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Halal at the Margins in Muslim Minority Market Adaptation and Religious Negotiation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the adaptation strategies and religious negotiations carried out by Muslim traders in the context of the revitalization of the Manado Bersehati Market, a modern market in an area with a minority Muslim population. A qualitative phenomenological approach collected data through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. The results of the study show that market revitalization focused on improving infrastructure and digitalization, such as the manless parking system and the integration of the Parkways application, has not accommodated sharia-based needs, such as halal zoning, worship spaces, or product distribution systems according to halal principles. Muslim traders responded to this condition by forming adaptive marketing strategies, combining traditional faith-based approaches with social media, and maintaining religious practices informally. Halal negotiation is carried out through supplier screening, self-labeling, and setting worship times in the trade schedule. The study also compared similar experiences in Muslim minority regions such as South Thailand and South Africa, showing value-based community resilience patterns. These findings highlight the importance of inclusive and responsive market governance to religious diversity and make a theoretical contribution to broadening the halal economic discourse from the perspective of minority actors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of traditional markets in developing countries has become part of efforts to modernize people's economic systems in the face of global market pressures and changing consumer behavior (Cavusgil, 2021; Inglehart, 2020; Purcărea et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the market revitalization program, as mandated in Articles 1, 2, and 3 and Article 13 of Law No. 7 of 2014 concerning Trade, has become a legal framework to strengthen physical infrastructure, improve market governance, and increase the competitiveness of the informal sector (Rajasa, 2022; Suyatna et al., 2022). Nevertheless, market modernization has never been completely socially and culturally neutral (Dewi et al., 2024). Amid this modernization, an important question arises: to what extent does this revitalization process pay attention to local communities' cultural and religious values operating in an increasingly standardized market? This is the primary concern in this study, especially in the context of Muslim communities living as minorities in non-Muslim cities, such as Manado, North Sulawesi.

The Manado Bersehati Market (Pasar Bersehati Manado) is a concrete example of public policy-based revitalization in direct contact with the social practices of grassroots communities. Inaugurated in August 2023, the market underwent a significant overhaul, ranging from physical infrastructure to modern management systems, including integrating innovative parking technology through the Parkways app and a cashless payment system supported by four national banks (Adv Team, 2025; BSS Update, 2024). Various new facilities, such as green open spaces, children's play areas, and parking zones with real-time control systems, are provided (Tigauw & Paat, 2024). However, this modernization does not necessarily create inclusive conditions for all groups of traders. For Muslim traders, especially those who sell food products, there is a specific challenge in maintaining halal integrity in a market space that does not structurally segregate halal and non-halal products (Adekunle & Filson, 2020; Dashti et al., 2024). The existence of pork traders side by side with halal food traders, the lack of halal labeling, and the absence of institutional support to ensure the visibility of halal products are problems that have an impact on trade identity, Muslim consumer beliefs, and the consistency of religious values in daily economic practices.

In the halal economic literature, the issue of product integrity is not only related to certification or ingredient content, but also to the ecosystem in which the product is provided, marketed, and consumed. The concept of halal ecosystem emphasizes that halal assurance concerns aspects of trust, transparency, and compatibility of the trading space with Sharia principles (Adekunle & Filson, 2020; Raimi et al., 2025; Yusup & Sulaiman, 2025). In minority contexts, this dimension becomes more complex because formal institutions such as halal certification bodies and market managers generally do not explicitly accommodate the needs of Muslim groups operating under social and symbolic pressures from non-Muslim majority neighborhoods (Al Farisi et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2021; Srimulyani, 2021; Yusuf et al., 2023). Therefore, this study sees the practice of Muslim traders as a form of everyday halal negotiation (Benussi, 2021; Berger et al., 2017; Kurth & Glasbergen, 2017), which is how Muslim economic actors manage a compromise between economic interests, religious demands, and social structures that are not always supportive.

On the other hand, the literature on minorities and public spaces shows that access to public infrastructure friendly to religious values is part of social justice and inclusion. The theory of spatial justice and cultural citizenship shows that public spatial planning, including the market, is not a neutral arena, but a place where identity, values, and power negotiations occur (Fainstein, 2016;

Stevenson, 2016). In a revitalized market without the active participation of minority groups, there is often a symbolic and practical exclusion of such groups, either through the design of culturally insensitive spaces or through the neglect of their specific needs (Tunstall, 2023). In this case, Muslim traders must get around a system that does not fully accommodate halal principles, while maintaining their existence in a market structure that is increasingly controlled by the logic of modernization and efficiency.

