



Understanding Through the Click: How Social Media Guides or Misleads the Issue of Halal Products

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Abstract

The awareness and understanding of Halal issues have significantly increased in recent times due to the prevalent use of social media. Nevertheless, the abundance of information often leads to the guidance of understanding, yet its credibility occasionally remains in doubt. Based on this condition, this study explores the role of social media as a catalyst for driving understanding of Halal issues, alongside its role in spreading misled information and investigating the responses of Muslim individuals to this dynamic. Using a systematic literature review (SLR), this study encompassed an analysis of 20 recent research articles published between 2016 and 2023 that fulfilled the inclusion and exclusion criteria and quality assessment, focusing on the discussion of Halal issues across various social media platforms. The findings reveal multiple insights, notably emphasizing that social media serves as a mediator between religion, the market, and consumption in significant ways, particularly in fostering awareness of Halal products and issues. Moreover, the study sheds light on the sensitivity of Halal issues, which are deeply intertwined with individuals' beliefs and religiosity, thereby eliciting strong reactions and prompting community resistance even in the absence of confirmed information. In addition to presenting insights, this study identified potential issues that warrant further investigation in future studies. These endeavors are intended to enhance understanding within the field of Halal Studies and provide practical insights for the Halal industry to better understand the needs and perspectives of the Muslim population in the digital age.

Keywords *Social Media, Fake Information, Misleading Information, Awareness, Halal Issues, Halal Industry, Digital Environment*

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that social media has many impacts on life. In 2019, Statista (2019) found that social media users believe that this platform has had an impact on their daily life, positively or negatively, which is still consistent with the recent Statista survey results (Statista, 2021, 2023). As a broad impact of social media, several studies repeatedly point out some impact, namely, global connectivity, influence people and opinion-shaping, and even providing an influence in social movements (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020). Indeed, the core impacts of social media on communication within the wider society have a substantial influence on raising awareness and understanding about particular issues, such as the comprehension of Halal products.

The concept of Halal extends beyond food and includes various other products and services, such as finance, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals, where adherence to Islamic principles guides their production and use (Hasanah & Agustiningasih, 2019). However, many people have a misguided understanding of halal as associated with the prohibition to eat particular meat and beverages, whereas the meaning of halal itself has a detailed meaning, where the upstream to downstream process must be correct and fulfill the halal requirement (Kurniawati & Cakravastia, 2023). Nonetheless, currently, the comprehension of the concept is facilitated by numerous social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok that offer diverse contents that explain the Halal product, which offer a variety of content explaining Halal products in a clear,

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engaging manner using graphics and straightforward messaging.

However, social media serves as a double-edged sword, where the wealth of information can either guide toward the truth or lead to misinformation. Besides its positive content, the other contents often lead to misleading information spreading, such as the prior issue of Cadbury Malaysia Porcine DNA Case (Yu & Chan, 2020) or when certain fast food brands in Indonesia allegedly have pork ingredients (Indonesian Ulema Council, 2021). Even though these two cases responded responsively by the Halal Council, the dissemination of this information is already impactful to society, especially Muslims. Starting from some texts or contents in social media posts, the posts significantly impact the Muslim faithful, inevitably instigating concerns regarding the products they have consumed. These two cases are examples of the abundance of misleading Halal information that spreads through social media, which shows how Muslim people can easily trigger the dissemination of fake news when it violates their beliefs, morals, and values (Wisker, 2020).

The rise and ubiquity of social media can facilitate the dissemination of Halal information, yet concurrently, social media also significantly influences the provision of both accurate guidance and potentially misleading information regarding Halal products, highlighting the crucial importance of examining the impact of social media in Halal studies through comprehensive research discussions. Unfortunately, most halal studies in the present study profoundly discuss the social media issue from the relationship between marketing, branding, and customer perspective (such as Shah et al. (2020), Ariffin et al. (2021), and Zamrudi and Il-Hyun (2022)). Whereas from the spread of information in social media, prior studies (i.e., Khasanah (2020), Pozlan et al. (2023)) focusing to discuss the positive and negative things on it separately—which make the discussion for both the positive impact of social media that leads into guidance and the negative impact that make a mislead, have not discussed through a helicopter view of it. Therefore, based on this issue and the research gap that appears, this study wants to delve deeper, to understand how social media can lead to understanding but also spread misleading information. Some inquiries are made for this study, namely:

1. What are the drivers that make spreading information on social media enhance the understanding of the halal issue?
2. How do Muslims react to misleading information about Halal issues that spread on social media?

