

STAY HALAL BROTHER : EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM CONSUMERS IN AVOIDING COMMONLY CONSUMED PRODUCTS WITHOUT HALAL LABELS

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Article Info

Received: July 3, 2024

Revised: October 9, 2024

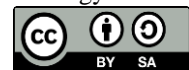
Accepted: January 10, 2025

Online Version: February 11, 2025

Abstract

This study explores the lived experiences of Muslim consumers in Makassar who consciously avoid commonly consumed products without halal labels. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research aims to reveal how faith, morality, and daily consumption practices intersect in shaping ethical decision-making. Twelve participants were selected through purposive sampling and interviewed in natural settings such as markets and cafés, allowing the researcher to capture authentic narratives of moral reasoning and spiritual reflection. The findings reveal four interrelated experiential themes: awareness of uncertainty, moral and emotional negotiation, faith-based reasoning, and spiritual fulfillment. These experiences demonstrate that “staying halal” represents not only adherence to Islamic dietary law but also an ongoing process of self-discipline and taqwa (God-consciousness) expressed through restraint. The novelty of this study lies in shifting the analytical focus from halal purchasing intention to ethical abstention, emphasizing non-consumption as a form of worship and moral identity. The results highlight that in Makassar’s urban Muslim society, abstaining from uncertified products is a spiritual act rooted in reflexive awareness rather than fear or social conformity. The study contributes to the literature on Islamic consumer behavior by illuminating how faith is embodied in moral decision-making and suggests that halal education should emphasize inner consciousness and ethical reflection beyond certification systems.

Keywords: Ethical Abstention, Muslim Consumers, Phenomenology



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Journal Homepage

<https://research.adra.ac.id/index.php/ijonis>ISSN:(P: [3048-1147](https://doi.org/10.70177/ijonis.v2i1.2633)) - (E: [3048-2658](https://doi.org/10.70177/ijonis.v2i1.2633))

How to cite:

Ridha, A., & Fitriani. (2025). Stay Halal Brother : Exploring the Lived Experiences of Muslim Consumers in Avoiding Commonly Consumed Products Without Halal Labels. *International Journal of Noesantara Islamic Studies*, 2(1), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.70177/ijonis.v2i1.2633>

Published by:

Yayasan Adra Karima Hubbi

INTRODUCTION

Halal consumption has transformed from a purely theological directive into a complex socio-economic and cultural phenomenon that reflects how faith and identity intersect with marketplace behavior. The term *halal*, grounded in Islamic jurisprudence, represents more than a religious requirement it encapsulates values of purity, trust, responsibility, and social ethics in production and consumption (Rasul & Gani, 2020). Globally, the halal economy has reached an estimated value exceeding two trillion US dollars in 2023, illustrating not only its market size but also its moral magnitude in shaping modern consumerism (M. Aneesh & Siddiq, 2024). For Muslim consumers, halal certification functions as a visible assurance that products meet divine guidelines, thus linking religious observance with daily lifestyle choices (Aziz & Chok, 2013; Wibowo, 2023).

Despite this growing awareness, the presence of halal labels in local markets is far from universal. In Indonesia home to the world's largest Muslim population many products widely circulated and consumed remain without official halal certification. This is particularly evident in Makassar City, a multicultural urban hub in Eastern Indonesia where modern consumption habits intersect with deep-rooted Islamic traditions. Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi Province, represents a dynamic setting for studying the tension between religiosity and urban consumer culture. Although the city's population is predominantly Muslim and religious identity strongly shapes social behavior, the commercial landscape features numerous food, beverage, and household brands that are widely trusted but not yet formally certified halal. This creates a nuanced moral situation in which consumers must reconcile their religious principles with the realities of everyday purchasing.

