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Marketing practices and sustainability challenges of halal food enterprises in a muslim-majority public market

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A B S T R A C T

The rapid expansion of the halal economy has increased the need for sustainable business practices among small-scale halal food enterprises operating in local markets. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the marketing practices and sustainability challenges of halal food enterprises in a Muslim-majority public market, focusing on Dalican Public Market in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte, Philippines. Data were collected from 30 halal food enterprise operators selected through purposive sampling using a structured survey questionnaire and a descriptive quantitative design. This study assessed marketing practices in terms of product, price, place, and promotion, identified challenges affecting business sustainability, and explored strategic measures to enhance enterprise competitiveness. A very high extent of marketing practices overall (WM = 4.53) was reported, with product obtaining the highest mean (WM = 4.91), followed by price (WM = 4.57), place (WM = 4.39), and promotion (WM = 4.24). The results showed that sustainability-related challenges obtained an overall mean of 3.61, indicating agreement, with limited space or poor location and lack of marketing knowledge developing as the most strongly reported challenges (M = 4.83 each). Proposed strategic improvements received strong support overall (M = 4.85), particularly the development of digital marketing skills (M = 4.88). Halal food enterprises placed strong emphasis on product quality, halal compliance, and pricing while identifying operational constraints and capacity-building needs as important areas for improvement. This study provided empirical evidence on marketing practices and business challenges among halal food enterprises in a Muslim-majority local market.

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1 Introduction

The global halal economy has experienced remarkable growth over the past decade, driven by increasing consumer awareness of halal products, the expansion of Muslim populations, and the growing recognition of halal as a symbol of quality, safety, and ethical production. Even though halal is traditionally permissible under Islamic law, contemporary halal practices extend beyond religious compliance to include standards of hygiene, wholesomeness (tayyib), quality assurance, and consumer trust (Alam & Sayuti 2011). Therefore, halal has evolved into a multidimensional concept influencing various sectors, including food, tourism, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, finance, and retail markets (Fischer 2015).

The halal food sector represents the largest segment of the global halal industry. According to DinarStandard (2025), Muslim consumer expenditure on food continues to account for a significant portion of the global halal market, creating substantial opportunities for large-scale enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). As consumer demand increases, businesses are compelled to ensure halal compliance and adopt effective marketing strategies that communicate product authenticity, quality, and value to target markets. Therefore, effective marketing practices are essential in enhancing competitiveness, attracting consumers, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of halal enterprises (Kotler & Keller 2016).

Marketing within a halal context differs from conventional marketing because the concept integrates commercial objectives with Islamic ethical principles. Wilson & Liu (2010) argued that halal marketing emphasized trust, transparency, honesty, and compliance with Shari'ah principles throughout the value chain. Furthermore, Shah *et al.* (2020) viewed halal marketing as a strategic approach that combined Islamic values with contemporary marketing practices to create value for consumers while ensuring religious compliance. Effective halal marketing includes product quality, pricing, distribution, promotion, and certification mechanisms that strengthen consumer trust and improve business competitiveness. The presence of halal certification, proper labelling, and adherence to halal standards has been shown to positively influence purchasing behavior among Muslim (Ab Talib *et al.* 2016; Alam & Sayuti 2011).

Among the traditional marketing mix dimensions, product quality remains a critical determinant of consumer preference. In halal markets, consumers increasingly associate halal-certified products with superior quality, safety, and reliability (Alam & Sayuti 2011). Pricing strategies influence purchasing decisions, particularly among consumers seeking affordability without compromising halal integrity. Distribution and accessibility also play significant roles in ensuring that halal products reach consumers in a manner consistent with Islamic requirements. Furthermore, promotional activities serve as important mechanisms for communicating halal attributes, creating brand awareness, and facilitating customer loyalty (Wilson & Liu 2010).