With a phenomenological qualitative approach, this study examines how Muslim traders in the Manado Bersehati Market develop marketing strategies that are economically adaptive and negotiable to Islamic values. The primary focus is directed at hybrid strategies between traditional and digital trading techniques (such as the use of WhatsApp and social media) and how they build customer loyalty while maintaining halal credibility. This research also reconstructs how they interpret market revitalization as a social process that is not neutral, but is loaded with ideological and political content in the form of spatial planning, management authority, and control over trade symbols.

The study is expected to contribute to the global discourse on halal practices in Muslim minority areas, while highlighting the importance of market policy formulation oriented towards technical modernization and responsive to the diversity of religious values and practices. The findings of this study can be a reference for local governments, market managers, and halal certification bodies in designing a fairer, more transparent, and inclusive market system.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to deeply explore the subjective experiences and social meanings formed by Muslim traders in carrying out their trading activities amid the revitalization process of the Manado Bersehati Market (Tenny et al., 2017). The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand how economic actors interpret market space and social interaction and negotiate their religious identity in the context of structural and symbolic modernization.

The research location is centered on the Manado Bersehati Market, which results from the revitalization of the Jengki Market and is now one of the centers of strategic economic activities in Manado City. The location selection was carried out purposively, considering that this market is a space for interaction between Muslim traders as a minority group and other interfaith trading communities in a market structure that has been modernized in terms of infrastructure and management systems.

The research subjects comprised eight Muslim traders who sold foodstuffs, processed foods, and necessities. Informants were selected through purposive sampling techniques with the following criteria: (1) status as active traders in the Bersehati Market, (2) identifying themselves as Muslims, and (3) having traded before and after the market revitalization took place. Data collection techniques include semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation of daily trading activities, and visual documentation of sales halls, product labels, and market management systems (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Moleong, 2021).

The validity of the data is maintained through the triangulation technique of sources and methods, as well as the member check process with informants to ensure the validity of the

transcribed and analyzed narratives. The data was analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Alase, 2017), which involves identifying the main themes of the informant's subjective experience, then interpreting the relationship between these themes and the social, structural, and religious context surrounding them. This approach allows researchers to deeply understand the dynamics of adaptation of marketing strategies and the negotiation of halal values in a complex and pluralistic trading space.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that Muslim traders in the Manado Bersehati Market not only adapt to physical and systemic changes due to market revitalization, but also carry out a complex process of negotiating religious values in maintaining halal principles in a pluralistic public space. The adaptation takes two primary forms: first, a hybrid marketing strategy to maintain economic existence; and second, religious negotiations that take place casually but consistently in everyday trading practices.

Adaptive Marketing Strategies in the Revitalization Market

Muslim traders at the Manado Bersehati Market need to devise a new marketing strategy after the market's revitalization. Revitalization not only brings physical changes, but also fundamentally changes the interaction pattern between traders and customers. A more organized space, a market traffic flow system, and different distribution channels of goods demand adjustments in how products are marketed. Traders can no longer rely solely on strategic locations or spatial proximity to regular buyers, as the zoning system and access points have been restructured by market management. This encourages the birth of a marketing strategy that is reactive, proactive, and adaptive in response to new dynamics of the increasingly organized and complex market.

Traditional approaches remain the primary foundation of Muslim traders' trading strategies in these challenges. Most merchants still rely on emotional connection and direct interaction with consumers as the primary way to maintain customer loyalty (Alaoui & Ouhna, 2024; Koran, 2020). This approach is rooted in local cultural values and Islamic practices, emphasizing *muamalah* ethics, such as honesty, good service, and transaction blessings. (Hasan, 2015; Iswanto et al., 2020) In minority contexts, this strategy is also a safe form of adaptation because it allows traders to develop interpersonal relationships without relying on formal systems that may not be friendly to their religious preferences (Abunyewah et al., 2023; Dashti et al., 2024). In interviews, some merchants admitted that maintaining close relationships with customers they know personally is becoming the "main weapon" to deal with new, broader, and anonymous competition.