Empirical evidence suggests that many Indonesian Muslims continue to buy uncertified products due to brand familiarity, convenience, or perceived cleanliness, rather than verified halal status (Millatina et al., 2022; Sukesti & Budiman, 2014). In Makassar's context where traditional markets coexist with modern retail chains consumers often rely on informal indicators such as store reputation or social endorsement to infer a product's permissibility. This pattern of *trust-based consumption* reveals a gap between normative religious guidance and practical consumer behavior. For some Makassar Muslims, however, such ambiguity provokes inner conflict and motivates deliberate avoidance of uncertified products, a practice that this study defines as ethical abstention.

The urgency of exploring this phenomenon lies in its moral and cultural implications. Prior research overwhelmingly addresses why Muslim consumers choose to buy halal-certified products (A. Kaya & Ekmekci, 2022; Yener, 2015), but rarely investigates why they choose not to buy uncertified ones. Abstention, as an act of faith, embodies *taqwa* consciousness of God and reflects the spiritual discipline of aligning everyday behavior with Islamic ethical values (Wibowo, 2023). (A. K. Aneesh & Siddiq, 2024) emphasize the importance of studying "grey-area consumption," where the absence of halal labeling compels individuals to rely on moral reasoning rather than institutional assurance. In the context of Makassar, where consumption is deeply embedded in communal norms and family traditions, understanding how Muslim consumers navigate these moral boundaries is both timely and necessary.

Studies have consistently demonstrated that religiosity is a powerful determinant of halal purchase intention (Hidayati & Sunaryo, 2023; Khader & Siddiq, 2024) and that halal labels enhance trust and loyalty toward brands (Ashraf, 2019; Zulkifli & al., 2023). Yet, when such labels are missing, consumers face a moral vacuum where personal interpretation and spiritual intuition take precedence. (Djunaidi & al., 2021) observed that many Indonesian consumers infer halalness through packaging or word-of-mouth a cognitive shortcut that masks the deeper moral dilemmas of uncertainty. In Makassar's diverse urban economy, where food stalls, cafés, and imported products are abundant, these uncertainties are magnified. The act of "staying halal" thus becomes both a religious commitment and a daily negotiation shaped by accessibility, income, and social influence.

The research context in Makassar is particularly relevant because of its dual character as both a devout and rapidly modernizing city. As a center of education and commerce in Eastern Indonesia, Makassar showcases a population exposed to global products, social media marketing, and convenience-driven lifestyles, yet still guided by strong religious sentiments. The city's Friday markets and halal food festivals celebrate Islamic identity, while its supermarkets display products that are ambiguously labeled or uncertified. This paradox reflects what (Gunawan & al., 2024) describe as the "trust convenience dilemma" in Muslim consumer behavior, where spiritual ideals are challenged by the realities of urban consumption. In this setting, abstaining from uncertified products represents more than compliance it becomes a conscious moral stance that reinforces identity and spiritual coherence.

Theoretically, this study integrates Islamic consumer ethics with phenomenological inquiry to explore how such abstention is experienced and understood. Islamic consumption theory perceives consumers as moral agents whose choices are evaluated not only economically but spiritually (M. Aneesh & Siddiq, 2024). Central principles such as *halal-thayyib* (lawful and wholesome), *amanah* (trust), *israf* (moderation), and *ukhuwah* (social solidarity) guide ethical reasoning and promote balance between material needs and moral obligations (Deti, 2025). Within this framework, consumption becomes an act of worship (*ibadah*) and a reflection of one's faith. Phenomenology, as advanced by (Moustakas, 1994) and adapted in Islamic scholarship by (Ridha, 2024), offers a methodological bridge to capture how individuals subjectively experience and interpret these values in real life. This study therefore does not attempt to measure abstention but to reveal its lived meaning among Muslim consumers in Makassar.