Despite the expanding halal market, many small-scale halal enterprises continue to face sustainability challenges. Studies have identified barriers such as limited access to halal certification, inadequate marketing capabilities, financial constraints, fluctuating production costs, and insufficient adoption of digital marketing technologies (Noordin *et al.* 2009). These challenges are particularly evident among vendors operating in traditional public markets, where competition, infrastructure limitations, and resource constraints may affect business performance and long-term viability.

In the Philippines, the development of the halal industry has gained momentum, particularly within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), where a substantial Muslim population creates a favorable environment for halal enterprises. Public markets remain important centers of economic activity and food distribution within the region. These include Dalican Public Market, located in Dalican, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte, Philippines. The market serves as a significant commercial hub where halal food enterprises provide fresh meat, cooked meals, processed foods, and other halal-compliant products to local consumers. Despite the growing importance of halal entrepreneurship in the region, empirical studies examining the marketing practices and

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sustainability challenges of halal food enterprises operating in public market settings remain limited.

Previous studies have largely focused on halal consumer behavior, halal certification, and purchase intentions in urban and international contexts (Ab Talib *et al.* 2016; Awan *et al.* 2015). Comparatively, limited attention has been given to grassroots halal enterprises operating in local public markets, particularly within Muslim-majority communities in the southern Philippines. Understanding how these enterprises use marketing strategies and address sustainability challenges is important for strengthening the halal ecosystem and supporting local economic development.

This study examines the marketing practices and sustainability challenges of halal food enterprises in a Muslim-majority public market, specifically Dalican Public Market in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte, Philippines. Marketing practices are assessed in terms of product, price, place, and promotion, as well as the challenges affecting business sustainability. This study also proposes strategic interventions to enhance the competitiveness and resilience of halal food enterprises. The results are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on halal entrepreneurship and provide practical insights for enterprise operators, policymakers, local government units, and stakeholders in the development of the halal industry in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

2 Methodology

A descriptive quantitative design was used to examine the marketing practices and sustainability challenges of halal food enterprises operating in a Muslim-majority public market. This study was conducted at Dalican Public Market in Dalican, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte, Philippines. The trading center serves predominantly Muslim consumers and hosts various halal food enterprises engaged in the sale of fresh meat, cooked meals, processed foods, snacks, beverages, and other halal-compliant products. The market was selected due to the significant role in local commerce and the relevance to halal food marketing within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

The respondents consisted of 30 halal food enterprise operators selected through purposive sampling. Eligible respondents were vendors engaged in the sale of halal-compliant food products and willing to participate in the study. A halal food enterprise was defined as a business selling food products considered halal based on the nature of the products sold, rather than on formal halal certification. The sample size of 30 was determined based on the availability of eligible participants and the feasibility of data collection. Eligible vendors were identified at the market based on the inclusion criteria and invited to participate until the target of 30 respondents was reached. Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire developed based on the objectives of the study and relevant literature on halal marketing and enterprise sustainability. The instrument collected information on respondents' business profiles, including years of operation, product type, and halal certification status, as well as marketing practices related to product, price, place, and promotion. This study also examined sustainability challenges encountered by halal food enterprises and identified strategic interventions to enhance business competitiveness and long-term viability. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' perceptions and practices.

Before data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by the subject-matter expert (SME) to ensure content validity, clarity, and relevance to the study objectives. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate university authorities and market stakeholders. Data collection was carried out from April to May 2026 during the 2025–2026 academic year through the personal administration of questionnaires. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, and completed questionnaires were retrieved after completion to ensure data accuracy and completeness.

The collected data were organized, encoded, and analyzed using descriptive statistical Methods. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic and business profiles of the respondents, while weighted means were used to determine the extent of marketing practices, sustainability challenges, and proposed strategic improvements. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study process. The information gathered was used solely for academic and research purposes.