Through a systematic review of the literature, this research comprehends how social media influences the comprehension of Halal. It seeks to grasp the guidance and information offered, and any potentially deceptive content. Moreover, this study aims not only to enhance conversations about topics related to Halal but also to provide valuable insights that can help society differentiate credible information, particularly concerning Halal matters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and its Ability to Spread Information

In general, the inherent essence of social media prompt users to openly share assertions and proof in assessing information. This attribute endows social media with a powerful position as an information center (Chyne et al., 2023). Its affordances can also give users a greater sense of autonomy, which supports users' spontaneous and psychological needs that derive from their own interests in using social media (Zhou et al., 2023).

Many studies found how social media effectively can drive many positive impacts, which lead to productivity, the awareness of many social issues, connectivity, and brand awareness that can reach target audience (Li et al., 2020; Mcshane et al., 2021; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Yet, the evaluation of information quality on these platforms was challenging, especially due to the user's

lack of a clear understanding of the backgrounds and expertise of those disseminating information (Chyne et al., 2023), which in the end led to misleading and widespread fake news.

To clarify, misleading information consists of different types of information. Initially, misinformation involves the unintentional spread of inaccurate or misleading information without any malicious intent. In contrast, disinformation involves the purposeful creation and dissemination of false information with malicious intent. Lastly, fake news pertains to incorrect or false news specifically crafted for dissemination on the Internet and intended to deceive users (Wei et al., 2023). A previous research study underscores a consistent trait of fake news that has persisted since the inception of research, namely a substantial volume of production leading to uncertainty and real-time propagation (Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

According to this issue, Baryshevtsev (2020) conducted research outlining four elements that influence the acceptance of misleading information. Initially, people tend to adhere to their beliefs and safeguard their own perspectives, even if it means avoiding conflicts despite knowing that the information is clearly incorrect. Second, stories that logically align and seem tended to be more persuasive and gain trust and acceptance. The study further highlights a third factor, emphasizing that the credibility of expertise, irrespective of the content, could contribute to the initial belief in the source of fake news. The final factor mentioned is that people tend to agree more with credible individuals, even when they disseminate misleading information. Overall, the link between strong beliefs and the acceptance of deception represents a potentially driving mechanism influenced by fake news.

In the context of Halal issues, the current impact of social media on the dissemination of Halal issues extends beyond just Halal food to encompass various related topics. Social media platforms have become pivotal in shaping conversations and sharing information about Halal practices, including tourism, finance, cosmetics, and fashion. They serve as dynamic spaces where individuals, communities, and businesses engage in discussions, share insights, and promote Halal products and services (Fachrurazi et al., 2023). This digital landscape has significantly amplified the reach and influence of Halal-related content, enabling a broader awareness and understanding of Halal principles and practices across diverse global audiences, which is the primary reason why this study, in the following section, will not limit the Halal issue in social media from one industry. Otherwise, this study aims to embrace all Halal issues, information, and topics discussed across social media.

Social Media and Halal Issues

According to Al-Qardawi (1997), the term of halal is an activity that is allowed according to Sharī'ah; there are no restrictions on its occurrence. Halal, particularly, is part of a lifestyle, which includes all of the products consumed or used by Muslim people. Proven, the implementation of halal has already become a part of the modern Muslim lifestyle, as shown by how awareness makes people consider the halal certificate and other things related to it (Putri & Abidinagoro, 2018). Wilson (2014) even presented a "hierarchy of Islamic marketing approaches", contending that the concept of halal not only provides significant prospects for expanding and transforming products but also introduces a new paradigm for both businesses and scholars.