Despite relying on traditional approaches, Muslim merchants are starting to implement digital strategies independently to reach new consumers. WhatsApp and Facebook Marketplace are two of the leading platforms that are widely used to expand marketing networks (Wulandari et al., 2023). They take advantage of daily status, community groups, and direct messages features to offer products, accept orders, and provide daily promotional information. Although this technology is still simple and not integrated with modern e-commerce systems, it shows a form of innovation based on practical needs. Merchants can read that today's consumers want faster, more flexible, and more convenient services and digital technology answers that need. This adaptation according Kiptoo et al. (2024) also reflects high cultural resilience, as it is carried out without formal training, but rather through personal initiative and learning from fellow traders.

The digital initiative reflects a form of community marketing based on trust and social values. Muslim traders tend to take advantage of the networks of fellow Muslims, both locally and through the family diaspora outside Manado, to disseminate the halal products they offer. They blend religious values, personal beliefs, and economic information in product promotion narratives. For example, some merchants emphasize "halal and cleanliness" as the main selling point, not just taste or price. This is a form of trust-based halal branding building trust in halal products not through formal certification, but through social reputation and personal credibility in their community (Anwar, 2025). This model is considered more flexible and contextual in minority Muslim communities that often do not have access to official halal certification bodies.

However, this strategy is insufficient to address the structural pressures caused by market revitalization. In interviews, traders revealed that despite the improvement of the market's physical facilities, such as the availability of toilets, ample parking lots, and a more regular cleaning system, they still feel "left behind" because they are not given adequate training or information regarding the new management system. The use of digital parking systems, changes in the flow of visitors, and a more bureaucratic stall arrangement structure make it difficult for small traders, especially the elderly. This shows a digital and managerial gap that needs to be overcome so that market revitalization benefits managers and empowers traders as the leading actors of the local economy (Adekunle & Filson, 2020).

The absence of structural support in the form of digital marketing training reinforces inequalities in technology adaptation. Some merchants stated that they wanted to learn how to use online store applications, QRIS systems, or social media more optimally, but did not have access to such training. The city government and the management of Perumda Pasar Manado do not have a program to assist the digitization of MSMEs that specifically targets traditional market traders. Based on studies in the halal economy literature (Putra et al., 2021), the digitization of halal marketing is very effective in increasing the visibility of halal products, especially in minority areas. This inequality can reinforce economic dualism, where only digitally adaptive traders can survive and thrive.

Market revitalization has also brought about a change in the competitive landscape between traders. With more standardized spaces and a regular flow of visitors, traders with larger capital and aggressive trading strategies tend to dominate consumer access. This is an additional challenge for Muslim traders with limited capital, who are more selective in choosing product sources due to halal principles. They compete not only in price and quality but also in maintaining Sharia values. Sometimes, traders choose not to sell cheaper products but doubt their halal status, even though this option risks lowering profit margins (Purcărea et al., 2022; Raimi et al., 2025). This reflects loyalty to religious principles while demonstrating the limitations of a commercial space controlled by secular commercial logic.

This adaptive marketing strategy is also a forum to strengthen religious identity in a formally neutral public space. Although no market management policy supports the segregation of halal and non-halal products, Muslim traders still strive to create symbolic spaces that convey their Islamic commitment, such as displaying the inscription "Halal", maintaining exceptional cleanliness of stalls, and starting trading activities with prayer. These small actions became forms of religious expression in the public sphere defined by technocratic modernity. In the context of

cultural performance theory, this practice can be read as symbolic resistance to the homogenization of space that tends to ignore minority identities.

The role of local communities is crucial in underpinning the success of this adaptive marketing strategy. The solidarity of the Muslim community in Manado allows for the exchange of information, moral support, and alternative marketing networks independent of the formal market system. Some traders have even formed mosque-based WhatsApp groups or recitation communities to offer products and share logistics information. The community often becomes the main support space when the market is volatile, especially during the pandemic and post-revitalization transition periods. This aligns with the theory of embeddedness (Rutten & Boekema, 2007), which emphasizes that economic activity is always embedded in social networks and community values.

Thus, the adaptive marketing strategies implemented by Muslim traders in the Bersehati Market reflect a blend of pragmatic innovation and the negotiation of religious values. Their adaptation is to survive in a restructured market and maintain the space for Islamic expression in an increasingly modern and bureaucratic trading system. These findings suggest that market revitalization should be understood not just as an infrastructure project, but as a complex social process, which can create new inequalities if not accompanied by an inclusive and value-based approach. Therefore, this marketing strategy of the Muslim community can be seen as a form of halal resilience, namely the ability to maintain halal principles amid structural, technological, and social challenges in the multicultural trading space.