3 Results

3.1 Characteristics of Halal Food Enterprises

This section presents the characteristics of halal food enterprise operators in Dalican Public Market, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte, Philippines. Understanding the profile of halal food enterprises is important because business age, product specialization, and halal certification status influence market positioning, consumer trust, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. These characteristics provide essential context for interpreting the marketing practices and challenges experienced by halal food enterprises operating in a Muslim-majority public market.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of respondents by type of product sold

Type of Product	f	%
Cooked meals	6	20.00%
Fresh meat	8	26.67%
Processed food	4	13.33%
Snacks	5	16.67%
Beverages	2	6.67%
Other products	5	16.67%
Total	**30**	**100.00%**

The largest proportion of respondents (30.00%) had been operating businesses for one to three years, followed by four to six years (23.33%) and seven to ten years (23.33%). Vendors operating for less than one year accounted for 16.67%, while 6.67% had maintained operations for more than 10 years. The predominance of enterprises operating for three years or less suggests a relatively young and dynamic halal business sector characterized by continual market entry and entrepreneurial activity.

The concentration of young enterprises may be explained through Stinchcombe's (1965) Liability of Newness Theory, where newly established businesses often face challenges related to organizational legitimacy, resource acquisition, and market acceptance. Despite the constraints, the substantial number of halal enterprises indicates growing opportunities within the halal food market. This result reflects broader global trends in halal entrepreneurship, where increasing consumer demand for halal-compliant products has facilitated the expansion of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across Muslim-majority regions (Fischer 2015). The presence of newly established and moderately experienced enterprises suggests an evolving halal business ecosystem capable of generating local economic opportunities while responding to changing consumer preferences. The distribution of enterprises by type of product sold shows the characteristics of the local halal food market.

Fresh meat represented the largest product category (26.67%), followed by cooked meals (20.00%), while snacks and other products each accounted for 16.67%. Processed food represented 13.33%, and beverages accounted for 6.67%. The predominance of fresh meat shows the central role of meat products in the halal food economy. This reflects consumer demand for products that comply with Islamic dietary requirements. In Muslim communities, meat products are often subject to greater scrutiny because halal status depends on the ingredients used and adherence to prescribed slaughtering procedures. According to Fuseini *et al.* (2016), halal meat production requires compliance with specific Islamic principles governing animal slaughter and processing, making meat products particularly sensitive to issues of halal authenticity and religious acceptability. Therefore, consumers tend to place greater emphasis on the halal status of fresh meat products compared to other food categories. This result suggests that fresh meat vendors occupy a strategic position within the local halal market and play an important role in maintaining consumer confidence in halal food systems.

The prevalence of cooked meals reflects changing consumer lifestyles and increasing demand for convenient halal food options. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), evolving consumption patterns and urbanization have contributed to the growth of ready-to-eat food markets, creating opportunities for small-scale food enterprises. In Muslim-majority communities, these trends may allow halal food vendors to diversify product offerings while maintaining compliance with Islamic dietary requirements. The relatively lower representation of beverages may indicate limited market demand or greater competition from alternative beverage providers operating outside the halal food sector.

An important result is that respondents reported possessing halal certification, representing a 100% compliance rate among surveyed enterprises. This result shows a strong commitment to halal assurance and reflects the significance of certification as a mechanism for building consumer trust. Halal certification serves as a critical quality signal that reduces uncertainty and strengthens consumer confidence in food products (Ab Talib *et al.* 2016). From a marketing perspective, certification functions as a religious requirement and a strategic business asset differentiating enterprises within competitive markets.

The result supports the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991), where behavior is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of halal food enterprises, compliance with halal certification requirements may be shaped by social expectations within Muslim communities, regulatory requirements, and the perceived benefits associated with certification. The universal certification status indicates that halal compliance has become institutionalized as a normative business practice within the local market environment.

The characteristics of respondents carry several theoretical implications. First, the dominance of relatively young enterprises supports entrepreneurial ecosystem perspectives, which emphasize the role of new businesses in stimulating local economic development and innovation. Second, the concentration of fresh meat and cooked meal enterprises reinforces halal consumption theories that connect purchasing behavior to

religious values, food quality, and trust. Third, the widespread adoption of halal certification suggests the importance of institutional legitimacy in shaping enterprise behavior, supporting the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991) and signaling theory, where certification serves as a credible signal of product quality and compliance.

