

FROM CERTIFICATION TO TRUST: DIGITAL BRANDING STRATEGY IN INDONESIA'S HALAL ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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ABSTRAK

Sertifikasi halal di Indonesia tumbuh pesat, dengan lebih dari sembilan juta produk bersertifikat pada akhir 2025, namun pertumbuhan ini tidak selalu diikuti kepercayaan digital konsumen terhadap merek bersertifikat. Artikel ini mengkaji mengapa sertifikasi halal, proses administratif yang dikelola bersama oleh Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal (BPJPH), Lembaga Pemeriksa Halal (LPH), dan Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), belum tentu diterjemahkan menjadi kepercayaan digital yang dibutuhkan pelaku usaha. Dengan pendekatan kajian pustaka dan studi kasus kelembagaan, artikel ini menganalisis arsitektur institusional sertifikasi halal, kesenjangan antara sertifikasi dan kepercayaan digital, serta Surat Edaran BPJPH Nomor 7 Tahun 2025 yang mewajibkan publikasi digital status halal. Menggunakan kerangka analisis jaringan sosial (ikatan kuat-lemah dan struktur hub), studi ini menunjukkan regulasi tersebut berpotensi mengubah kepatuhan administratif menjadi strategi branding berbasis jaringan, dengan syarat disertai penguatan kolaborasi lintas lembaga dan literasi digital pelaku usaha.

Kata Kunci: sertifikasi halal; branding digital syariah; analisis jaringan sosial; kepercayaan konsumen; BPJPH

ABSTRACT

Halal certification in Indonesia has expanded rapidly, covering more than nine million certified products by late 2025, yet this growth has not always been matched by consumers' digital trust in certified brands. This article examines why halal certification, jointly administered by the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), Halal Inspection Bodies (LPH), and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), does not automatically translate into digital trust. Using a literature-based approach combined with an institutional case study, the article analyses the institutional architecture of halal certification, the certification-trust gap, and BPJPH Circular Letter No. 7 of 2025, which mandates digital publication of halal status. Drawing on social network analysis, particularly

weak ties and network hubs, the study shows that this regulation can convert administrative compliance into a network-based branding strategy, provided it is matched by stronger inter-agency collaboration and digital-literacy support for business actors.

Keywords: halal certification; digital branding syariah; social network analysis; consumer trust; BPJPH

INTRODUCTION

Halal certification has become one of the fastest-growing regulatory instruments in Indonesia's economy. Since Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance made certification mandatory in stages, the number of certified products has risen from a few hundred thousand a decade ago to more than 9.8 million by October 2025, and to roughly 13 million by mid-2026, according to figures released by the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal, hereafter BPJPH) (BPJPH, 2025; RRI.co.id, 2026). The great majority of these certificates, around 80 percent, belong to micro and small enterprises, which reflects the government's strategy of using free or subsidised certification schemes such as SEHATI to bring the informal food and beverage sector into the formal halal system (RRI.co.id, 2026). At the global level, the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report for 2024/2025 ranked Indonesia third in the world's halal industry ecosystem, behind Malaysia and Saudi Arabia (MUI, 2026), a position the government hopes to improve as it pursues its stated vision of making Indonesia the world's halal hub by 2029.

Despite this remarkable administrative achievement, certification alone has not guaranteed that certified products are recognised, trusted, or chosen by consumers in the crowded digital marketplace. Studies of micro, small, and medium enterprises (UMKM) repeatedly report a similar pattern: business owners obtain a halal certificate, yet their products remain digitally invisible because they lack the marketing skills, content strategy, or online presence needed to convert legal compliance into consumer trust (Subandono et al., 2025). Community-service and applied-research reports from several regions describe UMKM whose halal status is not accompanied by adequate digital promotion, product photography, or marketplace listings, so that the certificate functions as a compliance document rather than a communication asset (Subandono et al., 2025). This condition mirrors a broader theme that has attracted growing scholarly and

policy attention in Indonesia: that regulatory compliance and market trust are governed by different logics, and that closing the gap between them requires a communication strategy, not merely an administrative one.

