




A Qualitative Case Study of Halal Certification as a Trust Signal in Indonesian Muslim Consumers' Purchase Intentions toward Boocha Booms Kombucha

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Abstract

This qualitative exploratory case study examines how 12 Indonesian Muslim consumers interpreted halal certification, trust, and purchase intention toward Boocha Booms, a local kombucha brand that had not obtained formal halal certification during the study period. As a fermented beverage that may contain naturally occurring ethanol traces, kombucha creates halal ambiguity because consumers must assess not only ethanol percentage but also ingredients, production processes, safety, institutional certification, and brand transparency. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and supporting product-verification evidence from a laboratory ethanol test. The laboratory result was treated as contextual documentation rather than as the sole basis for determining halal status. Thematic analysis supported by NVivo identified three interpretive positions among participants: strict rejection of any ethanol trace, conditional acceptance when the product met MUI-related ethanol thresholds and other halal requirements, and unawareness or indifference shaped by the product's health-oriented image. Trust emerged as an important interpretive mechanism connecting perceived halal assurance, brand transparency, and purchase consideration, rather than as a statistically tested mediator. The findings suggest that formal halal certification, transparent ethanol communication, and consumer education may reduce uncertainty among the studied participants. Because the evidence comes from a small qualitative case study, the findings should be understood as context-specific exploratory insights rather than generalizable claims about all Muslim consumers.

Keywords: *Halal Certification, Halal Trust Signal, Fermented Beverage, Ethanol Trace, Kombucha, Qualitative Case Study, Muslim Consumer Perception*

INTRODUCTION

Kombucha, a lightly effervescent, fermented sugared tea touted for its probiotic and functional-health benefits, has experienced rapid growth as part of the global functional-beverage and wellness trend, with notable market expansion in Indonesia and the Southeast Asian region. Market analyses indicate that the global kombucha market is growing strongly and that the Indonesian market in particular has shown sustained expansion and promising forecasts in recent years, reflecting rising consumer interest in gut-health and natural fermented drinks ([Polaris Market Research, 2025](#)). Despite its popularity, kombucha occupies a contested space between health food and a fermented product that can contain trace ethanol as a natural by-product of fermentation. Empirical analyses of commercial kombucha reveal a range of ethanol concentrations depending on production and storage conditions. Studies report that kombucha can contain ethanol levels from trace amounts up to several percent by volume in some cases and that ethanol content can increase during storage or under suboptimal temperature control. These technical realities raise practical concerns for certain consumer groups (e.g., pregnant women) and complicate the

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product's halal status for some Muslim consumers (Jang et al., 2021). In this context, kombucha represents a fermented functional beverage whose naturally occurring ethanol traces may create halal ambiguity, particularly among Muslim consumers who associate fermentation and alcohol-related terminology with potential religious concerns.

Halal, as prescribed by Islamic law, extends beyond food to encompass multiple aspects of life, including finance, education, and lifestyle. In the context of food consumption, halal and tayyib products embody quality, safety, and ethical responsibility. The concept emphasizes not only physical well-being but also spiritual intentions, such as seeking divine approval and avoiding harm to humans, animals, and the environment (Batu, 2012). Initially, the halal discourse centered on the prohibition of pork and alcohol, but contemporary debates have expanded to hidden ingredients, contamination risks, and inadequate slaughtering practices. In Muslim-minority contexts, credible halal certification functions as an essential guarantee of compliance for consumers (Ahmed et al., 2018).

In the Indonesian context, the world's largest Muslim-majority market, halal assurance plays a central role in food and beverage consumption decisions. The Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) provides regulatory and normative guidance: under current MUI interpretation, fermented beverage products containing less than 0.5% ethanol by volume may be regarded as legally halal, provided no other prohibited ingredients are used and the product is medically harmless, though scholarly and community debate persists. This tension between technical thresholds and social/religious acceptability contributes to consumer uncertainty, particularly when formal halal certification is absent or unclear on product labels (Polaris Market Research, 2025). Moreover, cases of doubtful or unsafe practices, such as porcine-based gelatin in confectioneries or non-halal additives in processed foods, have heightened skepticism among Muslim consumers about whether marketed halal products truly comply with Sharia standards (Ekoyudho, 2021). These concerns highlight that even in Muslim-majority countries, halal status cannot be assumed without strong certification and transparent regulation (Aslan & Aslan, 2018).

Existing literature on halal certification and consumer behaviour indicates that halal certification often functions as a credibility cue that reduces information asymmetry and increases consumer trust and purchase intention in halal-sensitive markets. However, most empirical studies focus on mainstream food products or quantitative measures of purchase intention; there is limited qualitative, case-based research exploring how halal certification (or its absence) shapes the meanings, trust dynamics, and buying decisions of Muslim consumers toward emerging fermented beverages such as kombucha. Prior halal consumer-behavior studies generally emphasize mainstream halal foods or employ quantitative intention-based models, while comparatively little attention has been given to how consumers qualitatively interpret uncertified fermented beverages in situations where technical ethanol evidence, religious guidance, and brand communication are not fully aligned. Therefore, this study addresses that gap by investigating how halal certification and consumer trust interact in shaping purchase intention for a fermented beverage that lies at the boundary between health and religious acceptability.

Theoretically, this study extends the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) by incorporating consumer trust as a mediating construct between halal certification and purchase intention, specifically in the context of functional fermented beverages. This conceptual extension highlights how institutional credibility (through certification) and affective trust jointly influence behavioral intention in halal-sensitive markets.