3.2 Marketing Practices of Halal Food Enterprises

The results reported an overall weighted mean of 4.53, interpreted as Very High Extent. The mean scores were classified as follows: 4.21–5.00 = Very High Extent, 3.41–4.20 = High Extent, 2.61–3.40 = Moderate Extent, 1.81–2.60 = Low Extent, and 1.00–1.80 = Very Low Extent. Therefore, the respondents extensively implemented marketing practices across the dimensions of product, price, place, and promotion. Among the four dimensions, product obtained the highest weighted mean (M = 4.91), followed by price (M = 4.57), place (M = 4.39), and promotion (M = 4.24).

The exceptionally high rating of the product dimension showed the central role of product quality, freshness, cleanliness, and halal compliance in the marketing strategies of halal food enterprises. In halal markets, products are evaluated based on functional attributes and conformity with Islamic principles. This result was consistent with the concept of halalan tayyiban, where products should be lawful, wholesome, safe, and beneficial for consumers. Bonne & Verbeke (2008) reported that Muslim consumers often considered halal compliance a critical determinant of food choice because the concept reflected religious obligations and perceptions of product quality. Similarly, Wilson & Liu (2010) argued that halal functions as a brand attribute transmitting trust, authenticity, and ethical assurance among consumers. The strong emphasis placed on product-related attributes suggested that respondents viewed halal integrity as an important method of establishing consumer trust and maintaining long-term customer relationships. Shah *et al.* (2020) emphasized that product quality and halal assurance remained fundamental elements of successful halal marketing strategies because the variables influenced consumer confidence and market competitiveness. The results showed that product-related practices served as the primary marketing strength of halal food enterprises operating within the study area.

Price was recorded as the second-highest marketing dimension, indicating that affordability and fairness were important considerations among halal food enterprises. The respondents recognized the need to balance profitability with consumer purchasing capacity. This observation was consistent with Islamic marketing principles, which advocated fairness, transparency, and social responsibility in commercial transactions. Hassan *et al.* (2008) emphasized that ethical pricing practices contributed to customer satisfaction and business sustainability by preventing exploitation and facilitating trust between sellers and consumers. Therefore, the high rating of the price dimension suggested that respondents adopted pricing practices in line with market realities and Islamic ethical values. These practices may have strengthened customer loyalty and contributed to the sustainability of halal food enterprises operating within a competitive public market environment. The results also reflected the importance of value creation in halal marketing, where consumers seek products with economic and religious value.

The place dimension received a high rating, indicating that accessibility, visibility, cleanliness, and product arrangement played important roles in the respondents' marketing practices. Halal food enterprises recognized the importance of creating convenient and appealing market environments for consumers. According to Berman & Evans (2018), retail location and store accessibility are among the most influential determinants of customer traffic and purchasing behavior because convenience and product exposure are directly affected. Ab Talib *et al.* (2016) stated that effective distribution and market accessibility contributed significantly to the credibility and performance of halal enterprises by ensuring the availability of halal products and protection throughout the supply chain. The relatively high score for place indicated that respondents strategically used market locations and product displays to maximize customer engagement. Moreover, organized selling areas and clean environments may have reinforced perceptions of food safety, product quality, and halal compliance, enhancing consumer confidence.