Halal Negotiation in a Multicultural Market Structure

Halal integrity in the revitalization market is a crucial issue that Muslim traders must negotiate daily. In the context of minorities, maintaining sharia-compliant trading practices is not just a matter of choosing products, but also about dealing with social realities that are not always supportive. At the Manado Bersehati Market, the spatial arrangement does not structurally distinguish halal and non-halal products. Halal food vendors can be directly adjacent to non-certified pork or grocery sellers. This puts Muslim traders in a vulnerable position they have to maintain a halal image while still running their businesses in a system that is formally neutral, but culturally inhospitable to minority religious values.

The absence of space segregation for halal products and the lack of supervision from market authorities exacerbate this condition. No written rules or market manager policies require structuring based on product type and religious sensitivity. This makes the concern of Muslim consumers increase, especially since the visualization of non-halal products is straightforward to see. The Muslim traders admitted that some customers questioned the halal status of their goods simply because the stalls were located close to pork sellers. In this case, trust becomes a primary trading asset, more than product quality or price.

Muslim traders developed symbolic and physical strategies to affirm their halal commitments to get around the situation. Some include "100% Halal" labels in handwriting or print. They also keep the stalls clean and closed, and use separate equipment that does not come into contact with other products. In many cases, these actions are personal and not standardized. However, this is precisely where the importance lies: Muslim traders manage the meaning of halal as *a moral practice*, not just a commodity. This aligns with the concept of "everyday halal negotiation" (Adekunle & Filson, 2020; Othman & Md Nawi, 2025; Putra et al., 2021), which emphasizes that halal is not

only based on certification authority, but is also attached to Muslim actors' integrity and social performance.

This negotiation is also reflected in how they answer customer questions regarding materials, product sources, and processing methods. Information about halal is not communicated through certification labels from the MUI or BPJPH, but directly through verbal communication. "I said directly, this is halal because I took it from a Muslim slaughterhouse," said one of the traders. This statement suggests that the trust mechanism is built on social relationships and shared identities, not official documents. In the halal economy literature, this practice is referred to as relational halal assurance that is, halal assurance based on personal relationships, not institutions (Othman & Md Nawi, 2025).

However, the limited institutional support for halal labeling weakens the bargaining position of Muslim traders. Amid market modernization, state-recognized halal labels have become a symbol of formal market power. Merchants who do not have access to such certifications are at an inferior position in the face of new consumers who are more aware of formal standards. This creates a paradox: Muslim traders who sell halal products substantially become less trusted than wholesalers who are certified but have no religious affiliation. In this context, the role of the state and market authorities has become important to create an inclusive and affordable verification system for small traders in minority communities.

On the other hand, the absence of halal-non-halal space segregation also has a psychological impact on Muslim traders. They express feelings of "uncomfortable" or "not free" because they must constantly explain their position in a space dominated by a majority structure. Some even chose not to expand their trade for fear of not being able to maintain halal standards consistently under fast-paced and congested market pressures. This phenomenon reflects a form of symbolic exclusion, in which minorities are given space physically, but not in value. In spatial justice theory Benussi (2021), this is a form of spatial injustice hidden in the design of modern public spaces.

Halal value negotiations also arise in the selection of suppliers and distribution networks. Muslim traders tend to only work with suppliers they know personally and have the same religious background. They reject products that are cheaper but are doubtful of being halal. These decisions can be economically irrational in a market that demands efficiency and high profit margins. However, from a religious perspective, the decision expresses moral integrity. They are willing to lose money in order to maintain the beliefs of the local Muslim community. This decision reinforces their position as moral agents in an economic system dominated by commercial logic.

Traders negotiate religious times and rituals amid crowded market activity in daily practice. Some of them close their stalls during Friday prayers or when there are community religious activities. This act not only reflects spiritual commitment but also becomes a performative form of Muslim identity displayed in public spaces. When market management does not provide a proper worship space or flexible time for religious activities, traders adjust their work rhythms. This shows a form of religious temporal negotiation, which is how religious time is negotiated in a secular market time logic.