Existing empirical research highlights why this qualitative approach is essential. (Zulkifli & al., 2023) found that halal awareness and lifestyle orientation significantly shape millennial purchasing behavior, while (Hidayati & Sunaryo, 2022) confirmed that halal certification strengthens consumer attitudes and brand attachment. However, (Siregar, 2022) argued that in Indonesia, many consumption patterns are habitual rather than reflective, implying that the decision to avoid certain products involves deliberate moral effort. (Ariyanti et al., 2021) observed that only a fraction of food items in Indonesian retail chains carry halal labels, thus requiring consumers to exercise vigilance. In Makassar, where social interactions and religious discourse are deeply intertwined, abstaining from uncertified products is often discussed within peer groups or family settings as an act of *istiqamah* steadfastness in faith. This collective moral discourse adds social weight to personal abstention, blending individual spirituality with communal norms.

The gap between market practice and moral expectation has practical consequences. Many producers view halal certification as a marketing advantage rather than an ethical duty (Rasul & Gani, 2020). Consequently, uncertified products persist in the market, leaving moral responsibility to consumers. By investigating how Makassar's Muslim consumers respond to this condition, this study seeks to reveal the emotional and cognitive dynamics behind ethical abstention how guilt, trust, satisfaction, or relief accompany decisions not to buy. The findings may guide halal authorities and business actors in designing educational and promotional strategies that resonate with local moral consciousness rather than relying solely on formal regulation.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore the lived experiences of Muslim consumers in Makassar who avoid commonly consumed products without halal labels. Specifically, it aims to uncover how they interpret religious commitment, moral reasoning, and self-identity through everyday acts of consumption restraint. The expected contributions are threefold: theoretically, to expand the discourse on Islamic consumer behavior by introducing ethical abstention as a form of spiritual practice; empirically, to provide rich qualitative evidence about the moral consciousness underlying consumption in urban Indonesia; and

practically, to inform policymakers, marketers, and halal certification agencies about the lived moral realities of consumers beyond regulatory frameworks.

In the context of this study, religious commitment is defined as the internalized adherence to Islamic teachings that governs daily decision-making, including choices of what to eat, wear, or use (Khader & Siddiq, 2024). Islamic consumption values refer to ethical orientations emphasizing lawful consumption, moderation, fairness, and social welfare (Bekmez et al., 2023). Islamic moral reasoning denotes the reflective process by which individuals evaluate whether an action aligns with Qur'anic principles and prophetic ethics (M. Wahyudin, 2025). Ethical abstention is understood as the conscious refusal to buy or consume products without halal certification, driven by moral accountability and spiritual awareness rather than fear of social judgment. These conceptual anchors guide the phenomenological exploration of consumer experience within Makassar's religiously vibrant yet commercially diverse environment.

Ultimately, choosing to "stay halal" amid the urban dynamics of Makassar signifies more than adherence to a dietary rule; it is a daily exercise in faith, identity, and ethical self-governance. Muslim consumers who avoid uncertified products demonstrate moral autonomy and *taqwa* in contexts where certainty is blurred by commercialization. Yet their internal reasoning, emotions, and struggles have remained largely unexamined in prior scholarship. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study seeks to illuminate those voices and meanings, offering a grounded understanding of how Islamic faith is lived and felt in the contemporary marketplace of Makassar.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method grounded in the phenomenological tradition to explore the lived experiences of Muslim consumers in Makassar who consciously avoid commonly consumed products without halal labels. The qualitative paradigm is chosen because it allows for deep understanding of meanings, values, and reflections embedded in human experience rather than statistical generalization. Through this method, the researcher seeks to uncover how faith, morality, and everyday consumption intersect within the consciousness of halal observance. Phenomenology, as both philosophy and method, enables the interpretation of participants' subjective realities by focusing on their narratives, emotions, and reasoning processes. Thus, the research emphasizes understanding the essence of experience: how "staying halal" is perceived, felt, and lived by consumers rather than merely describing outward behavior.