Promotion received the lowest score among the four dimensions and was interpreted as being practiced to a very great extent. This result suggested that respondents actively engaged in promotional activities but depended more on product quality and pricing strategies than formal marketing communications. The relatively lower rating may have reflected the continued dependence of small-scale enterprises on traditional promotional methods such as word-of-mouth referrals and interpersonal relationships. Mukhtar & Mohsin Butt (2012) found that trust-based communication remained influential in Muslim consumer markets, where recommendations from family members, friends, and community networks significantly affected purchasing decisions. Even though traditional approaches appeared effective in the local context, the results also suggested opportunities for halal food enterprises to strengthen the use of digital marketing platforms and social media tools. Kotler *et al.* (2019) emphasized that digital transformation changed the way businesses interact with consumers, enabling enterprises to expand market reach, strengthen brand visibility, and enhance engagement through online platforms. Greater adoption of digital marketing tools improves the competitiveness of halal food enterprises and enables effective participation in the growing halal economy.

Table 2: Mean distribution of the respondents by marketing practices of halal food enterprises

Type of Product	WM	Interpretation
Product	4.91	Very High Extent
Price	4.57	Very High Extent
Place	4.39	Very High Extent
Promotion	4.24	Very High Extent
Overall Mean	**4.53**	**Very High Extent**

The results can be interpreted through Resource-Based View (RBV) proposed by Barney (1991), where organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage through valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate resources. In the context of the present study, product quality, halal compliance, customer trust, ethical pricing, and market accessibility may be viewed as resources that contribute to enterprise competitiveness and sustainability. The results have relevance to the Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing developed by Morgan & Hunt (1994), which emphasizes the importance of trust and commitment in establishing long-term relationships between businesses and customers. Respondents' strong emphasis on product integrity, fair pricing, and customer-oriented practices suggests the relevance of trust-based and relationship-oriented practices to sustaining enterprise performance within the halal market. Moreover, Ab Talib *et al.* (2016) viewed halal marketing as an integration of Islamic values and contemporary marketing practices designed to create long-term value for businesses and consumers. The results carried important implications for halal entrepreneurship and enterprise sustainability. The dominance of product-related strategies suggested that halal food enterprises competed primarily through quality assurance and compliance with Islamic principles. Even though the approach appeared effective in maintaining consumer confidence, greater investment in digital marketing, branding, and customer engagement initiatives may strengthen market competitiveness. As halal markets continue to expand, enterprises that successfully integrate traditional halal values with modern marketing practices are positioned to achieve sustainable growth, enhance market penetration, and contribute to the broader development of the halal industry.

3.3 Challenges in Marketing Halal Food Products

Respondents agreed that several operational and business-related factors affected the sustainability and growth of enterprises, with an overall mean of 3.61. The mean scores were interpreted using the following ranges: 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree, 3.41–4.20 = Agree, 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Agree, 1.81–2.60 = Disagree, and 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree. Among the identified challenges, limited space or poor location affecting sales (M = 4.83) and lack of marketing knowledge affecting business growth (M = 4.83) were reported as the most significant concerns and interpreted as Strongly Agree. These were followed by fluctuating prices of raw materials affecting pricing (M = 4.67), also interpreted as Strongly Agree. In contrast, respondents disagreed that limited access to halal certification significantly affected businesses (M = 2.30) and strongly disagreed that strong competition among vendors constituted a major challenge (M = 1.40). Cumulatively, operational and internal business constraints posed greater challenges to enterprise development than external market competition.

Limited space and poor business location represented the most critical challenges confronting halal food enterprises. Respondents strongly agreed that unfavorable stall locations and restricted selling spaces negatively affected sales performance. This result reported the importance of accessibility and visibility within public market environments, where consumer traffic largely determines purchasing opportunities. Levy & Weitz (2012) emphasized that retail location remained the most influential determinant of business success because the variable directly affected customer convenience, exposure, and accessibility. Enterprises located in less visible or accessible areas often experience lower customer engagement regardless of product quality. Therefore, physical infrastructure and strategic market positioning remained crucial determinants of enterprise performance within traditional public market settings.