As a minority, Muslim traders also built internal solidarity to strengthen their position. They share supplier information, refer customers to each other, and even coordinate stall locations so they are not too scattered (Kiptoo et al., 2024; Wulandari et al., 2023). This solidarity is important

because it allows them to form informal support networks that serve as a substitute for formal systems that are not available. Within the framework of embeddedness theory, their economic activities are firmly embedded in social networks and religious values, making trading activities part of the life of Muslim communities amid the dominance of non-Muslim majority values.

Thus, halal negotiation in a multicultural market structure reflects pragmatic challenges and implies a symbolic struggle for space, value, and recognition. Muslim traders in the Manado Bersehati Market build a coping strategy that is symbolic, social, and spiritual in a market space that does not fully accommodate their identity. Their practice shows that halal is not just a product category, but a battlefield of identity struggle in the ever-changing social order. These findings reinforce the importance of market policies that are both formally neutral and substantively fair in recognizing the diversity of religious values and expressions.

Space, Security, and Control in Modernized Systems

The physical and systemic modernization of the Manado Bersehati Market has brought a significant transformation in the governance of public spaces and infrastructure. Various state-of-the-art facilities were implemented, including the Parkways app-based manless digital parking system, an orderly vehicle entry and exit flow, and sensors and automatic bars. On the surface, this innovation shows significant achievements in efficiency and visitor comfort. However, from a social perspective, this infrastructure reform has not been followed by structural transformations that guarantee fair access and recognition of the diversity of needs of traders, particularly those from religious minority groups.

For Muslim small traders, this modern system has created a new form of symbolic and structural inequality (Fischer & Nisa, 2025). A digital management system does not necessarily increase the participation or welfare of small traders, as they are not involved in the revitalization planning process or the post-development spatial design. In interviews, some traders said they "just adjusted" and "just followed," without being asked to discuss their religious needs, such as halal zoning or worship halls. This shows that the modernization of the market, which is imagined as neutral and efficient, in practice, contains a bias towards the needs of the majority (Qizam et al., 2025).

The distribution of stall space that does not consider the principle of halal is a crucial issue that the technocratic logic of the market cannot answer. No special channels for halal traders were found, nor a clear zone marking between halal and non-halal products. As a result, many Muslim traders had to share corridors with traders of pork or food whose origin is unclear. In Islam, clarity and separation in managing halal and non-halal goods are fundamental principles that cannot be negotiated. The absence of a fair space distribution system is a form of structural invisibility experienced by minority Muslim communities in public commercial spaces (Inglehart, 2020).

This inequality is exacerbated by the absence of affirmative policies that can strengthen the economic position of minority traders (Calder, 2020; Rutten & Boekema, 2007). There are no religious-based incentive, training, or capital facilitation schemes offered by market managers or municipal governments. In many cases, Muslim traders have to pay additional costs to adjust their stalls to make them more feasible in terms of sanitation and halal. This shows that the revitalization carried out so far is structural and surface, but does not touch the deeper socio-cultural dimension. As a result, the modernization process has created a new form of exclusion more subtle, but still significant.

The automated surveillance system also exposes the inequality of control over the space. Technologies like monitoring cameras, financial dashboards, and digital sensors allow market management to control visitor flow and parking revenue in real-time. However, no similar system oversees trading practices based on halal values. In other words, oversight is focused on fiscal and public security aspects, not on protecting minority values or rights. This reflects the bias of technocratic modernity that only measures success through numbers and systems, not social inclusivity (Mohd Nawawi et al., 2019).

In this context, Muslim merchants practice a form of 'everyday religious agency' the daily effort to negotiate space and time independently to maintain their religious commitments (Astriani, 2025). Some actions taken include closing stalls during Friday prayers, not selling on religious days, or choosing a logistics route from suppliers known to have halal commitments. These actions are not part of the official market system, but rather the result of internal negotiations that originate from the religious consciousness of individuals. This practice confirms that Muslim merchants maintain their spiritual integrity even though the systems around them are not supportive.

This space negotiation is also seen from the informal spatial strategy carried out by Muslim traders to maintain a symbolic distance from non-halal products. For example, some deliberately choose stalls on the side of the market that are farther away from non-Muslim traders, or build a simple partition between their trading area and the pork sellers. Some also use a cover cloth as a visual barrier (Yusup & Sulaiman, 2025). This strategy is improvisational and is not supported by market architecture design. However, this practice is important as a form of value-based space claim, not just an economic function.