Research Approach

This research adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Muslim consumers in Makassar City who consciously avoid commonly consumed products that lack halal labels. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it emphasizes understanding the *essence* of human experience rather than explaining cause-and-effect relationships. As (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and (Moustakas, 1994) emphasize, phenomenology seeks to interpret the meanings individuals assign to their daily experiences and to reveal how these meanings shape behavior and awareness.

The act of avoiding uncertified products is not only a behavioral choice but also a moral and spiritual reflection, rooted in the consciousness of *halal* and *haram*. Through this approach, the research aims to understand how such awareness is formed, internalized, and lived by Muslim consumers in an urban context like Makassar. The focus is on how faith, ethical reasoning, and social context intersect in shaping consumer identity.

The phenomenological method also allows the researcher to practice *epoché* or bracketing: suspending personal assumptions about halal consumption to allow participants'

voices and perspectives to emerge authentically. By engaging participants in reflective dialogue, this study attempts to uncover both the texture (what is experienced) and structure (how it is experienced) of halal-related moral decision-making.

Research Target/Subject

The research subjects consist of Muslim consumers living in Makassar City, who consciously avoid purchasing or consuming products that are commonly consumed by the public but lack halal labels. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, guided by specific inclusion criteria: 1) Individuals who self-identify as Muslim and regularly make personal consumption decisions. 2) Individuals who have consciously refrained from purchasing uncertified products within the past six months. 3) Willingness and ability to articulate experiences and reflections during interviews. 4) Representation from diverse demographic and socio-economic backgrounds gender, occupation, and age to capture variation in perspectives.

A total of twelve participants (P1–P12) were included, sufficient to achieve thematic saturation while maintaining analytical depth. The participants represented a broad social range: university students, civil servants, entrepreneurs, homemakers, and local food vendors. This diversity mirrors the socio-economic structure of Makassar, where Islamic consciousness is widespread but expressed differently across social classes. Participants were recruited through halal community networks, local mosques, and referrals from acquaintances who practice halal-conscious lifestyles. To protect participants' privacy, pseudonyms and coded identifiers were used, and all personal information was treated confidentially according to ethical research standards. Each participant received an informed consent form detailing the study's aims, voluntary nature, and right to withdraw without consequence.

Research Procedure

The research unfolded as an interpretive journey that immersed the researcher in the social and moral world of Makassar's Muslim consumers. Rather than adhering to rigid procedural steps, inquiry evolved organically through observation, conversation, and reflection. Interactions often began informally and developed into deeper conversations about daily consumption habits and moral reflections. The researcher acted not merely as an interviewer but as a reflective listener, balancing empathy with analytical awareness. Reflexivity was maintained throughout, as the researcher continually examined how personal beliefs might shape interpretation.

Data collection occurred in a relational and trusting atmosphere, encouraging participants to narrate their experiences freely as stories rather than as responses to structured questions. These narratives intertwined personal faith, family influence, and community expectations, revealing that concerns about halalness in Makassar are inseparable from collective identity. Through immersion and shared reflection, understanding emerged naturally as a dialogical process co-constructed between researcher and participants capturing both the texture (what was experienced) and structure (how it was experienced) of their moral and spiritual worlds.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, supported by field observations and reflective notes. Interviews were conducted in September 2025 in natural settings such as cafés, small shops, and community spaces locations where participants usually engage in purchasing or consumption activities. Each interview lasted approximately 30–40 minutes and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure natural expression. The researcher employed an open and conversational tone, guiding participants through prompts designed to evoke reflective storytelling rather than short responses. A set of semi-structured guiding questions was prepared based on the theoretical framework of Islamic consumer behavior and

previous phenomenological studies. These questions aimed to uncover participants' moral reasoning, emotions, and faith reflections surrounding the act of avoiding uncertified products.