An equally significant challenge identified by respondents was the lack of marketing knowledge. The respondents strongly agreed that insufficient knowledge of marketing strategies constrained business growth and limited opportunities for expansion. This result reflected the increasing complexity of contemporary business environments, where enterprises are expected to use diverse marketing tools, digital platforms, branding strategies, and customer engagement methods. Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) argued that marketing competence had become an essential organizational capability enabling businesses to respond effectively to changing consumer preferences and competitive conditions. Even though halal food enterprises showed strong commitment to halal compliance and product quality, many operators may have lacked the technical skills necessary to maximize market opportunities through strategic marketing initiatives.

Table 3: Mean distribution of the respondents on the challenges in marketing halal food products

Indicators	WM	Interpretation
There is strong competition among vendors.	1.40	Strongly disagree
Limited access to halal certification affects my business.	2.30	Disagree
Fluctuating prices of raw materials affect pricing.	4.67	Strongly agree
Limited space or poor location affects sales.	4.83	Strongly agree
Lack of marketing knowledge affects business growth.	4.83	Strongly agree
Overall Mean	**3.61**	**Agree**

Fluctuating prices of raw materials were reported as a significant challenge affecting enterprise operations. Respondents strongly agreed that variations in input costs affected product pricing and business stability. This result showed the vulnerability of small-scale enterprises to economic uncertainties and supply chain disruptions. Christopher (2016) stated that fluctuations in raw material prices, transportation costs, and supply availability placed substantial pressure on small businesses because of limited financial reserves and purchasing power. For halal food enterprises, rising production costs may create difficulties in maintaining affordable prices while preserving profitability and product quality. Therefore, economic instability within supply chains may directly influence enterprise sustainability and long-term viability.

The respondents disagreed that limited access to halal certification significantly affected business operations. This result differed from many studies that identify certification as a major barrier for small enterprises. After fulfilling the requirements, respondents may no longer perceive certification access as a significant challenge. Tieman *et al.* (2012) emphasized that halal certification served as a mechanism for strengthening market credibility and consumer confidence. After certification has been secured, enterprises may become more concerned with operational issues such as marketing, pricing, and business management. Therefore, certification-related barriers were relatively less important within the context of the present study.

Another result was the strong disagreement regarding competition among vendors as a major business challenge. Respondents did not perceive intense rivalry within the market environment, suggesting that halal food enterprises operated within a relatively stable market characterized by sufficient consumer demand. Porter (1985) argued that competitive pressure becomes more pronounced when markets approach saturation, and firms struggle to differentiate the products. The results indicate that halal food enterprises in Dalican Public Market benefited from a supportive business environment where demand remained adequate to sustain multiple vendors simultaneously. The shared cultural and religious context of the community may have promoted cooperative rather than highly competitive business relationships among enterprise operators.

From a theoretical perspective, the results supported Human Capital Theory, where knowledge, skills, and competencies are valuable assets influencing organizational productivity and growth. Becker (1993) argued that investments in education, training, and skill development enhance individual and organizational performance. The identification of marketing knowledge as a major challenge suggested that deficiencies in human capital constrained enterprise competitiveness and limited opportunities for growth. The result is consistent with Resource Dependence Theory, where organizations depend on external resources that shape operational outcomes and strategic decisions. Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) explained that access to critical resources such as capital, infrastructure, information, and supply inputs significantly influences organizational effectiveness. The challenges associated with fluctuating raw material prices and unfavorable business locations reflected the influence of external resource conditions on the sustainability of halal food enterprises.

The results carried important implications for halal entrepreneurship and enterprise development. Even though respondents showed strong adherence to halal principles and product quality standards, operational limitations related to infrastructure, marketing competence, and resource management continued to affect business growth. These suggest the need for capacity-building programs focusing on marketing skills, digital literacy, business planning, and customer engagement. Improvements in market infrastructure, stall allocation, and enterprise support services contribute to the sustainability and competitiveness of halal food enterprises. The interventions are important in halal economies where small-scale enterprises play a significant role in local economic development and food security.