This study addresses that gap by empirically exploring consumer perceptions, trust, and ambiguity around halal status in the case of BooCha Booms, a nascent Indonesian kombucha brand, using qualitative case-study methods (Koc et al., 2025). BooCha Booms is not positioned as representative of all kombucha brands or all Indonesian SMEs. Instead, it is selected as an

information-rich case because it combines three analytically relevant conditions: a fermented beverage category associated with trace ethanol, the absence of formal halal certification during the study period, and a consumer-facing brand identity emphasizing natural and health-related values. These characteristics make the case particularly suitable for exploring how participants negotiate uncertainty, trust, and purchase consideration in a halal-sensitive context. Furthermore, the case is relevant because Boocho Booms operates as an Indonesian UMKM within a Muslim-majority market where consumers may expect halal assurance even for health-oriented products.

Throughout this study, references to “Muslim consumers” are interpreted specifically as referring to the 12 participants involved in this qualitative case study unless broader claims are explicitly supported by previous literature. Accordingly, this study does not seek to generalize its findings to the wider Indonesian Muslim population.

This research aims to:

1. To explore how the interviewed Indonesian Muslim consumers interpret the halal status of Boocho Booms kombucha in relation to fermentation-related ethanol traces.
2. To examine how formal halal certification is perceived as a trust signal in this case.
3. To interpret how consumer trust appears to shape purchase consideration within the participant narratives.
4. To derive practical implications for SMEs regarding halal communication and quality-control practices from the empirical findings rather than treating these implications as a separate population-level test.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do the interviewed Indonesian Muslim consumers interpret the halal status of Boocho Booms kombucha in light of fermentation-related ethanol traces and the absence of formal halal certification?
2. In what ways do participants perceive formal halal certification as contributing to trust in Boocho Booms kombucha?
3. How does trust appear in participant accounts of trial, repeat purchase, and purchase hesitation?
4. What practical halal communication and quality-control implications can be derived from participant perceptions, observation, and document analysis for SMEs in similar fermented-beverage contexts?

Empirically grounded in interviews, observation, and document analysis, the study contributes both to academic debates on halal signaling in novel food categories and to practical strategies for UMKM seeking to navigate pro–contra perceptions in Indonesia’s demanding halal marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kombucha

Kombucha is a traditional fermented tea produced by fermenting sweetened tea with a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY). Microbiological and biochemical studies ([Dufresne & Farnworth, 2000](#); [Jayabalan, 2014](#)) describe kombucha as a dynamic matrix whose composition (organic acids, polyphenols, vitamins, live microbes, and trace ethanol) depends on starter microbiota, raw material (e.g., black vs. green tea), fermentation time/temperature, and post-bottling handling. Empirical lab analyses (e.g., [Jang et al., 2021](#)) document broad variability in ethanol levels (from trace amounts to >1% ABV in some cases), and show that ethanol can increase during storage or with additional fermentable flavorings. The literature therefore positions kombucha as an “emerging functional beverage” with both strong health-oriented appeal and specific product risks: (1) variability in biochemical composition that affects health claims and

safety; and (2) regulatory ambiguity across jurisdictions (e.g., different ABV thresholds for non-alcoholic labeling in US, EU, Canada) that complicates market positioning (Food Standards authorities, various reports cited in sector reviews). From a consumer perspective, these technical properties create information asymmetry: consumers cannot directly verify live cultures, biochemical composition, or ethanol content from packaging alone. This sets up kombucha as a credence good in practice (i.e., product attributes not easily verifiable by consumers), which amplifies the role of third-party signals such as certification and labeling in shaping perceived safety and acceptability. Within credence goods theory, halal status, ethanol level, ingredient sourcing, contamination risk, and process compliance are interpreted as product attributes that consumers cannot fully evaluate even after consumption, thereby increasing reliance on institutional signals and trusted certification mechanisms. Implication for this study: kombucha's biochemical variability and labeling/regulatory ambiguity make halal status a nontrivial issue for Muslim consumers, especially when ethanol traces are present or not disclosed. For Boocho Booms, these product properties frame consumer uncertainty that halal certification must address.

Halal Certification

Research on halal certification consistently frames it as both a regulatory mechanism and a symbolic credibility cue. Halal certification processes assess inputs (raw materials), processing (GMP/GHP/HACCP), supply-chain handling, and organizational practices before issuing a halal certificate (Wahyuni et al.; KASCERT, SZUTEST summaries). Studies across contexts (Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, and beyond) indicate two central roles of halal certification:

1. Technical/assurance role: certification documents compliance with specified procedural and material criteria (e.g., no porcine derivatives, approved slaughtering, hygiene controls).
2. Signal/marketing role: the halal logo functions as a market cue that reduces information asymmetry for consumers who cannot physically verify halalness ([Anggarkasih & Resma, 2022](#)).

However, empirical studies also highlight limits and tensions. Misuse of halal logos, weak enforcement, cross-contamination risks, and import of non-compliant goods mean that certification is necessary but not always sufficient to secure consumer trust ([Aslan & Aslan, 2018](#); [Manap, 2021](#); [Ahmed et al., 2018](#)). Certification costs and administrative burdens ([Türker, 2020](#)) further complicate adoption for SMEs/UMKM, even if certification produces measurable business benefits when recognized by the market ([Giyanti & Indriastiningsih, 2019](#)). The halal label functions as a credence attribute ([Darby & Karni, 1973](#)), which consumers must rely upon third-party certification to evaluate. In signaling terms ([Spence, 1973](#), conceptual lineage), halal certification is a costly signal whose market effectiveness depends on institutional credibility and consumer awareness. In this study, Signaling Theory is used specifically to explain why formal halal certification may function as a credible external signal for product attributes that consumers cannot directly verify, particularly in the case of fermented beverages associated with ethanol ambiguity. For Boocho Booms (a UMKM kombucha), obtaining recognized halal certification could operate as a decisive credibility signal, but the effectiveness of that signal will depend on recognition of the certifier, clarity of communication about ethanol, and broader institutional trust in certification agencies.