The increased knowledge about halal products is primarily due to the significant expansion of social media platforms, where a wealth of content and information related to halal is readily available, offering easy access to the public. The changing from a traditional communication to a social media model is depicted clearly by Shah et al. (2020), where in the present social media framework, the traditional role of the marketer as the sole communicator and the consumer as a passive recipient has evolved. Instead, both the marketer and consumer now engage in a mutual relationship, actively sharing information and interacting among themselves. In addition to its

impact on spreading Halal understanding or even serving as an important source of Dawa and Quranic dissemination, the acceptability of social media in the religious corners of a Muslim society is mixed. Some academics have issued religious decrees (fatwas) condemning social media because of its role in facilitating trade allegations and the dissemination of falsehoods (Shah et al., 2020). On the other hand, the term “Halal Social Media” or “Shari’ah-compliant halal social media” is spread out, pointing out social media that are Shari’ah-compliant (Ibahrine, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

The study of Mafarja et al. (2023) highlight the significance of systematic literature review (SLR) as a crucial research methodology adopted across various disciplines. The SLR methodology facilitates a thorough synthesis of pertinent studies, thereby enriching the depth of the information presented. This aligns with the objectives of this study, which seeks to investigate the impact of social media on Halal's dissemination issues within society through different studies. Therefore, to ensure a thorough SLR, this study adhered to the PRISMA Guideline for reporting SLR (Page et al., 2021).