3.4 Proposed Strategic Improvements

The proposed interventions obtained weighted means ranging from 4.83 to 4.88 and were interpreted as Strongly Agree. The overall mean was 4.85, which corresponded to a Strongly Agree interpretation. Among the proposed interventions, developing digital marketing skills among vendors obtained the highest weighted mean (M = 4.88). This was followed by strengthening support for halal certification (M = 4.86) and improving access to financial assistance or capital (M = 4.86). Meanwhile, training on marketing strategies (M = 4.83) and enhancing the promotion of halal products through community programs (M = 4.83) received strong support from respondents. These results suggested a strong consensus among halal food enterprise operators regarding the need for capacity-building initiatives, institutional support mechanisms, and technological adaptation to enhance business sustainability and competitiveness.

Table 4: Mean distribution of the respondents on proposed strategic improvements

Indicators	WM	Interpretation
Training on marketing strategies should be provided to vendors.	4.83	Strongly agree
Support for halal certification should be strengthened.	4.86	Strongly agree
Access to financial assistance or capital should be improved.	4.86	Strongly agree
Promotion of halal products through community programs should be enhanced.	4.83	Strongly agree
Digital marketing skills should be developed among vendors.	4.88	Strongly agree
Overall Mean	**4.85**	**Strongly agree**

The highest-rated improvement focused on the development of digital marketing skills among vendors. This result reflected the increasing importance of digital technologies in contemporary business environments and suggested that respondents recognized the potential of online platforms to expand market reach and strengthen customer engagement. Small and medium enterprises depend on digital marketing to improve visibility, build customer relationships, and access broader markets beyond immediate geographic locations. Ryan (2016) emphasized that digital marketing enabled businesses to communicate directly with consumers, improve brand awareness, and generate competitive advantages through cost-effective promotional strategies. The strong support for digital marketing development suggested that respondents viewed technological competence as an essential component of future business growth. Given the growing influence of social media and e-commerce platforms, digital literacy may become a critical determinant of competitiveness among halal food enterprises.

Support for halal certification is reported as a highly prioritized strategic intervention. Respondents previously indicated that certification was not a major challenge, but the support mechanisms were strengthened. The long-term value of maintaining certification standards and improving access to institutional assistance was recognized. Halal certification has become an important quality assurance mechanism that enhances consumer trust, facilitates market expansion, and improves business credibility. According to Aziz & Chok (2013), certification serves as evidence of religious compliance and a strategic marketing tool influencing consumer confidence and purchasing decisions. Therefore, the respondents' support for strengthened certification initiatives reflected an understanding of the broader economic and reputational benefits associated with halal assurance systems.

Access to financial assistance and business capital was identified as a critical area for improvement. Respondents strongly agreed that greater financial support would enhance enterprise sustainability and growth opportunities. This result was consistent with entrepreneurship literature reporting financial capital as a key determinant of business development, innovation, and resilience. Scarborough & Cornwall (2018) argued that access to adequate financing enabled entrepreneurs to invest in infrastructure, inventory, technology, and business expansion activities. For halal food enterprises operating within public market environments, financial assistance facilitates improvements in product quality, marketing activities, facility enhancement, and compliance with evolving halal standards. The results underscored the importance of financial inclusion programs designed to support small-scale halal entrepreneurs.

Training on marketing strategies received strong support from respondents. This result complemented the earlier identification of marketing knowledge as the most significant business challenge. Effective marketing training provides entrepreneurs with competencies related to branding, consumer behavior analysis, customer relationship management, and market segmentation. Armstrong *et al.* (2019) emphasized that marketing knowledge enabled businesses to identify consumer needs more effectively and develop strategies needed to create sustainable value. The respondents' strong endorsement of marketing training suggested a willingness to acquire new skills and adopt more sophisticated business practices. These capacity-building initiatives may enhance enterprise performance and overall market competitiveness.