Table 1. Mapping of Interview Questions and Research Focus

No.	Interview Question	Research Focus / Dimension	Expected Insight
1	Can you describe a situation when you decided not to buy a product because it had no halal label?	Lived experience of avoidance	Contextual understanding of the event and moral trigger
2	What motivated you to avoid that product?	Moral and cognitive reasoning	Ethical rationale, perceived risk, spiritual conviction
3	How did you feel when making that decision?	Emotional-spiritual dimension	Feelings of doubt, peace, or satisfaction linked to faith
4	How does your decision reflect your understanding of Islam and halal living?	Faith and religiosity	Internalization of religious values in daily practice
5	How do others family, friends, or community respond to your choice?	Social influence	Social approval, pressure, or support shaping moral choice
6	What products are hardest to avoid and why?	Practical challenge	Market availability, brand attachment, and moral conflict
7	What does 'staying halal' personally mean to you?	Essence of the phenomenon	Integration of moral reasoning, faith, and self-identity

Interviews were recorded (with permission) and transcribed verbatim. Observations of participant behavior tone of voice, expressions, pauses were noted to capture emotional nuances. Supplementary data such as photos of unlabeled products and screenshots of local online discussions about halal awareness were collected for contextual triangulation.

Field notes and reflective memos were written after each interview to record immediate impressions, emotional atmosphere, and emerging patterns. This reflexive process ensured the researcher's sensitivity to participants' meanings and minimized interpretive bias.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis followed the phenomenological reduction technique developed by (Moustakas, 1994). The analysis process was iterative and interpretive, consisting of several overlapping stages: 1) Immersion and Familiarization: The researcher repeatedly read the transcripts to grasp the whole picture of participants' experiences. 2) Horizontalization: All statements were treated with equal importance to avoid premature hierarchization. 3) Meaning Unit Extraction: Significant statements related to faith, moral decision, or emotional reactions were highlighted and coded. 4) Clustering of Themes: Similar codes were grouped into thematic clusters that reflected shared meanings across participants. 5) Textural and Structural Description: The researcher described *what* participants experienced (textural) and *how* they experienced it (structural), including their internal reasoning and environmental context. 6) Essence Synthesis: Both descriptions were synthesized to formulate the essence of the phenomenon: that avoiding uncertified products is a conscious act of religious integrity combining moral vigilance, emotional reflection, and spiritual satisfaction.

To ensure data validity, the research applied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) criteria:

1. **Credibility:** Conducted through member checking participants reviewed summarized findings to confirm accuracy.

2. Transferability: Achieved by providing thick contextual descriptions of Makassar’s social-religious environment.
3. Dependability: Ensured through transparent documentation of coding and thematic synthesis steps.
4. Confirmability: Maintained via reflexive journaling and peer debriefing with two qualitative research colleagues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this research provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of Muslim consumers in Makassar who consciously avoid commonly consumed products without halal labels. The participants’ narratives reveal that their decisions are not merely behavioral reactions but deeply moral and reflective actions shaped by faith, knowledge, and emotional reasoning. Avoiding uncertified products is perceived as part of *iman* (faith) practice an expression of obedience and spiritual responsibility that goes beyond external compliance with regulations.

Through phenomenological analysis of twelve interview transcripts, four major experiential themes emerged: awareness of uncertainty, moral and emotional negotiation, faith-based reasoning, and spiritual fulfillment. These themes are interconnected in a continuum that begins with recognizing uncertainty, proceeds through moral and emotional struggle, and ends in a sense of spiritual calmness and self-assurance.

Participants consistently emphasized that “staying halal” is not only about labeling or certification, but about moral vigilance and sincerity in everyday life. This awareness was often sparked by encounters with ambiguous products in daily settings such as supermarkets, cafés, or online marketplaces. Participants described their decision-making process as a dialogue between mind and heart a moral reflection influenced by religious values, family norms, and community teachings.

The interviews also revealed that the Makassar cultural setting, with its strong Islamic identity and communal religiosity, reinforces halal consciousness. Discussions about food and labeling often arise naturally in social interactions, shaping collective awareness. Despite facing practical challenges and social pressures, most participants perceived their abstention as an empowering act that strengthens faith and discipline.