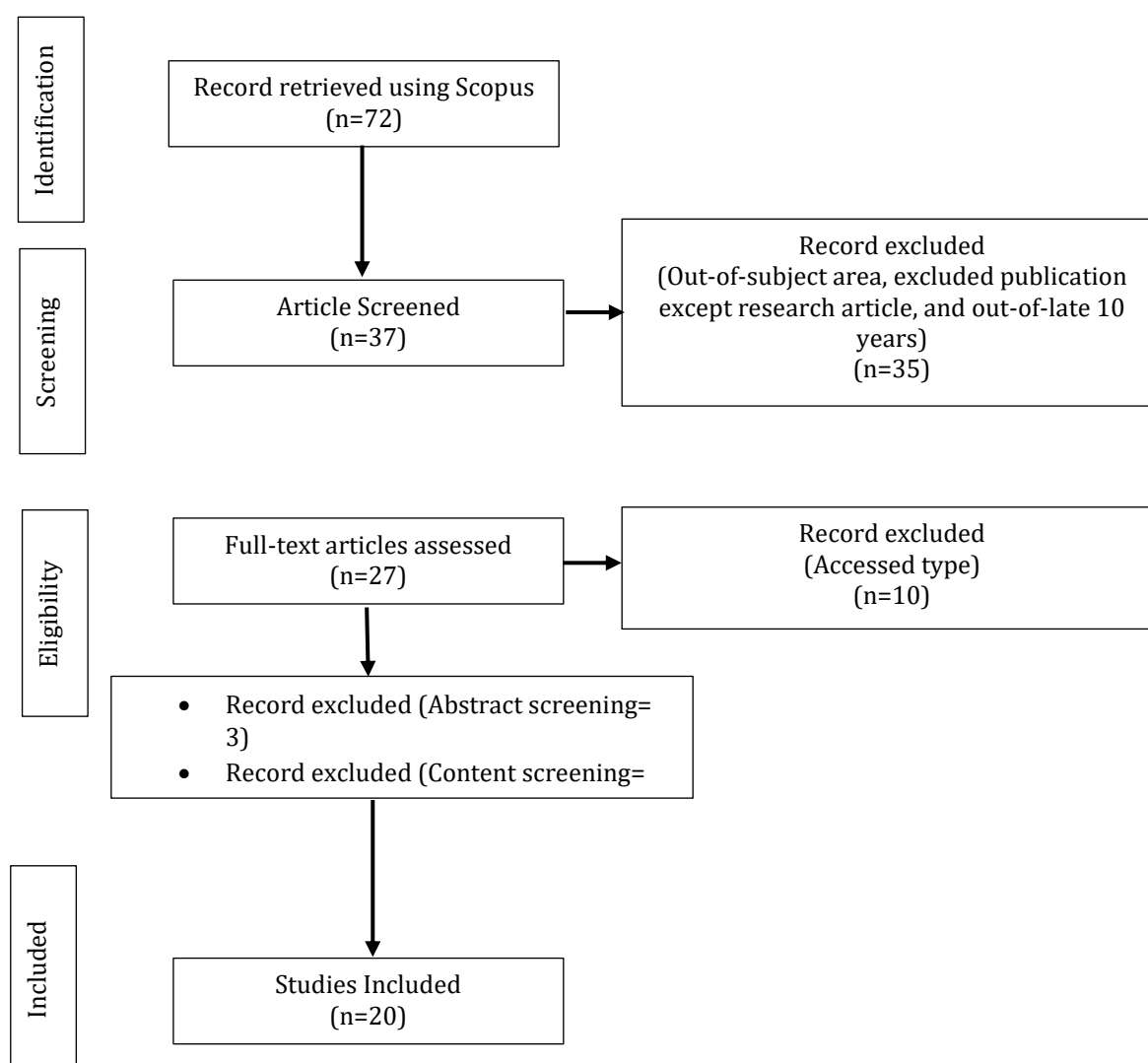


Figure 1. Systematic searching of data

In conducting this SLR, the study initiated the process by searching for pertinent publications

on ScienceDirect. The search yielded approximately 70,031 English-language articles addressing Halal issues, with no restriction on publication year. This abundance of literature demonstrates the evolving discourse on Halal, reflecting diverse perspectives on the subject matter. However, because this study only aims to focus on the Halal issue by involving the social media on its spreaders to the society, this study narrowed the search by applying the keywords, namely “Halal” AND “Social Media” and only involved the research articles written in English. In this study, there is no limitation on the publication year because the focus is on investigating the influence of social media on the dissemination of Halal-related topics within society. However, following the search process, the oldest publication found in the database dates back to 2016. This finding indirectly indicates the emergence of social media as a means of connecting and mediating Halal information to society.

Furthermore, as the initial keyword already provided specifically, around 72 articles were collected in the beginning. Then, the researcher screened the article on the basis of its type, year of publication, and subject area. In this phase, 37 articles were screened, and the researcher continued the process by checking the open access articles. Later, the abstract and content were screened. Finally, 20 articles were appropriate for the research analysis, and the process details are presented in Figure 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As introduced earlier, the primary goal of this study is to explore how social media posts contribute to and heighten public awareness of general Halal issues. In addition, this research investigates the responses of Muslim individuals to posts whose credibility is uncertain, potentially leading to future misinformation. These focal points are detailed in the subsequent subsections.

Following the filtration process, this study incorporated 20 relevant studies on the topic, with detailed information provided in Table 1. Without imposing limitations on the Halal industry, this investigation revealed the diverse impacts of social media on various Halal topics and industries. However, as indicated in the literature, the discourse remains predominantly centered around Halal food, representing the most prevalent association when considering the topic.

Table 1. Selected Halal Topics in Social Media Literature and the State of Art

Authors (year)	Domain	Aims of the Study
Rahim et al. (2022)	Halal Food	Understanding the Millennial generation particularly in obtaining halal foods by involving social media influencers
Mostafa (2021)	Halal Food	Understanding Information Diffusion in Halal Food through Cross-National Halal Food Twitter Networks
Mostafa (2018)	Halal Food	Attempted to investigate sentiments toward halal food expressed on social media
Sudaryanto et al. (2022)	Halal Skincare	Understanding brand effectiveness, high quality, and

Authors (year)	Domain	Aims of the Study
		persuasive reviews by social media influencers
Mostafa (2020)	Halal Food	Investigating the structure, dynamics, and sentiments of halal food tweets
Sangaji et al. (2021)	Halal Issue in the COVID-19 Vaccine	Aims to examine media coverage of COVID-19 and the resistance of the Indonesians to the vaccine
Putri and Abdinagoro (2018)	Halal Cosmetics	Aims to conduct a preliminary study of factors predicted to have a strong influence on the purchase intention toward halal cosmetics
Shah et al. (2020)	Halal Social Media	Examine the factors that affect brand satisfaction of a Muslim customer who makes purchases from selling outlets on social media
Jalil et al. (2021)	Halal Cosmetics	Effects of social media marketing strategies on repurchase intention among buyers of halal cosmetics manufactured in Malaysia
Wong et al. (2023)	Halal-related vaccine issue	Analysis of COVID-19 anti-vaccine sentiments in the Malaysian community
Lan and Navera (2022)	Anti-Islam Issues and Halal Food Rejection	Unearth the ideological underpinnings of the government discourse on state media, the sociopolitical structure of the society that the discourse reveals, and how the discourse on social media differs from and utilizes the government discourse
Feizollah et al. (2021)	Halal Tourism	Explores tweets from October 2008 to October 2018 related to halal tourism