Building on this, the present study integrates Signaling Theory ([Spence, 1973](#)) and the Theory of Planned Behavior ([Ajzen, 1991](#)) to conceptualize halal certification as a market signal that shapes perceived behavioral control and attitudes through the mediating role of trust. However, in this qualitative case study, the Theory of Planned Behavior is used only as a background framework for understanding attitudes, subjective norms, perceived risk, and purchase consideration rather than as a quantitatively tested causal model. Halal certification is not

interpreted as directly increasing perceived behavioral control; instead, participant narratives suggest that certification primarily shapes attitudes toward product acceptability, reduces perceived religious and safety risk, and supports confidence in purchase decisions.

Purchase Intention in Halal Contexts

A growing body of empirical research identifies several antecedents of halal purchase intention: halal awareness, perceived product quality, perceived value/price, religiosity, attitude, and social norms (Iranmanesh et al., 2020; Rachmawati & Suroso, 2022; Nurhasanah & Hariyani, 2017; Ali et al., 2020). Key syntheses from the literature:

1. Halal awareness and brand recognition increase the salience of the halal attribute, moderating relationships between product knowledge and purchase decisions (Rachmawati & Suroso, 2022).
2. Perceived quality and health benefits (particularly for functional beverages) operate as strong motivators for trial and repeat purchase (Vargas et al., 2021; Özdemir & Çon, 2017).
3. Price can positively or negatively affect purchase intention depending on perceived value: reasonable price strengthens intention when consumers see value in quality and halal assurance (Fatmi et al., 2020).
4. Religiosity and subjective norms shape motivation: more religious consumers are more sensitive to halal credibility and may require formal certification before purchase (Koc et al., 2025; Hosseini et al., 2019).

Several studies also point to differences in halal product adoption in Muslim-minority vs Muslim-majority settings: in non-Muslim countries, halal certification has extra value as an assurance mechanism; in Muslim-majority settings, certification still matters because of concerns about contamination and misuse of logos (Aslan & Aslan, 2018). Purchase intention for BooCha Booms among Muslim consumers will likely be a function of (a) perceived health benefits of kombucha, (b) awareness and recognition of halal certification, (c) religiosity and subjective norms, and (d) perceived ethanol risk. These variables frame the explanatory model to be explored qualitatively (how consumers narrate trade-offs) and, if quantitative, to be tested formally. In this framework, consumer trust acts as the key psychological mediator through which halal certification influences behavioral intention, consistent with extensions of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), where trust shapes both attitude and perceived behavioral control. Nevertheless, this study does not claim to statistically test mediation relationships among halal certification, trust, and purchase intention. Rather, trust is interpreted qualitatively as an explanatory or interpretive mechanism reflected in participant accounts of confidence, hesitation, trial, and repeat purchase behavior.

Customer Trust

Trust in halal markets is multi-sourced: consumers may trust certification bodies, government agencies, manufacturers, religious authorities, or peers (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Abu Bakar et al., 2017; Ozkan, 2022). Trust operates at multiple levels:

1. Institutional trust (in certifiers like JAKIM, MUI, or accredited agencies) determines whether a halal logo is viewed as meaningful.
2. Brand trust (trust in the producer's practices, transparency, and product quality) mediates how certification affects purchase decisions (Ali et al., 2018; Alam & Sayuti, 2011).
3. Interpersonal and religious trust (recommendations by religious leaders or community influencers) also shape acceptability, especially in ambiguous product categories.

Empirical work finds that trust often mediates the effect of certification on purchase intention: certification > trust > intention (Alam & Sayuti, 2011; Muflih & Juliana, 2021). However,

the mediation strength can vary: in some contexts, attitude or perceived safety may better explain intention, reducing the direct power of trust (Wiranti et al., 2023; Ustaahmetoglu & Toklu, 2015). The role of information asymmetry (credence attributes) heightens the importance of trust because consumers cannot directly verify product halalness. Trust theories in consumer research (e.g., Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol, 2002) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) are relevant: trust shapes attitudes and perceived behavioral control, which feed into intention formation. Also, credence goods theory underlines why trust and third-party certification are critical. Understanding how BooCha Booms can build institutional and brand trust is central. Qualitative exploration should map which actors (MUI, local ustadz, retailers, peer reviews) are most trusted and how trust interacts with perceived technical risks (ethanol). Accordingly, Trust Theory in this study is used to interpret how participants understand certification, brand transparency, institutional credibility, and community endorsement as sources of confidence or hesitation in relation to kombucha consumption.

In the Indonesian context, halal assurance is regulated under the authority of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), which functions both as a religious institution and as a certifying body for halal food and beverages. MUI's Fatwa Commission has stipulated specific guidelines for fermented products: beverages containing ethanol levels of less than 0.5% alcohol by volume (ABV) that arise naturally as a by-product of fermentation may be classified as halal, provided that (1) the raw materials and additives are halal, (2) the product is safe (non-intoxicating and medically harmless), and (3) the ethanol is not intentionally added for intoxicating effect (MUI, Fatwa No. 10/2018; see also Batu, 2012). This interpretation draws on the Islamic legal principle of *istihalah*, where the original prohibited substance undergoes a change in form and loses its harmful or intoxicating properties. In this manuscript, *istihalah* is used only as a religious interpretive and contextual lens for understanding why some participants may accept naturally occurring ethanol traces when the product remains non-intoxicating, below the relevant regulatory threshold, free from prohibited ingredients, and medically safe. It is not presented as an independent legal ruling produced by this study, nor does it replace formal halal certification procedures. In practice, however, debates continue among scholars and consumers: some view any trace of ethanol as problematic for halal compliance, while others accept MUI's technical threshold as sufficient. Such debates are particularly salient in the case of kombucha, which is positioned as a functional health drink but whose ethanol content may fluctuate during storage and distribution (Jang et al., 2021). For Muslim consumers, this creates both regulatory clarity and social ambiguity: technically, kombucha with <0.5% ethanol could qualify as halal under MUI guidelines, but uncertainty persists when labeling does not explicitly mention ethanol levels or when formal MUI certification is absent. As a result, halal certification from MUI (or BPJPH after the 2019 Halal Law implementation) plays a decisive role not only in regulatory compliance but also in shaping consumer trust and acceptance.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework guiding this study. It integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973), and Trust Theory (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002), positioning consumer trust as the mediating mechanism through which halal certification affects purchase intention, moderated by religiosity and halal awareness.