Most existing research on this issue is located at the level of individual business actors. Training programmes, community-service projects, and case studies of UMKM digital-marketing adoption dominate the literature, typically evaluating how certification affects an individual firm's sales, branding, or consumer perception. Far less attention has been paid to the institutional level, namely how the certifying ecosystem itself, consisting of BPJPH, Halal Inspection Bodies (Lembaga Pemeriksa Halal, or LPH), and the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, or MUI), designs its own communication strategy and, through regulation, shapes how millions of certified businesses communicate their halal status online. This article addresses that gap. It examines a concrete and recent policy instrument, BPJPH Circular Letter No. 7 of 2025 on the Publication of Halal Products and the Obligation to Display the Indonesian Halal Label, which for the first time requires certified businesses to publicise their halal status across digital channels rather than treating certification as a private administrative matter. Reading this instrument through the lens of social network analysis allows the discussion to move beyond a simple compliance narrative and to ask how a regulatory mandate can function as a deliberate, network-based branding strategy.

The stakes of this question are considerable given Indonesia's demographic weight as the world's largest Muslim-majority market. Mandatory certification has been rolled out in stages: obligations for medium and large food and beverage businesses took full effect on 17 October 2024, imported products face a deadline of 17 October 2026, and non-consumable goods such as fashion and leather items are scheduled to follow from October 2026 (BPJPH, 2025). Each stage adds millions of new certificate holders who must simultaneously learn how to comply with the law and how to communicate that compliance to consumers, which makes the institutional communication strategy examined here increasingly consequential rather than a marginal concern.

The research is located at the national policy level in Indonesia, drawing on statutory instruments (Law No. 33/2014, Government Regulation No. 42/2024, Presidential Regulation No. 153/2024), official BPJPH circulars and public data, and academic and applied literature on halal certification and digital marketing published mainly in the last five years. Three research questions guide the discussion: first, how does the

tripartite institutional mechanism involving BPJPH, LPH, and MUI structure the process and, implicitly, the communication of halal certification in Indonesia; second, why does certification by itself fail to guarantee digital brand trust for certified businesses; and third, how does BPJPH's recent shift toward mandatory digital publication function, or fail to function, as a network-based branding strategy capable of closing the certification-trust gap. To answer these questions, the article employs a qualitative, library-based research method combined with a single institutional case study. Data were collected through document analysis of laws and regulations, BPJPH's official statistics and circulars, and secondary academic and applied-research literature, rather than through primary fieldwork such as surveys or interviews. This method is appropriate because the object of inquiry is an institutional policy instrument and its publicly documented implementation, not the behaviour of an individual sample of consumers or business owners, and because it allows the analysis to be grounded in verifiable public records rather than self-reported data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two bodies of theory inform this article: the literature on digital branding and trust in the halal industry, and social network analysis as a framework for understanding how trust and information travel between people. Both are discussed briefly here before being applied to the Indonesian halal-certification case in the following section.

Digital branding syariah can be understood as the process of building consumer trust and brand identity in ways that are visibly consistent with Islamic values, communicated primarily through digital channels rather than physical points of sale. Applied research on Indonesian UMKM shows that halal certification is most effective when it is paired with an active digital-marketing strategy; certified businesses that also build a social-media presence, produce clear product content, and list on marketplaces report better consumer trust and modest sales gains, while those that treat certification as a one-off administrative task see limited commercial benefit from it (Subandono et al., 2025). This distinction matters conceptually because it separates two processes that are often collapsed into one another in policy discourse: certification, understood as a legal-administrative act that ends once a certificate is issued, and branding, understood as a continuous, networked process of building public perception that never truly ends as long as a brand remains active in

the market. The same distinction appears in the broader Islamic-communication literature, where scholars studying da'wah in digital media stress that message effectiveness on social platforms depends less on the formal correctness of a message and more on interactivity, audience understanding of platform features, and sustained engagement between communicator and audience (Ummah, 2023). Although that literature addresses religious preaching rather than product certification, its central insight, that digital trust is built relationally and continuously rather than declared administratively and once, applies directly to halal branding as well.