Authors (year)	Domain	Aims of the Study
Othman et al. (2022)	Cryptocurrency	Identify some topic communities and analyze the sentiments of some well-known Muslim scholars and experts in Malaysia on topics related to cryptocurrency
Feizollah et al. (2019)	Halal Tourism and Halal Cosmetics	Describing how Twitter data are extracted, and the sentiment of the tweets on halal tourism and halal cosmetics are calculated
Kamarulzaman et al. (2016)	Halal Food	Exploring the role of social media in mediating and connecting religious communities and markets through a nographic study of the search for halal food in the U.S.
Fachrurazi et al. (2023)	Halal Product	Investigate the effect of e-WoM behavior in Muslim social media on building a halal brand image and its influence on purchase intention
Sulaiman et al. (2022)	Halal Food	Aim to collect, label, aggregate, cluster, analyze, and map halal food images, text, and social tagging on Instagram
Jenol and Pazil (2023)	Halal Related to the Vaccine Issue	Analyzing tweets from February 2020 to February 2021 using the Twitter API, this paper highlights the discussion of the halal status of COVID-19 vaccines on Twitter.
Feizollah et al. (2022)	Halal related to the Vaccine Issue	Aims: To analyze Facebook and Twitter data to understand the discourse related to halal vaccines using aspect-based sentiment

Authors (year)	Domain	Aims of the Study
		analysis and text emotion analysis.
Hossain et al. (2023)	Halal Restaurant	Examine and forecast customer evaluations for halal dining establishments using machine learning methodologies.

Social Media Guidance for Understanding Halal Issues and Encouraging Halal Product Usage

It should be noted that in social media, people tend to find and search information based on their interest and commonly, based on their needs. This condition also happened in the halal issues, where Feizollah et al. (2019) found that some halal topics such as Halal Food or Halal Cosmetic have higher discussion than other halal topics. Nonetheless, the following study by Feizollah et al. (2021) explained how this situation triggers a domino effect where discussions about one sector of the halal industry online can inadvertently spark further discussions in other sectors, significantly contributing to the widespread dissemination of Halal-related issues. Social media offers effortless access, allowing individuals to search for topics either directly through content creators or more broadly using washrags (Hossain et al., 2023).

Unexpectedly, in nations where Muslims are not the dominant religious group, information concerning Halal issues proliferates more on social media than in countries where Muslims represent the majority (Mostafa, 2018). This situation illustrates how, on a macro level, social media platforms can influence and regulate the connection between religion, the market, and consumption in several significant ways. These include facilitating discussions about commitment and faith standards, acting as a community-driven judge of criteria, aiding in the construction of identities, and mitigating the marginalization often experienced by minority groups (Kamarulzaman et al., 2016).

However, besides interaction between Muslim people on social media, only a few central actors within close-knit communities control the flow of halal information, for example, in the halal food context (Mostafa, 2021). This situation demonstrates that despite the abundance of available information, unclear aspects concerning Halal issues are not disseminated randomly. Othman et al. (2022) even emphasize how for particular issues that are still under debate, the involvement of Muslim scholars, experts, or influencers in particular areas plays an important role in influencing other Muslim beliefs in those issues. Influencers sharing information, raising awareness, or endorsing Halal products who share a similar religious background tend to be perceived as more trustworthy. This is due to the belief that their sincerity and credibility align with the audience's faith and values (Shah et al., 2020). In particular, regarding purchasing behavior, someone who has a strong confidence in his/her religion is more inclined to respect and adhere to religious regulations (Iranmanesh et al., 2020).