Overall, the research findings indicate that halal awareness among Makassar’s Muslim consumers is a dynamic process that integrates spiritual, emotional, and ethical dimensions. Their experiences illustrate that moral choices in consumption are lived expressions of *taqwa* (God-consciousness) rather than mere compliance with external authority.

Table 2. Synthesis of Interview Results

P	Dominant Theme	Description of Experience	Representative Quote
P1	Awareness of Uncertainty	Hesitates when facing products without halal labels, even for familiar items.	<i>“Before, I didn’t care much, but now if I don’t see the logo, I think twice.”</i>
P2	Faith-Based Reasoning	Believes that avoiding doubtful products protects faith and moral purity.	<i>“If there’s doubt, I’d rather not buy it. Allah always gives a better choice.”</i>
P3	Awareness of Uncertainty	Realized through social media that some daily products lack certification.	<i>“I used to assume everything was halal, but now I check every label.”</i>
P4	Faith-Based Reasoning	Relates the decision to the hadith about leaving <i>syubhah</i> matters.	<i>“The Prophet said to avoid doubtful things; that’s my</i>

			<i>guideline.”</i>
P5	Moral and Emotional Negotiation	Experiences inner tension between desire and religious discipline.	<i>“Sometimes I want to buy it, but I remember my commitment to stay halal.”</i>
P6	Moral and Emotional Negotiation	Feels uneasy when tempted but later relieved after refusing to buy.	<i>“It’s not easy, but when I walk away, I feel peace in my heart.”</i>
P7	Spiritual Fulfillment	Gains satisfaction and calmness after avoiding uncertified products.	<i>“I feel proud when I can resist. It’s like passing a test of faith.”</i>
P8	Spiritual Fulfillment	Considers abstaining as part of worship and spiritual strength.	<i>“It’s not being strict, it’s part of consistency in faith.”</i>
P9	Moral and Emotional Negotiation	Faces social teasing for being too cautious but remains steadfast.	<i>“People laugh and say I’m overreacting, but I just want to be safe in faith.”</i>
P10	Faith-Based Reasoning	Views halal certification as a sign of trust in religious authority.	<i>“I rely on the label, it helps me feel sure and peaceful.”</i>
P11	Spiritual Fulfillment	Describes abstention as inner joy and closeness to God.	<i>“Every time I avoid something doubtful, I feel spiritually stronger.”</i>
P12	Awareness of Uncertainty	Feels confused by unclear labeling and chooses to abstain for safety.	<i>“If the label’s faded or missing, I just skip it. It’s better to be careful.”</i>

Source: Processed from in-depth interviews (2025)

Table 1 summarizes the lived experiences of the twelve Muslim consumers (P1–P12) who participated in this study. Each row represents one participant’s key narrative extracted from in-depth interviews conducted in Makassar in September 2025. The table identifies four dominant experiential themes awareness of uncertainty, moral and emotional negotiation, faith-based reasoning, and spiritual fulfillment which together capture the essential structure of the “Stay Halal” experience.

Awareness of Uncertainty

This theme appears prominently in the accounts of participants P1, P3, and P12. They described moments of hesitation when encountering products without halal certification, revealing an evolving consciousness toward the reliability of market goods. Their quotes such as “I start to question whether it’s safe for me as a Muslim” illustrate the shift from habitual consumption to reflective awareness. This indicates that halal consciousness often begins with small triggers like missing labels or unclear logos.

Moral and Emotional Negotiation

Participants P5, P6, and P9 expressed emotional conflict when balancing personal desire with religious discipline. Feelings of guilt, relief, or pride accompanied their decisions to refrain from uncertified products. The quotations “Sometimes I want to buy it, but I remember my commitment” and “My friends joke that I’m too rigid” demonstrate that moral decision-making involves both internal struggle and social interaction. These experiences suggest that staying halal functions as an emotional and relational negotiation, not just an individual choice.