Social network analysis offers a complementary framework for explaining how such trust actually spreads once a brand or an institution enters the digital space. Mark Granovetter's classic distinction between strong and weak ties remains foundational here. Strong ties, characterised by frequent and emotionally close interaction such as within a family, a congregation, or a loyal customer community, generate deep trust and reliable testimony but tend to circulate information within an already-connected cluster. Weak ties, by contrast, are the more occasional, cross-cutting relationships that connect otherwise separate clusters, and Granovetter showed that it is precisely these weaker connections that carry novel information across social boundaries that strong ties rarely cross (Granovetter, 1973). Translated into a branding context, a certified business that only reinforces its strong ties, its existing loyal customers, will retain them but struggle to reach new market segments; reaching new segments requires activating weak ties that bridge otherwise separate communities.

A related concept, the small-world network, explains why this bridging role can be achieved efficiently even in a large and only partially connected population. Watts and Strogatz demonstrated that networks composed mostly of tightly clustered groups can nonetheless be traversed in very few steps if a small number of nodes hold cross-cluster connections, a property popularly known through the "six degrees of separation" idea and its cultural variant, the "six degrees of Kevin Bacon" game linking Hollywood actors through shared films (Watts & Strogatz, 1998). In marketing and public-communication terms, these cross-cutting nodes are often described as hubs: not necessarily the accounts with the largest following, but the accounts or actors whose position gives them credibility and reach across multiple otherwise-separate communities, such as micro-influencers embedded in more than one social circle. A recent systematic

review of sixty-eight international studies on influencer marketing confirms this mechanism empirically, finding that trust and perceived authenticity, rather than follower count alone, are the factors that most consistently determine whether an influencer's endorsement actually shifts consumer behaviour and brand equity (Sangapan, 2025). A single collaboration with a well-placed hub can therefore diffuse a message across several clusters far more efficiently than spreading a uniform promotional budget evenly across many disconnected accounts.

Beyond these two literatures, it is useful to name the components that digital branding syariah is usually understood to comprise, since the discussion in the following section repeatedly refers back to them. Drawing together recurring themes across the halal-marketing and Islamic-communication literature cited above, digital branding syariah can be described as resting on four interrelated pillars. The first is trust, meaning that a certificate or religious credential must function as tangible, verifiable evidence rather than mere administrative formality. The second is value-based identity, meaning that promotional messaging must remain visibly consistent with sharia principles rather than treating religious compliance and marketing tone as separate concerns. The third is authentic storytelling, meaning that product narratives should communicate a business's human motivations and practices rather than restating compliance claims alone. The fourth is digital credibility, meaning that a business's reputation must be consistent across the multiple platforms where consumers now encounter it, rather than concentrated in a single official channel. These four pillars are not proposed here as an empirically tested model; they are used analytically, as a checklist against which the institutional case examined in this article can be read.

Taken together, these two literatures, and the four-pillar description of digital branding syariah drawn from them, suggest a hypothesis worth testing against the Indonesian halal-certification case: that the persistent gap between certification and consumer trust is, at least in part, a network problem rather than only a legal-compliance problem, and that closing it requires certifying institutions and certified businesses alike to think not only about whether a product is halal, but about how that status travels through strong ties, weak ties, and hubs in the digital public sphere. The following section examines whether Indonesia's certification institutions have begun to act on that logic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia's halal-certification ecosystem sits at the intersection of religious authority, state regulation, and market competition. Within a single decade it has moved from a voluntary, MUI-led labelling practice into a mandatory, state-administered system involving three formally separated institutions, a shift that has produced rapid, measurable growth in certificate numbers even as questions remain about how well that growth translates into consumer-facing trust. Because the certifying institutions, BPJPH, LPH, and MUI, publish their statistics, regulations, and circulars openly, this ecosystem offers unusually rich documentary material for a literature-based case study of institutional communication strategy, without requiring primary data collection from individual consumers or business owners.

The discussion below is organised around the three research questions set out in the introduction. It first maps the institutional architecture that governs certification, to establish where, structurally, public communication is or is not embedded as a formal responsibility. It then examines why this architecture, on its own, has produced a persistent gap between certification and digital consumer trust, drawing on applied research on UMKM digital marketing. Finally, it analyses BPJPH Circular Letter No. 7 of 2025 as the institutions' first explicit attempt to close that gap, reading its provisions through the social network analysis framework introduced in the literature review to assess both its promise and its limits.