The way social media works in the Halal issues discussion is similar to other issues discussion in this platform; nonetheless, the main difference is the motivation that relies on the people. In fact, altruism and moral obligation, two motivations that stemmed from religious teachings, were significant predictors of Muslims' behavior toward sharing their experiences regarding halal brands on social media. This e-WoM, in turn, strengthens the Halal Brand Image, provides differentiation, gives reason to buy, and most importantly, conveys messages that these brands are

truly halal (Fachrurazi et al., 2023). In accordance with the increasing awareness among Halal consumers, the purchase and launch of Halal products or even Halal brands in particular also arises due to the rising market demand. This condition might already be aware by the brands because while promoting a Halal product, the brand will apply efficient brand management of the use of social media platforms will help increase brand awareness (Feizollah et al., 2019). In conclusion, Halal social media positively impacts brand satisfaction of Muslim customers, which is moderated by religiosity (Shah et al., 2020).

Reflecting this situation, several studies have indicated that community and homophily detection serve as crucial factors that influence the correlation between social media and the dissemination of Halal-related matters (Mostafa, 2020, 2021). These studies also explained how halal subgroups may be conceptualized as social media communities because each of such clusters forms a subgroup of highly interconnected actors who share the same interests or ideological standpoints and occupy the same virtual space. With social media serving as a prime illustration of homophily, individuals' networks tend to be more uniform than diverse. This results in more frequent communication between people who share similarities than with those who hold different viewpoints or characteristics (McPherson et al., 2001).

Misleading Information in Social Media and Responses from the Muslim Community

A study by Lan and Navera (2022) pointed out that in social media, the relationship between the interlocutor and the audience is rarely unidirectional, and upon the reception of the message, the audience may then re-produce the discourse (Shah et al., 2020). This condition also makes the abundance of information in social media often misleading, especially because everyone can give their opinion, regardless of their background and understanding rate of the issue. Related to the Halal issue, one of the major debates that explode priorly is regarding the issue of the COVID-19 vaccine's Halal status. Due to this news, society—especially in the Muslim majority country—split into two sides, where some of them accept to get vaccinated because the pandemic is under emergency situation, while the other side resists and becomes anti-vaccine (Wong et al., 2023). During this moment, a study by Feizollah et al. (2022) analyzed how trust became the top-notch emotion in the Halal issue post regarding Halal Vaccination Discourse, followed by anticipation and fear. Otherwise, Sangaji et al. (2021) also found that non-halal vaccine content will get a strong reaction from netizens rather than other topic at this time.

Regrettably, alongside readily available information, this circumstance also produces a trend where people have a lower intention and frequently depend on flimsy and ineffective heuristics. For example, instead of evaluating the substance of a message, they might gage its credibility solely on the basis of its length (Lim, 2013). While not everyone behaves in this manner, this approach contributes to the dissemination of misleading information because many individuals opt to view shorter clips (such as Instagram reels or TikTok content) rather than engaging with comprehensive information, which might require more time.

The topic of COVID-19 vaccination is just a subject, along with other halal-related information, frequently resulting in misleading information. This manipulated news can lead to confusion, particularly concerning the Halal status of products. A lack of understanding about what is considered Halal is a contributing factor that leads to Muslims hesitating to share information and being more susceptible to trusting false news that continues to circulate on social media (Pozlan et al., 2023). However, from these issues, it can be concluded that the information related to Halal issues tends to be considered important and sensitive, which can make the public react faster compared to other information outside this topic where the public can respond more calmly, if the information has not confirmed yet by the authorities (Sangaji et al., 2021). Moreover, the most widespread pattern in the dissemination of misleading information about Halal involves the

creation of religious narratives aimed at substantiating scientifically inaccurate and false claims regarding a specific topic circulating on social media (Jenol & Pazil, 2023).

In the end, Muslim people tend to express caution when they find halal-related information on social media, which can lead to community resistance (Sangaji et al., 2021), especially regarding purchasing behavior, someone who has a strong confidence in his religion is more inclined to respect and adhere to religious regulations (Iranmanesh et al., 2020). It should be noted that the dissemination of misleading information has many negative impacts, especially for the halal industry players, such as loss of customer trust and damage to the reputation of brands, which affect financial sustainability.