To reduce theoretical overcrowding, the framework is interpreted through three complementary lenses: Signaling Theory, credence goods theory, and Trust Theory. The Theory of Planned Behavior is retained only as a supporting background framework for understanding attitudes, subjective norms, perceived risk, and purchase consideration within participant narratives. Accordingly, this framework does not claim to test causal mediation among halal

certification, trust, and purchase intention; rather, it qualitatively interprets how participants connect halal certification, perceived risk, institutional credibility, brand transparency, and purchase consideration in their own accounts.

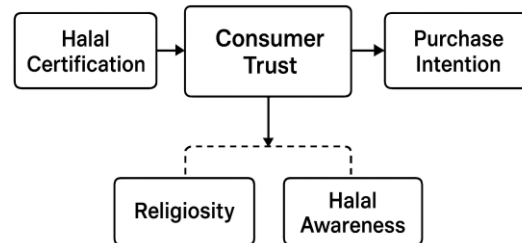


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Boocha Booms was selected as a case study because it represents an emerging small and medium enterprise (SME/UMKM) producing kombucha in Indonesia, operating without formal halal certification at the time of study. This setting provides a unique opportunity to explore how consumers negotiate uncertainty about halal status in novel product categories and how certification (real or potential) is perceived as a trust signal. Within the 12 participants, the analysis distinguished between participants who had purchased or consumed Boocha Booms, those who had tried kombucha but were not regular Boocha Booms consumers, and those who were aware of kombucha mainly through peers, social media, or product displays. This distinction was considered important because trust and purchase consideration varied according to direct experience, product familiarity, and halal sensitivity.





Figure 1. BooCha Booms kombucha production

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through three complementary methods to capture diverse perspectives and triangulate findings:

Semi-structured interviews

1. Conducted with 12 Muslim consumers in urban Indonesia (Jakarta and Bandung) who are aware of kombucha or have tried BooCha Booms.
2. Interview questions covered themes such as: perceptions of kombucha as a beverage, knowledge and concerns about ethanol content, expectations toward halal certification, trust in BooCha Booms as a local UMKM brand, and purchase decision processes.
3. Interviews lasted 45–60 minutes and were audio-recorded with participants' consent.
4. Participants were approached through urban consumer networks, product-related contacts, community referrals, and online communication channels using a combination of online and offline recruitment methods. No coercive incentive was used. Before each interview, participants received an explanation regarding the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Consent was obtained before audio recording and before the use of anonymized quotations in the manuscript.
5. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian or mixed Indonesian-English, depending on participant comfort, using face-to-face or online modes according to participant availability. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, checked against the recordings for accuracy, and anonymized using participant codes. Where participant expressions were translated into English for manuscript presentation, the translated wording was checked against the original Indonesian statements to preserve interpretive accuracy.
6. The final sample size of 12 participants was considered sufficient based on informational redundancy within the scope of this exploratory case study. Interviews continued until the main themes of strict rejection, conditional acceptance, unawareness or indifference, certification-based assurance, transparency expectations, and peer or community endorsement were repeatedly observed, and no substantially new themes emerged from

the final interviews. This was treated as thematic saturation within the bounded case rather than statistical representativeness.

Participant observation

1. Observation was carried out at Boochoa Booms sales points (offline booths, café partnerships, and community events) to examine how halal issues and product attributes were communicated in practice (packaging, labeling, seller explanations).
2. Field notes captured consumer questions, reactions, and conversations related to halalness, health benefits, and trust.
3. Observation specifically focused on Boochoa Booms sales points, product displays, packaging, seller explanations, and consumer questions related to halalness, health benefits, fermentation, and trust. Field notes recorded the setting, observed communication cues, the presence or absence of halal labeling, and examples of consumer hesitation or inquiry. These observations were not treated as numerical evidence but were used to contextualize interview themes and assess whether brand communication aligned with participant concerns in practice.

Document analysis

1. Analysis of relevant documents, including Boochoa Booms' promotional materials, social media posts, MUI halal certification guidelines, and previous fatwas on fermented beverages.
2. These documents provided insight into institutional positions and brand communication strategies.
3. Documents were selected because they were directly relevant to halal ambiguity, brand communication, or product verification. These included Boochoa Booms promotional materials, social media posts, MUI-related halal guidance concerning ethanol in fermented products, and laboratory ethanol reports. The documents were analyzed by identifying claims regarding ingredients, fermentation, health benefits, halal assurance, and ethanol content, and then comparing these claims with interview themes and observation notes.