The Institutional Architecture of Halal Certification: BPJPH, LPH, and MUI

Indonesia's halal-certification system rests on a tripartite mechanism established by Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance and elaborated through Government Regulation No. 31 of 2019, Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024, and Presidential Regulation No. 153 of 2024. BPJPH, positioned under the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a non-ministerial government institution, acts as the regulator and sole certificate-issuing authority; it sets policy, norms, and procedures, manages the Sihlal digital platform, and coordinates the two other pillars of the system (Kominfo, 2014; BPJPH, 2025). LPH institutions, of which 109 were operating by 2025, carry out the technical inspection and testing of raw materials, production processes, and the implementation of a business's Halal Assurance System, work that is delegated to certified halal

auditors and, where relevant, to Halal Process Assistants (Pendamping Proses Produk Halal, or PPH) who guide small businesses through the paperwork (BPJPH, 2025). Once an LPH completes its examination, the report is forwarded through BPJPH to MUI's Fatwa Commission, which convenes a Halal Fatwa Session (Sidang Fatwa Halal) to determine the product's halal status within a maximum of thirty working days; only after MUI issues its determination can BPJPH legally publish the certificate (Kominfo, 2014). This sequence means that no single institution certifies a product alone: legal authority, technical inspection, and religious determination are deliberately separated among BPJPH, LPH, and MUI, a design intended to balance administrative efficiency with religious legitimacy.

For businesses, two pathways lead through this mechanism. The self-declare pathway is reserved for micro and small enterprises whose products are classified as low risk; it relies on the business owner's own declaration, assisted by a registered PPH, and is the route used by the great majority of the roughly 103,758 PPH personnel and 331 PPH-providing institutions active in 2025 (BPJPH, 2025). The regular pathway, by contrast, applies to medium and large businesses or to products with more complex or higher-risk ingredients, such as meat requiring slaughter audits, and involves a full LPH inspection. Table 1 summarises how the scale of certification has grown as both pathways have been scaled up nationally.

Table 1. Growth in the Number of BPJPH-Certified Halal Products, 2025–2026

Reporting point	Certified products (cumulative)	Source
August 2025	6.4 million, with 7 million projected by end of 2025	LPH LPPOM, 2025
October 2025	More than 9.8 million; domestic products alone reached 9,795,756, alongside 2,868,457 certificates issued, 109 LPH, and	BPJPH, 2025

Reporting point	Certified products (cumulative)	Source
Mid-2026	103,758 PPH personnel Approximately 13 million, about 80 percent held by micro and small enterprises	RRI.co.id, 2026

Source: compiled by the author from BPJPH (2025), LPH LPPOM (2025), and RRI.co.id (2026).

The choice between these two pathways carries implications for trust that extend beyond administrative convenience. Self-declare certification relies primarily on the business owner's own written declaration, checked and assisted by a PPH rather than independently verified through full laboratory or on-site inspection, whereas the regular pathway subjects a business to direct examination by LPH auditors. Both pathways culminate in the same MUI fatwa determination and the same official Halal Label, so the certificate itself does not visibly distinguish which route a product took; from a network-trust perspective, this means the institutional architecture treats self-declared and fully audited products as equivalent signals to the market, even though the underlying verification intensity differs. Table 1 shows a clear acceleration in certification volume across less than a year, driven mainly by micro and small enterprises entering the system through the self-declare pathway. This growth pattern confirms that BPJPH, LPH, and MUI have succeeded in scaling the technical and religious sides of certification to an unprecedented degree. Table 2 summarises the legal basis and core function of each institution to clarify where, within this architecture, public communication is or is not embedded as a formal task.

Table 2. Institutional Roles in Indonesia's Halal Certification Mechanism

Institution	Legal basis	Core function	Output
BPJPH	Law No. 33/2014;	Regulate policy, norms,	Halal certificate, official Halal Label,

Institution	Legal basis	Core function	Output
LPH	Government Regulation No. 42/2024; Presidential Regulation No. 153/2024	and procedures; register applications; issue and revoke certificates; manage the Sihalal platform	Sihalal registration record
	Law No. 33/2014, Art. 1(13); Government Regulation No. 31/2019, Arts. 31–42	Inspect and test raw materials, production processes, and the business's Halal Assurance System	Inspection/examination report submitted to BPJPH
MUI (Fatwa Commission)	Law No. 33/2014, Arts. 33–34	Convene the Halal Fatwa Session to determine halal status, within 30 working days	Halal status determination (ketetapan kehalalan)

Source: compiled by the author from Law No. 33/2014 and its implementing regulations.