These discoveries demonstrate how the rapid dissemination of misleading information or even fake news, particularly in the context of Halal, necessitates a more cautious approach among Muslim communities when selecting and sifting through information. The impact of misleading information on the Halal industry relies heavily on the industry's effectiveness and proactive measures in addressing such misinformation. Simultaneously, policymakers, as official authorities, have displayed credibility in managing and coordinating the spread of misleading information. Hence, a significant collaboration between both parties is a proactive measure to prevent the occurrence of such issues. This collaboration involves the development of Halal awareness, fostering community cooperation to enhance understanding of Halal, and finally, reinforcing legislation by authorized bodies (Pozlan et al., 2023).

Future Research Suggestions on the Topic of Social Media Impact on Halal Issues

As social media emerges as a significant digital platform, a plethora of information is disseminated through it. The current study, particularly concerning Halal issues, has demonstrated how this platform facilitates community connectivity with Halal-related information, educates society about its principles, and disseminates misinformation, leading to potential misconceptions.

Despite the potential of social media to disseminate Halal issues, this topic remains ripe for further exploration. While the selected studies in this research offer valuable insights into the Halal discourse concerning social media, some aspects remain inadequately addressed, presenting numerous avenues for future research. Currently, discussions often center around the Muslim community without considering other religions. Future research should investigate whether the mechanisms identified in previous studies, whereby social media moderates the connection between religion and markets, are applicable to other religious groups and transnational communities.

Moreover, existing studies tend to approach the topic broadly, without considering specific community groups. This gap highlights the need for future research to explore how digital media influences the intersection of religious practices with class, race, region of origin, and gender. Furthermore, while current studies have analyzed Halal discourse on social media, they have not delved into the underlying dynamics that shape opinions on Halal issues in any topic that relates to it (i.e., halal food, halal cosmetic, and so on). This presents an opportunity to explore the reasons behind the formation of Halal sentiments, which could provide stakeholders with insights into the underlying factors influencing positive or negative opinions regarding Halal issues.

CONCLUSIONS

In the current digital era, this study acknowledges the significant role of social media in fostering increased awareness of Halal issues, which was the initial focus of this research. The investigation process in this study revealed that shared interests and needs serve as the primary catalyst for more frequent communication among individuals with similar concerns, as opposed to those with differing interests. Muslim individuals sharing Halal-related information on social media

were primarily motivated by altruism and a sense of moral responsibility. These factors acted as catalysts, fostering the emergence of electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) interactions and the subsequent dissemination of information.

However, this study also highlights the sensitivity of the Halal issue among Muslim individuals, which often results in negative sentiments when surprising or unverified information surfaces, particularly due to the construction of religious narratives justifying scientifically misleading or false claims on social media. This study delineates various instances, such as concerns about non-halal ingredients in food or controversies surrounding COVID-19 vaccines. Despite occurring at different times, both situations led to more fervent community resistance. When misinformation arises within the context of Halal issues, the resistance becomes more intense compared with situations unrelated to Halal matters.

The research conducted has successfully addressed the initial objectives of this study, which are to examine the impact of social media on enhancing understanding of Halal issues, its potential for disseminating misleading information, and the responses of Muslim individuals to these dynamics. By presenting the current state of affairs, offering novel insights, and identifying potential areas for further research, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between social media and discussions on Halal issues, particularly within the context of the evolving digital landscape.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The current studies provided novelty and valuable insight into the impact of social media on Halal issues, which can contribute to serving as a benchmark for enhancing discourse on this topic and encourage future studies' exploration of how social media catalyzes the development of understanding around Halal issues.

However, in addition to the insights presented here, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the current study, which may warrant further exploration in future research. Primarily, this study offers a general overview based on reactions observed across various social media platforms without restricting the analysis to specific countries. Future studies could investigate social media impact more precisely by differentiating between predominantly Muslim countries and those with minority Muslim populations.

Second, as this study solely employed a systematic literature review (SLR) as the method for data collection, future research could explore alternative methods, such as case studies or conducting in-depth interviews with individuals involved in disseminating Halal-related information—ranging from social influencers to those engaged in debates when misinformation spreads. Examining this issue from various generational perspectives could also enrich our understanding, considering the varying usage patterns and responses to specific issues across different generations in the context of high social media interaction.

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