This multi-source data collection allowed cross-validation and enriched interpretation of consumer perspectives (Patton, 2015). To ensure research quality, this study followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation (interviews, observation, and documents), member-checking (participants reviewed summaries of their interview responses), and prolonged engagement with the field. Transferability was supported by providing a thick description of the case context (Boochoa Booms as UMKM and kombucha as a contested beverage in Indonesia). Dependability and confirmability were addressed by maintaining an audit trail of interview transcripts, coding decisions, and field notes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), appropriate for exploring perceptions and meanings in qualitative data. The process involved:

1. Familiarization: reading interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents repeatedly.
2. Coding: identifying relevant codes such as "ethanol concern," "halal logo as trust signal," "brand transparency," and "religious assurance."
3. Theme development: clustering codes into broader themes (e.g., "ambiguity of halal status," "institutional trust vs. brand trust," "certification as purchase driver").

4. Iterative refinement: themes were compared across data sources to ensure consistency and groundedness.

NVivo software version 12 was used to manage and organize qualitative data. Reflexivity was maintained by keeping a researcher's journal to minimize personal bias in interpretation. Coding combined inductive and sensitizing deductive approaches. Initial codes were generated through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes, while sensitizing concepts such as certification signal, perceived risk, institutional trust, brand trust, and purchase consideration were informed by the literature review. NVivo 12 was used to store transcripts, organize codes, retrieve coded segments, compare themes across participant categories, and maintain analytic consistency. However, the software itself was not treated as establishing rigor; rigor was supported through systematic coding, memo writing, source comparison, and iterative theme refinement.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines for qualitative research. Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants, anonymity was preserved through pseudonyms, and sensitive religious perspectives were treated with respect and confidentiality. Ethical approval was obtained through a self-administered ethical protocol in accordance with the ethical standards for social research, including informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation. The study relied on internal researcher ethical assessment procedures rather than claiming formal institutional ethical approval unless such approval is separately documented. Ethical safeguards included informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymization, confidentiality, respectful handling of religious perspectives, and secure storage of interview data.

Framework of the Research Process

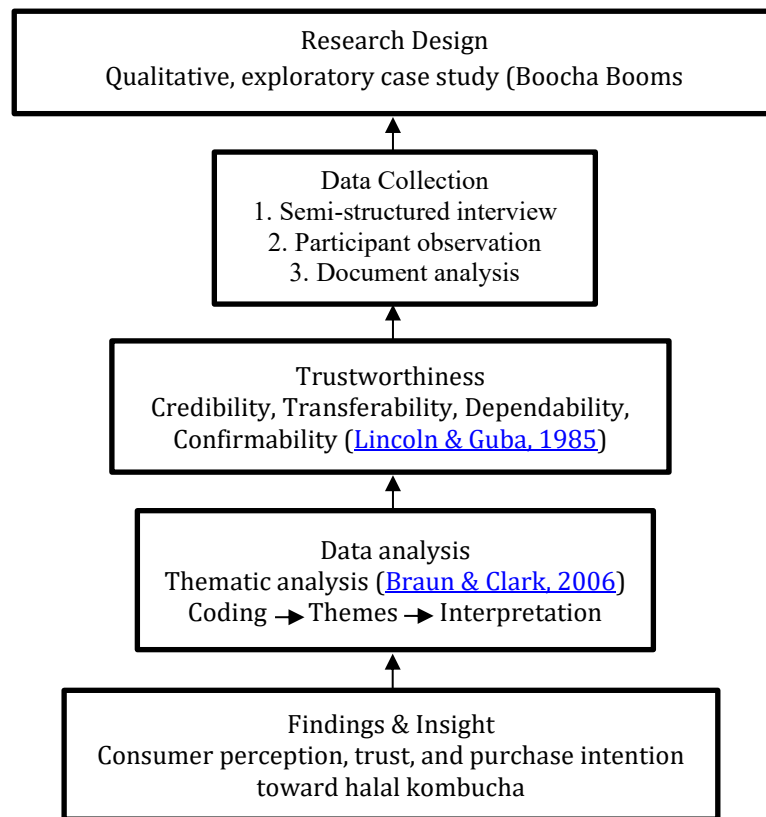


Figure 1. Framework of the Research Process

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Demographics

A total of 12 Muslim consumers were interviewed to explore their perceptions of BooCha Booms kombucha in relation to halal certification, trust, and purchase intentions. The participants represented diverse demographic characteristics in terms of age, gender, education, and frequency of kombucha consumption. The participant group included actual consumers of BooCha Booms, participants who had tried kombucha but were not regular BooCha Booms consumers, and participants who were aware of kombucha mainly through peers, social media, or product displays. These distinctions were treated analytically because levels of direct experience, familiarity, and halal sensitivity varied across participants. Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n = 12)

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education Level	Kombucha Consumption	Halal Level
P1	Male	22	Student	Undergraduate	Occasionally	High
P2	Female	25	Photographer	Undergraduate	Monthly	Medium
P3	Male	28	Entrepreneur	Undergraduate	Rarely	High
P4	Female	31	Homemaker	High School	Rarely	High
P5	Male	35	Business Owner	Postgraduate	Occasionally	Very High
P6	Female	24	Student	High School	Weekly	Medium
P7	Male	40	Business Owner	High School	Rarely	High
P8	Female	29	Nurse	Undergraduate	Monthly	Medium
P9	Male	33	Employee	Undergraduate	Occasionally	High
P10	Female	27	Photographer	Undergraduate	Rarely	Low
P11	Male	22	Photographer	High School	Rarely	Low
P12	Female	36	Teacher	Undergraduate	Occasionally	High

Observation data from BooCha Booms product displays and packaging indicated that the brand emphasized natural ingredients, artisanal fermentation, and health-oriented branding through minimalist yet colorful visual presentation. However, visible communication at the point of consumer evaluation did not include a formal halal logo or a clear explanation regarding fermentation-related ethanol traces. This contextual evidence supported participant statements that packaging and seller communication could either reduce or intensify uncertainty, particularly among consumers unfamiliar with kombucha fermentation.