As Table 2 indicates, the statutory design of the certification mechanism concentrates every institution's mandate on registration, inspection, and religious determination; none of the three bodies was originally assigned a public-facing communication task. The process, in other words, was built as a linear, back-office pipeline running from business to LPH to MUI and back to BPJPH, ending the moment a certificate is issued. This institutional

architecture is efficient at producing certificates, as Table 1 demonstrates, but it does not by itself produce consumer awareness or digital trust, a gap examined directly in the following subsection.

The architecture also has an international dimension that is easy to overlook when the discussion stays at the domestic level. By 2025, BPJPH had signed Mutual Recognition Agreements with 93 foreign halal bodies across 62 countries, allowing 108,657 foreign products under 3,690 registered foreign certificates to circulate as recognised halal products in Indonesia, alongside a further 132,173 products certified directly for export markets (BPJPH, 2025). BPJPH officials have used these agreements, together with appearances at international forums such as the 2025 IFESDC forum in Washington DC and the MABIMS ministerial meeting in Melaka, to argue that Indonesia's halal ecosystem is becoming globally interoperable rather than domestically self-contained (BPJPH, 2025). In network terms, each new Mutual Recognition Agreement functions as a deliberately engineered weak tie, a bridge connecting Indonesia's certification cluster to an otherwise separate national cluster abroad, which is structurally the same mechanism this article later argues could be used to bridge certified businesses to new domestic consumer segments; the difference is that BPJPH has so far applied this bridging logic to institutional recognition rather than to public-facing brand communication.

The Certification-Trust Gap: Why Certified Products Remain Digitally Invisible

The institutional architecture described above helps explain a paradox that recurs throughout applied research on Indonesian UMKM: many businesses that have successfully obtained halal certification remain commercially quiet in the digital marketplace. Field-based studies of digital-marketing assistance programmes for halal UMKM consistently find that certification and digital promotion are treated by business owners as two separate, largely unconnected tasks; owners who complete the certification process do not automatically build a social-media presence, produce consistent product content, or list their products on marketplaces, and many report low digital literacy and limited understanding of how to translate a certificate into promotional material (Subandono et al., 2025). Where digital-marketing training is delivered alongside certification assistance, participating businesses do report improved social-media accounts, more consistent content, and access to buyers beyond their

immediate neighbourhood, suggesting that the trust gap is addressable but does not close on its own (Subandono et al., 2025).

This picture is corroborated by a separate 2025 survey of 120 certified food businesses across West Java, East Java, and West Sumatra, which found that certified businesses reported revenue gains of roughly 15 to 30 percent within two years of certification, gains the study attributed less to the certificate itself than to certified businesses' simultaneous entry into modern retail and e-commerce channels that require a halal label as a listing condition (Astiwaru, 2025). Read together, the two studies suggest that certification opens a door to more demanding, higher-trust sales channels, but walking through that door still depends on a business's own, often under-resourced, digital-communication effort. Earlier Indonesian research on food-sector SMEs reached a similar conclusion using operational-performance indicators rather than digital-marketing indicators: certification was found to improve perceived product quality and access to modern retail, but its effect on overall business performance was constrained by SMEs' limited managerial and promotional capacity (Giyanti & Indriastiningsih, 2019, as cited in Astiwaru, 2025). A separate policy analysis of UMKM certification in Indonesia likewise concluded that legal recognition alone rarely converts into market advantage without a parallel branding effort on the business's part (Hutabarat & Ivanna, 2024, as cited in Astiwaru, 2025).

This pattern can be explained conceptually by distinguishing the underlying logic of certification from the underlying logic of branding, summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparing the Logic of Halal Certification and Digital Branding

Dimension	Halal certification	Digital branding
Nature of the process	Administrative and legal	Perceptual and relational
Direction of communication	One-directional, from business to regulator	Networked, spreading person to person
Point of completion	Ends once the certificate is issued	Continues as long as the brand remains active

Dimension	Halal certification	Digital branding
Basis of trust	Institutional authority (BPJPH/LPH/MUI)	Social proof, repetition, and network diffusion

Source: author's synthesis, developed from the institutional analysis in the preceding subsection and from Subandono et al. (2025).