Faith-Based Reasoning

Participants P2, P4, and P10 anchored their choices in explicit Islamic teachings. They repeatedly referred to prophetic guidance about avoiding *syubhah* matters and expressed trust in halal certification as a symbol of collective religious authority. Statements such as “If there’s doubt, better leave it” and “I rely on the label it helps me feel sure” reveal that their reasoning is doctrinal yet personal, connecting everyday consumption with faith and accountability before God.

Spiritual Fulfillment

Participants P7, P8, and P11 described positive spiritual outcomes from abstaining feelings of calmness, gratitude, and closeness to Allah. Their comments “I feel proud when I can resist” and “It’s part of consistency in faith” show that avoiding doubtful products is experienced as moral victory and inner satisfaction. For them, abstention becomes an act of worship, reinforcing discipline and religious identity.

Across all informants, the synthesis indicates that the phenomenon of “staying halal” unfolds as a progressive moral journey: it begins with uncertainty, develops through emotional and ethical negotiation, is guided by religious reasoning, and culminates in spiritual fulfillment. Each participant’s account confirms that the absence of a halal label does not merely create confusion it stimulates reflection and strengthens personal faith. In essence, the table encapsulates how Makassar’s Muslim consumers internalize halal principles as part of daily life, turning ordinary purchasing decisions into meaningful expressions of belief and moral consciousness.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the lived experience of Muslim consumers in Makassar in avoiding commonly consumed products without halal labels is not a simple behavioral response but a continuous moral process that connects awareness, reasoning, emotion, and faith. The act of “staying halal” unfolds as a moral journey beginning from a moment of uncertainty, developing through inner dialogue and emotional negotiation, and culminating in a sense of spiritual peace. This process reflects the phenomenological essence of human consciousness, in which meaning is not imposed externally but discovered through reflection on everyday choices. For many participants, the absence of a halal label became the trigger for awareness: a small symbol that opens a space for ethical contemplation. What used to be taken for granted trust that everything in the market is halal was gradually replaced by a sense of vigilance and responsibility. This transformation mirrors the cognitive awakening described by (Wibowo, 2023) and (Hidayati & Sunaryo, 2023), in which modern Muslim consumers reinterpret uncertainty as part of their faith practice. In Makassar’s social context, where religious discourse permeates daily life, this awareness is nurtured through sermons, family conversations, and social media narratives about halal authenticity, turning ordinary consumption into an act of reflection.

As awareness deepens, consumers face moral and emotional negotiations that reveal the human dimension of religiosity. Participants described feelings of doubt, guilt, and even pride when deciding whether to buy products without halal certification. These mixed emotions illustrate what (Bekmez et al., 2023) call spiritual self-regulation a process where conscience and desire constantly interact. In phenomenological terms, emotion is not a distraction from moral reasoning but its medium: through feeling, the believer recognizes the tension between worldly comfort and divine command. Several participants admitted that resisting temptation was sometimes met with social teasing from friends or relatives, yet this very struggle became proof of moral consistency. Such experiences echo (Pradana & al., 2019), who view ethical consumption as both personal affirmation and social negotiation. Within Makassar’s communal religiosity, choosing to refrain from doubtful products signals membership in a moral community that values sincerity (*ikhlas*) and accountability (*amanah*). Thus, the decision to abstain becomes a quiet act of resilience an assertion of autonomy grounded in faith rather than conformity.