Respondents strongly agreed that promotion of halal products through community programs should be enhanced. Community-based promotional activities may increase consumer awareness of halal products while strengthening support for local enterprises. Community engagement is particularly important in Muslim-majority settings where social networks, cultural values, and religious norms significantly influence purchasing behavior. According to Putnam (2000), community participation and social capital contribute to economic development by facilitating trust, cooperation, and collective action. Community-oriented promotional initiatives served

as effective mechanisms for increasing market visibility, strengthening consumer loyalty, and supporting the growth of halal enterprises.

From a theoretical perspective, the results supported Diffusion of Innovation Theory proposed by Rogers (2003), which explained how individuals and organizations adopted new ideas, technologies, and practices over time. The strong support for digital marketing development, training, and enhanced certification systems suggested a willingness among halal entrepreneurs to adopt innovations to improve business performance. This is consistent with Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory, where enterprise success depends on individual capabilities as well as the availability of supportive institutional, financial, and social structures. Isenberg (2010) argued that thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems required coordinated support from governments, financial institutions, educational organizations, and community stakeholders. The respondents' emphasis on certification support, financial assistance, and training initiatives reflected the importance of ecosystem-level interventions in fostering enterprise sustainability.

The results carried important implications for halal entrepreneurship and industry development. The strong consensus across all proposed interventions indicated that respondents viewed enterprise development as a multidimensional process requiring improvements in knowledge, technology, finance, and institutional support. The emphasis on digital marketing suggested that halal food enterprises were aware of the need to adapt to evolving market conditions and consumer preferences. The demand for certification support and financial assistance reported the continuing role of public institutions and development organizations in strengthening halal business ecosystems. Policymakers, local government units, halal certification bodies, and business development agencies should collaborate to design integrated support programs that address the diverse needs of halal entrepreneurs.

Future studies may evaluate the effectiveness of training programs, certification support initiatives, and digital marketing interventions in improving business performance among halal food enterprises. Longitudinal studies may examine whether participation in capacity-building programs contributes to sustained enterprise growth and market expansion over time. Comparative studies including different regions and market environments may also provide insights into contextual differences in enterprise support needs. Furthermore, future experts may investigate the role of government policies, Islamic finance programs, and entrepreneurial networks in facilitating the development of sustainable halal business ecosystems.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the marketing practices and sustainability challenges of halal food enterprises operating in a Muslim-majority public market in Dalican, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte, Philippines. The results showed that respondents extensively implemented marketing practices, with product quality, halal compliance, and fair pricing reported as the most emphasized strategies. These practices represented key aspects of halal food enterprise operations, particularly in maintaining product quality, halal compliance, and fair pricing. Even though place and promotion were also highly practiced, product-related attributes developed as the most emphasized aspects of halal food enterprise operations.

This study further identified limited business space or poor location, lack of marketing knowledge, and fluctuating raw material prices as the major challenges affecting enterprise operations. In contrast, limited access to halal certification and competition among vendors were not perceived as significant barriers. To address the challenges, respondents strongly supported strategic interventions such as digital marketing skills development, enhanced halal certification support, improved access to financial assistance, marketing training programs, and community-based promotional initiatives. These results show the importance of strengthening entrepreneurial capabilities, institutional support mechanisms, and technological adaptation to improve the sustainability and competitiveness of halal food enterprises.

The long-term sustainability of halal food enterprises depends on adherence to halal principles and product quality, as well as the ability of entrepreneurs to respond effectively to operational, financial, and marketing challenges. Strengthening collaboration among government agencies, halal certification bodies, educational institutions, financial organizations, and local communities may contribute to the development of a more resilient halal business ecosystem. Future studies may examine the relationship between marketing practices and business performance indicators such as profitability, customer retention, and enterprise growth. Comparative studies including halal food enterprises from different regions and market settings provide deeper insights into contextual differences in marketing practices and business challenges. Furthermore, qualitative and longitudinal investigations explore the effectiveness of digital marketing adoption, entrepreneurial training programs, certification support initiatives, and other capacity-building interventions in enhancing the sustainability and growth of halal food enterprises.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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