Table 3 clarifies why obtaining a certificate cannot, by itself, be expected to generate digital trust: the two processes differ in direction, in their point of completion, and in what ultimately grounds a consumer's confidence. A certificate answers the regulator's question, "does this product meet the halal standard," whereas branding answers the consumer's question, "can I trust what this business tells me," and the second question is settled socially, through repeated exposure and peer validation, not administratively. Because none of the three certifying institutions carries a communication mandate, as shown in Table 2, the responsibility for closing this gap has, until recently, fallen entirely on individual businesses, most of which, as the UMKM literature shows, lack the resources or skills to do so effectively (Subandono et al., 2025).

Read through the social network analysis framework introduced earlier, the gap can be reframed more precisely. A certificate builds strong-tie trust at best: it reassures a business's existing, already-convinced customers that their choice is religiously sound, but it does nothing to activate the weak ties or hub-level connections that would carry the message to new, previously unreachable consumer clusters (Granovetter, 1973). Left to operate through the certification pipeline alone, halal status remains locked inside a business's existing customer network rather than diffusing outward, which is precisely the pattern that applied UMKM research describes as certified products staying "quiet" despite formal compliance.

The scale of this gap is visible in BPJPH's own public statements, even though the figures reported vary depending on which denominator officials use. In an October 2025 briefing, the BPJPH leadership described 9.8 million certified products as the highest achievement since certification became mandatory, framing the figure as a success story (BPJPH, 2025). Seven months later, in April 2026, the same leadership told a different forum that only 24 million of an estimated 64 million products circulating in Indonesia had been certified, using the comparison to argue that acceleration was still badly needed (MUI, 2026). The two statements are

not strictly contradictory, since they appear to measure different populations, cumulative certificates issued versus the total addressable market of goods in circulation, but read together they illustrate a communication pattern in which certification progress is repeatedly narrated to institutional and industry audiences rather than to ordinary consumers browsing a marketplace. This asymmetry reinforces the argument developed through Table 3: the certifying institutions have, until recently, directed most of their communication effort inward, toward regulatory and industry stakeholders, leaving the outward-facing, consumer-directed communication effort almost entirely to individual businesses that, as the UMKM literature shows, are often the least equipped to carry it out (Subandono et al., 2025). This diagnosis sets up the question addressed in the next subsection: whether BPJPH's most recent regulatory intervention begins to correct this structural gap.

From Regulation to Reach: Circular Letter No. 7/2025 as a Network-Based Branding Instrument

On 28 August 2025, BPJPH issued Circular Letter No. 7 of 2025 on the Publication of Halal Products and the Obligation to Display the Indonesian Halal Label on Halal-Certified Products, a policy instrument that, for the first time, converts the display and publication of halal status from a voluntary marketing choice into a supervised regulatory obligation (SSEK Law Firm, 2025). The circular imposes four linked obligations on certified businesses. First, they must display the official Indonesian Halal Label, using BPJPH's exact design and placement standards, on packaging and at points of sale. Second, they must publish their halal status across the digital channels they own or use for promotion, including company websites, social-media accounts, and marketplace listings, and submit evidence or links of that publication to BPJPH through a dedicated email address for verification (Hukumonline, 2025; SSEK Law Firm, 2025). Third, promotional materials themselves, including advertisements, catalogues, and consumer testimonial videos, must clearly and identifiably display the Halal Label rather than merely mentioning certification in passing (Hukumonline, 2025). Fourth, when publishing on social media, businesses are required to mention or tag BPJPH's official accounts, and BPJPH has committed to featuring engaging and educational halal content, drawn from compliant businesses, on its own official social-media pages (SSEK Law Firm, 2025). These publication requirements build on an earlier labelling rule, BPJPH Head's Decree No. 145 of 2022, which

already required the Halal Label to be paired with its underlying certificate number rather than displayed as a generic logo, and which prohibited businesses from altering the label's colour, shape, or proportions; the 2025 circular effectively extends that same insistence on a single, verifiable, unmodified visual signal from physical packaging into every digital channel a business uses. Non-compliance carries administrative sanctions, up to and including withdrawal of a product from circulation, which gives the publication requirement real regulatory weight rather than leaving it as a suggestion (SSEK Law Firm, 2025).