Modernization also created a form of temporal control that limited the flexibility of religious time. With tightly regulated operating hours and pressure to serve consumers continuously, traders find arranging congregational prayer times or other worship difficult. There are no representative prayer rooms in the market area, and no management policy allows collective pauses in worship. As a result, religious time is negotiated within strict market time limits, creating a tension between spiritual obedience and economic demands. This shows that time has also become a field of value competition in the modern market.

However, the merchants showed extraordinary social and spiritual resilience amid these limitations. They continue to build solidarity networks, share halal logistics information, maintain each other's safety during prayers, and even share buyers in the Muslim community. This resilience does not come from the system, but from the social cohesion formed by the commonality of values and identities. In this case, the community becomes a more responsive and adaptive agent than the formal market structure.

Therefore, market modernization without the fair distribution of space, time, and value has the potential to widen social inequality amid diversity. Technological innovation and control systems can increase efficiency, but if not accompanied by cultural and religious sensitivity, they will reinforce old inequalities in a new form. The case of Pasar Bersehati shows that modernization should not be understood simply as an infrastructure project, but should be positioned as a social process that must be responsive to the values of symbolic justice and the recognition of minority identity. Otherwise, a control system built with technology will only give birth to a more sterile market, but quieter to the rights of vulnerable groups.

Halal Dynamics in Minority Muslim Communities in Asia and Africa

The experience of Muslim traders at the Manado Bersehati Market reflects a pattern that is not isolated, but parallels similar phenomena in other minority Muslim communities worldwide. In many countries with non-Muslim majority demographics, Muslim communities face structural challenges in maintaining halal practices in public spaces that do not necessarily support their religious expression. This can be seen from the case of Muslim communities in Southern Thailand, Mindanao (Philippines), and the Muslim Cape region of South Africa. Although each context has historical and political differences, there is a similar pattern regarding institutional marginalization of halal practices and the dominance of *the state neutrality* approach to the commercial space.

In Southern Thailand, for example, the majority Malay-Patani Muslim community in the southern region continues to experience systemic discrimination in halal trade practices because a secular central state controls the market structure. Research by Mohd Nawawi et al. (2019) shows that although the Thai government recognizes the importance of the halal industry as an export strategy, local policies in Muslim areas often fail to meet the needs of these minority communities. Muslim traders must often develop halal verification systems informally or work with mosque networks to strengthen community trust (Noiwong, 2001). This parallels the practice in Manado, where Muslim traders build halal credibility through social relationships and personal symbols, rather than through a state certification system.

Similar experiences have also occurred in the Southern Philippines, particularly in the Bangsamoro autonomous region. A study by Latif (2019) confirms that despite the more autonomous structure of Muslim authority (BARMM), markets in big cities such as Davao or General Santos that are outside Muslim authorities still resist the segregation of halal and non-halal products. Muslim traders outside the autonomous region still have to face a market design that is neutral and of secular standards. They survived by using community trade networks and strengthening mosque-based halal labeling. This suggests that political autonomy does not necessarily guarantee systemic change in markets managed by national or local secular actors.

In contrast, in South Africa, there are more successful efforts by Muslim communities in Cape Town and Johannesburg to build a halal system that is empowered from the ground up (Vahed & Jeppie, 2005). With support from independent bodies such as the South African National Halaal Authority (SANHA) and the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), the Muslim community is building a certification mechanism widely trusted by consumers and recognized by the state, although not authoritative (Tayob, 2020). The system is collaborative and deeply rooted in community solidarity. This suggests that the grassroots strategy of halal certification can be a solution when the state is unable or unwilling to protect minority halal practices. In the context of the Bersehati Market, this model can be adopted by strengthening local religious institutions that are directly involved in distributing and supervising halal products.

This comparison shows that community strength, moral legitimacy, and social networks play a central role in ensuring the sustainability of halal practices amid secular or non-accommodating market structures. In all three cases, Muslim traders showed the same resilience: they did not wait for state protection, but created their systems either through internal labeling, consumer education, or community building. This is an important lesson for traders in Manado: even though the state is not yet responsive, they can still strengthen their position by building *a halal ecosystem* based on community values.