Underlying this emotional and social negotiation is a clear structure of faith-based reasoning. Participants consistently justified their choices with reference to prophetic teachings about avoiding *syubhah* matters, showing that their reasoning rests on internalized religious knowledge rather than external enforcement. This aligns with (M. Aneesh & Siddiq, 2024),

who found that religiosity functions as the primary determinant of halal-oriented decision-making. The participants' statements reveal that for them, abstaining from uncertified products is an exercise in *taqwa* living with the awareness that every act, however small, is witnessed by Allah. This internalization of faith transforms moral reasoning into spiritual practice. At the same time, participants expressed respect for institutional authority by trusting halal certification as a collective assurance of religious integrity. This dual trust toward divine guidance and institutional verification illustrates what (S. Kaya & Ekmekci, 2022) term the dual dimension of halal labels: theological legitimacy and psychological reassurance. In this sense, faith-based reasoning operates as both compass and comfort, enabling consumers to navigate the complexities of modern markets while maintaining inner certainty.

The culmination of these experiences is a sense of spiritual fulfillment that participants described as calmness, relief, and joy after choosing to avoid doubtful products. This emotional resolution represents the reward of moral effort, confirming (L. Wahyudin, 2025) view that *taqwa* manifests through continuous self-control in daily decisions. The participants' narratives demonstrate that abstention is not experienced as deprivation but as empowerment. Saying no to uncertified products becomes a reaffirmation of identity a moment in which one feels closer to God and stronger in self-discipline. Such experiences can be interpreted as expressions of *mujahadah*, the inner struggle to uphold faith amid worldly temptation. From a phenomenological perspective, this spiritual peace is not an endpoint but a lived rhythm: awareness, conflict, reasoning, and fulfillment continually renew one another, sustaining the believer's moral consciousness.

Overall, the discussion suggests that in Makassar's cultural context, halal consciousness functions as a moral ecosystem supported by personal piety, communal norms, and institutional structures. The phenomenon of "staying halal" represents the integration of ethical reflection and spiritual devotion, where consumer behavior becomes an extension of worship (*ibadah*). This study therefore extends existing models of halal consumption by emphasizing the meaning of non-consumption the deliberate avoidance of uncertified products as an equally significant expression of faith. Through this moral journey, Muslim consumers transform uncertainty into vigilance, desire into discipline, and restraint into serenity. "Stay Halal, Brother" thus emerges not merely as a slogan but as a lived philosophy: a reminder that faith in contemporary Muslim life is preserved not only through what is consumed but through what is consciously left behind.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research affirm that "staying halal" among Muslim consumers in Makassar represents a lived moral experience a continuous process of awareness, negotiation, reasoning, and spiritual realization. Avoiding commonly consumed products without halal labels is not merely a reaction to uncertainty but a conscious act of religious devotion that integrates cognition, emotion, and faith into everyday life. The study shows that halal consciousness emerges from an interplay between individual reflection and collective religiosity: personal moral reasoning is reinforced by family teachings, community norms, and institutional structures that sustain public trust in halal assurance.

Through a phenomenological lens, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how faith is embodied in consumer practice. The decision to abstain from uncertified products reveals how Islamic ethics shape not only what people buy but how they think, feel, and relate to God. This highlights that *halal awareness* should be viewed as an inner discipline of self-control rather than a purely external compliance mechanism. For participants, the absence of a label was transformed into a moment of reflection, a moral test that affirmed their identity and strengthened their *taqwa*. Hence, non-consumption becomes a spiritual act an expression of faith through restraint.

Practically, these findings suggest that halal education and certification campaigns should emphasize not only legal assurance but also the moral and emotional meaning behind halal living. Religious institutions and policymakers may enhance consumer awareness by promoting transparency, moral reflection, and community engagement. For marketers, understanding this spiritual dimension can guide the design of ethical communication that respects the consumer's moral journey rather than merely appealing to labels.

In conclusion, "Stay Halal, Brother" encapsulates more than an individual's consumption pattern it symbolizes a cultural and spiritual movement toward conscious, reflective, and faithful living. The study extends existing perspectives on halal consumer behavior by emphasizing *the essence of moral abstention* as an equally powerful expression of religiosity. In Makassar's dynamic socio-religious environment, staying halal becomes a daily manifestation of faith, proving that devotion can be practiced not only through what is chosen but also through what is consciously left behind.

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