law. Aside from signifying conformity with sharia law, the halal label is seen by consumers as an indicator of superior cleanliness and quality when contrasted with non-halal items. From Barthes' semiotic perspective, the halal label functions as a modern myth that allows consumers to associate it with broader cultural concepts, including Islamic consumption ethics, health, and lifestyle. Thus, the connotative meaning contained in the halal label

has a significant influence on purchasing decisions, especially among Muslim consumers who adhere to their religious teachings. This shows that the halal label not only functions as an indicator of halalness, but also as a symbol that reflects the values and cultural identity of consumers.

#### **5. Conclusions**

This study demonstrates that halal labels significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions in both literal and cultural-religious situations. From Roland Barthes' semiotic viewpoint, halal labels are interpreted as signs encompassing both denotative and connotative meanings that significantly shape customer views. A more thorough comprehension of the implications of halal labels can offer significant insights for manufacturers and marketers in developing more effective methods to engage Muslim consumers.

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