Figure 2. Boocha Booms kombucha bottles and packaging

As shown in Figure 2, Boocha Booms presents its product in minimalist yet colorful packaging that highlights natural ingredients and artisanal fermentation. Such visual presentation reinforces its positioning as a health-oriented beverage, while the absence of a halal logo creates ambiguity for Muslim consumers regarding its permissibility.

Consumer Interpretations of Ethanol Traces in Kombucha

Participants expressed diverse understandings of how fermentation-related ethanol affects halal status, reflecting both religious sensitivity and varying levels of product knowledge. NVivo-assisted thematic analysis identified three sub-themes: strict rejection, conditional acceptance, and unawareness or indifference. Codes such as “ethanol concern,” “avoidance of uncertified products,” “MUI threshold acceptance,” and “health-benefit priority” were grouped into the broader theme of “Consumer interpretations of ethanol traces.” This theme was derived mainly from interview responses and contextualized by MUI-related documents and laboratory documentation. These findings illustrate the complexity of halal decision-making, particularly when consumers confront technical details, such as trace ethanol, that are not always visible or well-communicated on product labels. The findings should therefore be interpreted as participant perceptions within a qualitative case study rather than as representative evidence of all Muslim consumers.

Strict rejection.

For some participants, any amount of ethanol was perceived as impermissible, regardless of whether it occurred naturally through fermentation or fell below the technical thresholds defined by religious authorities. These consumers adopted a more literalist or precautionary stance, arguing that alcohol in any form compromises halal integrity. As one participant explained,

“...even if it’s just a tiny bit from fermentation, I personally don’t feel comfortable drinking it. For me, once there’s alcohol involved, no matter how small, it’s no longer halal.” (P10)

This strict interpretation is consistent with research by [Aslan and Aslan \(2018\)](#), who found that even in Muslim-majority markets, segments of consumers reject products containing trace

elements of prohibited substances, prioritizing spiritual caution over scientific or regulatory clarifications. Such positions often emerge from high religiosity or distrust toward certification bodies, which are seen as too lenient in applying Islamic law.

Conditional acceptance

Other participants, however, indicated a more nuanced view, aligning their acceptance with the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)'s fatwa, which permits fermented beverages with ethanol content below 0.5% ABV, provided that no prohibited substances are added and the product is safe for consumption. These participants emphasized that intent and proportion matter in Islamic law, distinguishing between intoxicating alcohol deliberately added and trace ethanol occurring naturally in fermentation. As one participant noted,

"...as long as it's under the halal limit set by MUI and not made to get people intoxicated, I think it's still okay to drink. It's more about the purpose and process, not just the alcohol number" (P9)

Laboratory testing further documented that the tested BooCha Booms kombucha sample contained 0.07% (v/v) ethanol, below the 0.5% threshold referenced in MUI-related guidance for naturally fermented beverages (see Table 2). The laboratory report functioned as product-verification documentation that contextualized technical discussions about ethanol rather than as a complete halal determination. This perspective resonates with Batu (2012), who highlight how Islamic jurisprudence applies the principle of *istihalah* (transformation) in evaluating halal-related interpretations. Conditional acceptance thus reflected participant reliance on institutional guidance and technical reassurance in negotiating uncertainty surrounding fermented beverages.

Table 2. Laboratory Test Result of BooCha Booms Kombucha

No.	Sample Code	Parameter	Unit(% v/v)	Result	Method
1	<i>The Fermentasi</i> (Kombucha)	Ethanol	(% v/v)	0.07	Distillation / Viknometer

Source: PT Cipta Karya Pangan Pasundan, Food Technology Laboratory, Bandung (2025)

The laboratory analysis showed that the ethanol content of the tested BooCha Booms kombucha sample was 0.07% (v/v), which is below the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)'s 0.5% threshold for naturally fermented beverages. However, halal compliance cannot be concluded from ethanol percentage alone. A complete halal assessment would also require verification of ingredients, processing aids, production processes, contamination control, safety, supply-chain handling, and formal certification status. During the study period, BooCha Booms had not yet obtained formal halal certification. Therefore, the laboratory evidence should be interpreted as reducing one technical concern related to ethanol content rather than establishing certified halal status by itself. This interpretation is consistent with Fatwa MUI No. 10 of 2018 on Food and Beverage Products Containing Alcohol/Ethanol, which states that beverages resulting from natural fermentation containing ethanol levels below 0.5% (v/v), provided they do not contain prohibited ingredients and are medically safe for consumption, may be considered halal-compliant within the broader certification framework (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2018).

Unawareness or indifference.

A smaller group of participants admitted to being unaware that kombucha contained ethanol at all, or expressed indifference, focusing instead on the drink's health benefits and functional value. For these consumers, kombucha was viewed primarily as a wellness product rather than a religiously sensitive one. One participant reflected,

"...honestly, I didn't even know kombucha had alcohol in it. I just tried it because people said it's good for digestion, and I don't really think about the halal side that much" (P11).

This echoes findings from [Vargas et al. \(2021\)](#), where health-oriented attributes such as probiotics, detoxification claims, and digestive benefits often outweighed concerns about product composition for certain consumer segments. Within this participant group, some younger or health-oriented participants appeared less aware of fermentation-related ethanol issues, although this pattern should not be interpreted as evidence that all younger Muslim consumers have lower halal awareness. Indifference or limited awareness highlighted information asymmetry, where consumers lacked knowledge about the biochemical realities of fermentation and instead relied on surface-level cues such as packaging, branding, and peer recommendations.

Taken together, participant accounts revealed three forms of response to halal ambiguity: strict rejection of uncertified or ethanol-containing kombucha, conditional acceptance when technical and religious assurance were available, and relative indifference when health benefits were prioritized. These differences indicate that halal certification and ethanol-related concerns did not operate uniformly across participants; rather, their perceived importance varied according to religiosity, product knowledge, institutional trust, direct experience, and peer or community influence.

Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention

The analysis revealed that consumer trust played an important perceived role in shaping purchase consideration for Boocho Booms kombucha. The findings do not demonstrate that halal certification statistically causes purchase intention; rather, participants perceived certification as an important assurance cue that reduced uncertainty and made purchase consideration more comfortable within this participant group. Trust was associated not only with perceptions of halal integrity but also with brand reliability, transparency, and ethical responsibility. Codes such as "need for halal logo," "brand transparency," "peer assurance," and "community endorsement" were grouped into the broader theme of "Consumer trust and purchase intention." This theme was derived primarily from interview accounts related to trial purchase, repeat purchase, hesitation, and trust formation. Three key themes emerged from the interviews: (1) trust as a prerequisite for trial purchase, (2) certification and assurance as enhancers of repeat purchase confidence, and (3) the role of peer and community endorsement.

Trust as a Prerequisite for Trial Purchase

Many participants indicated that their willingness to try Boocho Booms kombucha depended on their initial trust in the brand's halal claims. Without a baseline of trust, curiosity about kombucha as a functional beverage was insufficient to motivate purchase. Trust thus acted as a "gateway" condition.

"...before I even think of buying, I need to be sure it's really halal certified. If I don't see that assurance, I'd rather not take the risk" - (P12)

"...I might try it if the brand clearly shows its halal label and explains the process. Without that, I'm not confident enough to drink it." - (P1)

This aligns with prior studies showing that trust reduces consumers' perception of uncertainty and risk in food choices (Teng & Wang, 2015).

Certification and Assurance as Enhancers of Repeat Purchase

Participants consistently highlighted that formal halal certification would provide stronger assurance, reinforcing trust beyond initial word-of-mouth or brand messaging. While some were willing to purchase Boocho Booms based on perceived integrity of the owner and transparency of information, others stressed that certification would be a decisive factor for repeat purchase and long-term loyalty.

"...I bought it once because a friend recommended it, but for me to buy again, I need to see the official halal logo. That's what really makes me sure" (P2)

"...even if I trust the seller, I still prefer a certified halal label. It gives a sense of security and shows the brand is serious about Muslim consumers" (P8)

This finding echoes Aziz and Chok (2013), who note that certification acts as a formal signal reducing ambiguity and solidifying consumer confidence. However, participant accounts are interpreted qualitatively as perceptions of reassurance and confidence rather than as evidence of measurable willingness to pay or statistically verified loyalty effects.

The Moderating Role of Peer and Community Endorsement

Interestingly, participants also indicated that their trust was not only built on certification but also mediated by peer and community recommendations. For Muslim consumers, endorsement by peers or religious community members provided an additional layer of social assurance, which in turn strengthened purchase intention.

"...I usually ask my friends or look at what people in my community say before trying a new drink. If they approve, I feel more confident to buy it" (P7)

"...when someone I respect in my mosque or circle says it's halal and safe, I'm more likely to give it a try, even if I haven't checked the label myself." (P3)

This resonates with the concept of *social trust* in consumer behavior research, where word-of-mouth and community approval act as credibility cues that complement formal assurances (Gefen et al., 2003).

Recommendations for SMEs on Halal Communication

Participants emphasized that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) producing kombucha need to adopt more proactive and transparent strategies in communicating the halal status of their products. This theme was developed as a practical implication derived from participant perceptions, observation of communication gaps, and document analysis rather than as a separately tested empirical model. A recurring theme was the importance of transparent labeling, particularly regarding ethanol content. Several participants expressed that uncertainty about whether kombucha contains alcohol, even in trace amounts, created hesitation in purchase

consideration. Clear disclosure on product packaging, such as explicitly stating ethanol levels and explaining the natural fermentation process, was perceived as helpful in reducing consumer uncertainty. As one participant explained,,

“...if the label clearly shows how much alcohol is in it and explains that it comes naturally from fermentation, I’d feel more comfortable buying it. Right now, I’m not sure and that makes me hesitate.” (P6)

This reflects broader evidence that transparency in labeling not only supports informed consumer choices but also strengthens perceptions of brand credibility in halal-sensitive markets (Ahmed et al., 2018; Aslan & Aslan, 2018).

Another recommendation that emerged strongly was the use of educational campaigns to build consumer awareness. Participants suggested that SMEs like Boocho Booms could leverage social media platforms to provide accessible explanations of why kombucha, despite being fermented, can still be categorized as halal under specific conditions. One participant noted,

“...if Boocho Booms posted simple videos or infographics on social media explaining how kombucha fermentation works and why it can be halal, I think more people would understand and feel confident trying it” (P4)

Pointing to the value of digital platforms in addressing misconceptions. Short videos, infographics, and testimonials by credible sources were considered useful tools for increasing awareness. This aligns with findings from Iranmanesh et al. (2020), who noted that halal awareness campaigns significantly enhance consumer trust and purchase intention by reducing information asymmetry in credence goods. Finally, participants underlined the need for proactive certification efforts. While informal communication and educational content may be helpful in the short term, formal certification by recognized bodies such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) or BPJPH is considered essential for long-term market expansion. As expressed by one participant,

“...at the end of the day, no matter how much information is shared online, seeing an official halal certification from MUI would make me fully trust the product and consider buying it regularly” (P5)

For these respondents, certification serves not only as a compliance mechanism but also as a powerful marketing tool that signals credibility and widens access to mainstream retail channels. This finding echoes prior research, which has shown that halal certification serves a dual role: providing technical assurance and acting as a trust signal that positively influences purchase intention (Koc et al., 2025; Alam & Sayuti, 2011). Taken together, these findings suggest that SMEs should approach halal communication as a multidimensional strategy: combining transparency in labeling, continuous consumer education, and institutional certification. Such an integrated approach addresses both informational and trust-related gaps in consumer decision-making. For Boocho Booms and similar SMEs, adopting this strategy could mitigate consumer uncertainty about ethanol traces, enhance brand trust, and ultimately increase purchase intentions in halal-sensitive markets.