Analysed through social network analysis, this circular does something the original certification pipeline never did: it deliberately restructures the network position of every certified business. By requiring millions of otherwise unconnected businesses to tag a single official account, the rule creates, almost overnight, a direct tie between every certified node and one central hub, converting what had been a fragmented population of isolated compliance transactions into a hub-and-spoke network anchored on BPJPH itself. BPJPH's parallel commitment to feature compliant businesses on its own pages pushes the agency further, from a passive regulator into an active hub in the sense described by Watts and Strogatz (1998): a node whose cross-cutting position allows it to shorten the distance between otherwise separate clusters of businesses and consumers, echoing how a small number of well-placed micro-influencers can carry a message across communities far more efficiently than an evenly spread promotional budget. Applied research on Indonesian UMKM public relations supports this reading: businesses that collaborate with micro-influencers selected for credibility and audience trust, rather than sheer follower count, report stronger brand-attitude formation than those relying on conventional advertising alone (Salsabila et al., 2024). BPJPH's own account, positioned to curate and re-share content from millions of certified businesses, is structurally attempting the same trust-transfer mechanism at a national scale. Table 4 maps this logic onto concrete strategic actions available at both the institutional and business level.

Table 4. Network-Based Strategic Actions Implied by BPJPH Circular Letter No. 7/2025

Social network concept	Institutional-level action (BPJPH, LPH, MUI)	Business-level action
Strong ties	Keep audit and fatwa timelines predictable so certification remains a credible anchor of trust	Use loyal, repeat customers as sources of authentic testimonials
Weak ties	Expand Mutual Recognition Agreements with foreign halal bodies and require every business to link to BPJPH's account	Seek collaborations outside an existing customer base, such as with community organisations or marketplaces
Hubs	Curate and re-share compliant businesses' content through BPJPH's official social-media accounts	Partner with credible micro-influencers embedded in relevant faith or lifestyle communities
Shareable message design	Mandate a single, standardised, instantly recognisable Halal Label graphic across all channels	Keep halal-related promotional messages concise, authentic, and aligned with sharia values

Source: author's synthesis, developed from SSEK Law Firm (2025), Hukumonline (2025), Granovetter (1973), and Watts and Strogatz (1998).

These stakes are not only domestic. The State of the Global Islamic Economy Report for 2024/2025 placed Indonesia third in the global halal-industry ecosystem, behind Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia's halal-related trade recorded a surplus of roughly USD 29.09 billion between January and October 2024 alone, with processed food as the leading export category (MUI, 2026). Yet the same analysis notes that imported halal products still account for only about one percent of the certified products circulating domestically, a small share relative to the size of Indonesia's own Muslim-majority market of some 240 million people

(MUI, 2026). Read alongside BPJPH's stated 2029 ambition of becoming the world's halal hub, Circular Letter No. 7/2025 can be understood as an attempt to convert Indonesia's certification volume, which Table 1 shows growing quickly, into a form of visible, digitally networked brand equity that supports both domestic consumer trust and international competitiveness, rather than allowing certification to remain a back-office achievement that is legible mainly to regulators and trading partners.

The policy design summarised in Table 4 suggests that BPJPH has, intentionally or not, begun to treat digital branding as a network-engineering problem rather than a purely administrative one. Yet the circular's success is not automatic. Mandating a tie to BPJPH's account guarantees a formal connection, but connection is not the same as the weak-tie bridging that Granovetter identified as the actual carrier of new information across social boundaries; if millions of businesses post the same formulaic label image only to satisfy the reporting requirement, the network will display many spokes radiating from a single hub without the lateral, peer-to-peer sharing that genuinely builds trust. The persistence of low digital literacy among micro-enterprise owners, documented in the UMKM digital-marketing literature discussed above, is a real constraint on how well the circular's requirements translate into the kind of authentic, shareable content that Table 4 recommends (Subandono et al., 2025).