However, a striking difference is that Manado has no institutional form of an organized halal community. Unlike South Africa or Southern Thailand, which have strong civil society institutions, Muslim traders in Bersehati Market still work individually and informally. This shows that strategic encouragement from religious leaders, academics, and local organizations is needed to form a community-based halal institution that can provide labels, training, and advocacy to traders. This is important to reduce reliance on non-inclusive market systems and build community empowerment from the ground up.

In terms of policy, this comparative study also reveals that countries with Muslim minorities do not have a comprehensive approach to guaranteeing the right to halal practices. Even when there are national halal regulations, their implementation does not always reach small traders or minority communities. This indicates a policy vacuum between the national legal system and the cultural needs of religious communities (Calder, 2020; Putra et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the JPH Law regulates the guarantee of halal products, but does not explicitly discuss how the guarantee is enforced in areas with a majority demographic composition of non-Muslims (Dewi et al., 2024; Rajasa, 2022; Srimulyani, 2021). This creates a gray area in the implementation on the ground.

As such, it is important to encourage a *comparative halal governance approach*, where the design considers local contexts and minority needs. In the context of Manado, this means that the market's revitalization must not only follow the standards of modernity of infrastructure, but must also open up space for local values—including the value of Muslim religiosity to live on an equal footing. The city government and Perumda Pasar can design a halal zoning pilot project in one part of the market as a form of locally-based institutional innovation. This will create a market that is not only modern but also fair and contextual.

Neutral Revitalization or Covert Exclusion? Rereading Market Modernization from a Minority Perspective

Market revitalization is generally understood as an infrastructure modernization project, but in practice, it contains an ideological and power dimension that is often invisible. On the surface, the revitalization of the Manado Bersehati Market appears to be an effort by the city government to improve public comfort, sanitation, and economic access. However, when viewed from the perspective of Muslim traders as a minority group, revitalization also means a reorganization of space and values that are not always symbolically just. With the absence of halal segregation, the absence of worship spaces, and the disregard of policies for faith-based needs, revitalization has given birth to a new form of exclusion, not by prohibiting, but by ignoring it.

The concept of "neutrality" carried out in modern market design tends to obscure the structural inequalities within it. Neutrality in space policy is often considered fair because it does not favor a particular religion, group, or identity. However, in sociological reality, this neutrality is a tool of majority domination because the dominant values do not appear to continue to work behind public policy. In the context of the Bersehati Market, technology-based management systems, uniform regulations, and homogeneous spatial design do not open space for minority religious expression. This is a form of what Foucault in Astriani (2025) calls "oppression through normalization."

In the revitalization of culturally insensitive markets, minorities not only lose value recognition, but also lose autonomy over space. Muslim traders are not involved in the process of redesigning the market. They become objects of change, not subjects that help determine direction. Public

spaces, in this case, markets, are trading spaces and cultural arenas where values, identities, and symbols are at stake. When these spaces are designed without considering the community's needs, the process of revitalization turns into a process of value displacement, in which the way of life, the way of trade, and the religious ways of minority groups are slowly shifted by technocratic logic (Dashti et al., 2024; Kiptoo et al., 2024).

Thus, market revitalization cannot be separated from the discourse of spatial justice and value pluralism. A truly inclusive marketplace not only beautifies physical buildings and facilitates digital transactions, but also provides recognition of different ways of life. This means that halal spaces, worship zones, training of traders based on sharia values, and affirmation schemes for minorities are not privileges, but the fulfillment of the right to a fair space. The market is a reflection of society, and if the market ignores the minority, then it is reproducing injustice in a more elegant form.

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the revitalization of the Manado Bersehati Market, despite bringing infrastructure updates and digital management systems, has not answered the needs of the Muslim merchant community as a minority group. The absence of halal zoning, the neglect of religious expression, and the formal but symbolically unfair distribution of space show that market modernization is still biased towards dominant values. Nevertheless, Muslim traders show adaptive resilience through hybrid marketing strategies and daily religious practices that reflect halal values in product selection, relations with consumers, and the management of worship time.

These findings confirm that equitable market building must be more than just physical modernization; it must be responsive to social diversity and values. Therefore, an inclusive, participatory, and culturally sensitive revitalization policy is needed. Local governments and market managers must provide a space that symbolically and structurally supports halal practices. Meanwhile, Muslim communities also need to build community-based halal institutions to strengthen bargaining positions amid pluralistic markets. Thus, the market can become a space that is efficient, fair, and humane.

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