Discussion

The findings highlight that halal certification plays a decisive role in shaping consumer trust and purchase intentions. Similar to Iranmanesh et al. (2020), participants demonstrated a strong

willingness to pay for halal-certified products, confirming that halal logos act as both credence cues and risk-reduction mechanisms. The diversity of interpretations regarding ethanol traces echoes earlier studies on halal-sensitive categories such as fermented foods and beverages (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008; Aji et al., 2021). While some consumers strictly avoided any trace of ethanol, others referred to religious authorities such as MUI, reflecting how institutional fatwas guide everyday consumption practices. Unexpectedly, a subset of younger consumers (students) reported low awareness about ethanol in kombucha, prioritizing its health image. This contradicts the assumption that all Muslim consumers are equally vigilant regarding halal compliance (Rezai et al., 2019). This finding suggests a generational gap in halal consciousness, where health narratives sometimes override religious considerations. From a practical perspective, SMEs like BooCha Booms face trust deficits if they market functional beverages without halal certification. The recommendation for transparent communication and certification aligns with Wilson & Liu (2011), who argue that halal assurance is not only a religious necessity but also a competitive advantage in Muslim-majority markets. In conclusion, halal certification emerges not merely as a compliance tool but as a strategic trust-building mechanism that directly affects purchase intentions. The study extends the literature by contextualizing halal perception in the case of kombucha, a product category at the intersection of health trends and religious dietary laws.

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to explore Muslim consumers' perceptions and trust toward BooCha Booms kombucha, particularly in relation to halal ambiguity, the perceived role of halal certification, and the ways trust influenced purchase consideration within participant narratives. By conducting in-depth interviews with Muslim consumers and contextualizing the findings through observation and document analysis, the research provides nuanced insights into how participants interpreted halal-related uncertainty surrounding a fermented beverage product operating without formal halal certification during the study period. The findings show that participants interpreted the halal status of kombucha through the lens of fermentation and ethanol traces, which generated different forms of response ranging from strict rejection, conditional acceptance, to relative indifference. These responses reflected differences in religiosity, product familiarity, institutional trust, and health-oriented considerations. The ambiguity surrounding kombucha's halal status also highlighted the importance of transparent communication regarding fermentation processes, ethanol content, and certification status. Participants generally perceived halal certification as an important assurance cue that reduced uncertainty and made purchase consideration more comfortable, while trust in brand transparency, institutional credibility, and peer endorsement further shaped participant confidence toward the product. However, the findings should be interpreted as participant perceptions within a qualitative case study rather than evidence of statistically validated causality, mediation, or population-level effects.

The study contributes to the literature on halal consumer behavior by suggesting that consumer trust may function as a useful interpretive theme for understanding how halal certification is perceived in fermented-beverage contexts. Rather than extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) through a statistically tested mediating mechanism, the findings indicate that trust appeared to shape participant considerations by reducing perceived uncertainty, supporting feelings of assurance, and connecting institutional credibility with product acceptance. In this way, the study illuminates how halal ambiguity, technical ethanol information, certification expectations, and trust interacted in participant meaning-making regarding kombucha consumption.

For practitioners, especially SMEs operating in halal-sensitive fermented beverage markets, the findings suggest several context-specific implications derived from participant

narratives, observation, and document analysis. SMEs may benefit from pursuing formal halal certification, communicating ethanol-related information transparently, explaining fermentation processes in accessible language, maintaining quality-control documentation, and utilizing credible institutional or expert communication to reduce consumer uncertainty. These recommendations, however, should not be interpreted as universal prescriptions for all SMEs, but rather as practical implications grounded in this qualitative case context. Policymakers and halal-related institutions may also use these findings to support clearer communication regarding fermented beverages and to assist SMEs in navigating halal-related verification processes. Because this study is limited to a single brand, 12 participants, urban Indonesian contexts, and a product that had not obtained formal halal certification during the study period, the conclusions should be interpreted as exploratory and transferable only to analytically similar contexts. Nevertheless, the study contributes by providing a contextualized understanding of how Muslim consumers negotiate halal ambiguity and trust in relation to an emerging fermented functional beverage category within Indonesia's evolving halal marketplace.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. The findings are based on a small, context-specific sample and a single uncertified kombucha brand, which may not represent the broader diversity of Muslim consumers in Indonesia. Because BooCha Booms had not obtained formal halal certification during the study period, the study mainly reflects participant perceptions of halal ambiguity, trust, and expected certification value rather than responses to a certified product. In addition, the observation component provided only contextual evidence, limiting deeper interpretation of consumer interactions at sales points. Although the study offers exploratory insights, it does not statistically test relationships among halal certification, trust, perceived risk, and purchase intention. Likewise, the laboratory ethanol result only provides technical context for the tested sample and cannot independently determine formal halal compliance, which also requires assessment of ingredients, production processes, contamination control, safety, and official certification procedures.

Future research could use quantitative or mixed-method approaches to further examine relationships among halal certification, consumer trust, religiosity, halal awareness, perceived risk, brand transparency, and purchase intention. Comparative studies involving certified and uncertified kombucha brands, different regions, and broader consumer groups would also strengthen transferability and practical relevance. Longitudinal studies may additionally help explain how halal perceptions and consumer trust evolve as kombucha products and halal certification practices continue to develop.

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