Measured against the four-pillar description of digital branding syariah set out in the literature review, Circular Letter No. 7/2025 makes uneven progress. On the trust pillar, the circular strengthens the certificate's tangibility considerably, since a standardised label backed by a verifiable Sihlal record is precisely the kind of concrete evidence that pillar calls for, rather than a certificate that sits in a filing cabinet. On digital credibility, mandating consistent display across websites, social media, and marketplaces directly targets the requirement that a business's reputation should not be concentrated in a single channel. The circular is far less prescriptive, however, on the value-based identity and authentic storytelling pillars, since it regulates where and how the Halal Label must appear but says nothing about the tone, values, or narrative quality of the surrounding content; a business can satisfy every provision of the circular by attaching a compliant label to an otherwise generic advertisement, without producing the kind of value-consistent, human storytelling that the branding literature associates with durable consumer trust. This unevenness suggests that regulation can engineer the network structure

through which a message travels, as Table 4 shows, but cannot by itself guarantee the quality of the message that travels through it.

A further limitation concerns enforcement capacity rather than policy design. Table 1 shows that certified products now number in the tens of millions, and Table 2 shows that BPJPH is a single agency responsible for regulating all three; verifying that each certified business has correctly displayed the Halal Label, published proof of publication through the designated email channel, and tagged BPJPH's official account, as the circular requires, is a monitoring task of a very different scale from BPJPH's original mandate of registering applications and issuing certificates. Where enforcement resources cannot keep pace with the population of certified businesses, the risk is that the hub-and-spoke structure described in Table 4 remains formally mandated but practically thin, with many businesses complying only enough to avoid the administrative sanctions the circular threatens, rather than genuinely investing in the kind of continuous, relationally built trust that digital branding requires. Whether Circular Letter No. 7/2025 closes the certification-trust gap identified in the previous subsection, or merely formalises the appearance of digital compliance, is therefore an empirical question that this literature-based study cannot settle on its own, and it is a natural direction for the primary, field-based research recommended in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

This article set out to examine why halal certification in Indonesia, despite covering millions of products, does not automatically produce digital consumer trust, and whether recent regulation has begun to close that gap. Three findings stand out. First, the institutional architecture built around BPJPH, LPH, and MUI is deliberately designed to separate regulatory authority, technical inspection, and religious determination, a design that has proven highly effective at scaling certificate production but that, until recently, assigned no formal role to public-facing communication. Second, this architectural gap helps explain a pattern documented repeatedly in applied UMKM research: businesses that obtain certification do not automatically gain digital visibility, because certification builds strong-tie trust within an existing customer base without activating the weak ties and network hubs that carry a brand's message to new consumer segments. Third, BPJPH Circular Letter No. 7 of 2025 represents the first explicit attempt by the certifying institutions to

intervene in this gap, converting the display and digital publication of halal status from a voluntary marketing choice into a supervised obligation that restructures certified businesses into a hub-and-spoke network anchored on BPJPH's own accounts.

Read together, these findings support the article's central argument: the persistent distance between certification and consumer trust is not primarily a legal-compliance problem but a network-communication problem, and closing it requires certifying institutions to take on a communication role that their founding statutes did not originally contemplate. Circular Letter No. 7/2025 shows that BPJPH has begun to recognise this, but the analysis also identifies real limits to the policy's likely effectiveness, including uneven digital literacy among micro-enterprise owners and a monitoring burden that has grown far faster than the agency's original administrative mandate. A regulatory tie to a central hub is not, by itself, the same as the genuine peer-to-peer sharing that Granovetter's weak-tie theory identifies as the true carrier of new trust across social boundaries, and formal compliance with the labelling and tagging requirements could, in the worst case, produce the appearance of a networked branding strategy without its substance.

Because this study relied on document analysis and secondary literature rather than primary data collection, its conclusions should be read as a conceptual and policy-level diagnosis rather than as a measured effect. Future research would benefit from primary, field-based designs, such as surveys or content analysis of certified businesses' actual social-media publications following Circular Letter No. 7/2025, or comparative case studies of specific halal-certified brands, zakat institutions, or Islamic financial products that have adopted network-based branding strategies, in order to test empirically whether the network restructuring identified here in fact narrows the certification-trust gap. Such research would also help BPJPH, LPH, and MUI refine future circulars so that mandated connections to a central hub evolve into the kind of authentic, cross-cluster trust that halal certification alone has so far been unable to guarantee.

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