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A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE USE OF ARABIC TRANSLATION IN HALAL PRODUCT LABELLING BY SMES

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Abstract:

In the context of globalization and the increasing demand for halal products, the challenge of producing consistent and culturally appropriate translations emerges as a critical issue in this study. Inaccuracies in translation can lead to errors or misunderstandings about the halal status of products, particularly when specific terms lack direct equivalents in Arabic or when the intended meaning is distorted through translation. Accurate translation is, therefore, essential to ensure compliance with halal standards and to build consumer trust. This study aims to identify the role of Arabic translation in ensuring compliance with halal standards in the labelling of products produced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, it seeks to analyze the challenges faced by SMEs in ensuring the accuracy of Arabic translations on halal product labels. The study employs a qualitative approach, with a literature review as the primary method. Sources include journals, articles, and documents related to halal labelling and Arabic translation. Data analysis was conducted by examining key themes and concepts related to the use of translations in halal product labelling, providing a comprehensive understanding of the role and challenges faced by SMEs in ensuring the accuracy of Arabic translations on halal product labels. The findings reveal that Arabic translation on halal product labelling plays a vital role in building trust among Muslim consumers and ensuring compliance with international halal standards. However, challenges exist in maintaining translation accuracy and cultural relevance, as well as navigating the variations in halal labelling regulations across international markets. Hence, improvements in

standardization and linguistic precision are necessary to support the assurance of halal product status in a more consistent and effective manner.

Keywords:

Arabic Translation, Halal Product Labelling, Small And Medium Enterprises.

Introduction

In recent decades, the demand for halal products has seen a significant increase. The primary factors driving this growth include the rising global Muslim population and increased consumer awareness about the importance of product compliance with Shariah principles and laws (Khan & Khan, 2017). Muslims are now more cautious in selecting products that align with religious requirements, particularly in sectors such as food, beverages, cosmetics (Hajipour et al., 2015b), and pharmaceuticals. The emergence of younger, more educated Muslim demographics has also contributed to this rising demand, as they are more critical of the authenticity of halal labelling and ensure that the products they use are free from doubtful ingredients. This shift highlights growing consumer awareness of the value of Shariah compliance in everyday products, which in turn motivates more companies to obtain halal certification for their products (Amer, 2023).

The State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2020/21 by Thomson Reuters predicts that the global halal industry will reach a value of \$2.4 trillion by 2024. This growth spans various sectors that require halal compliance. It not only caters to the needs of Muslim consumers but also plays a significant role in the global supply chain, making halal labelling a critical aspect in ensuring trust and adherence to standards (Suryawan et al., 2019).

For small and medium enterprises (SMEs) aiming to enter the international halal market, the need for accurate product labelling and proper translation (Azman Che Mat, 2014), particularly in Arabic, is crucial. This effort not only ensures compliance with halal standards but also helps build consumer trust in Arabic-speaking countries, thereby opening vast opportunities for SMEs to compete in the rapidly growing global halal industry.

However, despite its recognized importance, many companies face significant challenges in translating their product labels into Arabic. One of the primary issues identified is a lack of knowledge (Abdulrahman, 2015) required to ensure accurate translations that align with Shariah terminology. Errors in translation can create uncertainty among Muslim consumers, ultimately reducing their confidence in the halal status of the product.

A study by Mohd Roji Kawi (2023) found that inaccuracies in Arabic translations on halal product labels can lead to serious misunderstandings, especially when technical or religious terms are used. Discrepancies between the original language and the translation may also negatively impact consumer perceptions of product quality, which in turn can influence purchasing decisions. This underscores that precision in the translation process is not only crucial for compliance with halal standards (Amer, 2023) but also for maintaining the product's integrity in the eyes of consumers.

This study holds significant importance in the context of the growing halal industry, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that often face limited resources in the globalization process. Proper labelling with accurate translation is not only vital for ensuring

that products meet halal standards but also for positioning them in markets in a manner that respects local culture and norms.

A study by Anis Shahirah Abdul Sukur (2022) highlighted that cultural appropriateness in product labelling can directly influence a product's success in foreign markets, especially in Arabic-speaking countries with stringent standards for halal products. Therefore, this study aims to identify the role of Arabic translation in ensuring compliance with halal standards in the labelling of products produced by SMEs. Additionally, it seeks to analyze the challenges faced by SMEs in ensuring the accuracy of Arabic translations on halal product labels.

Research Questions:

1. To what extent does Arabic translation play a role in ensuring compliance with halal standards in the labelling of products produced by SMEs?
2. What challenges do SMEs face in ensuring the accuracy of Arabic translations on halal product labels?

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of issues related to the use of Arabic translation in halal product labelling. It involves the analysis of carefully selected secondary documents to ensure accuracy and relevance in addressing the research questions. These documents include academic journals, scholarly articles, and official documents related to halal labelling and the use of Arabic in this context.

The use of such literature not only supports the theoretical framework but also serves as a foundation for identifying the role of Arabic translation and the challenges faced by SMEs in the context of international halal labelling. The data analysis employs a thematic analysis approach, where key themes emerging from the reviewed literature are identified and categorized. This approach facilitates the formulation of comprehensive conclusions on the importance of translation accuracy and the critical challenges that need to be addressed within the SME halal labelling industry.

Results

Research Question 1: To What Extent Does Arabic Translation Play A Role In Ensuring Compliance With Halal Standards In The Labelling Of Products Produced By Small And Medium Enterprises (SMEs)?

Previous studies have found that product labelling in Arabic serves as both an indicator of and a means of ensuring compliance with halal standards, while also building trust among Muslim consumers. For consumers in Arabic-speaking countries, the language used on labels (Benajiba et al., 2019) plays a critical role in shaping perceptions of the authenticity and safety of products. Products labelled in Arabic instill greater confidence among consumers that the products meet Shariah requirements (Hendijani Fard & Seyyed Amiri, 2018). This enhanced trust is particularly valuable for SMEs, whose products may be new or less well-known, as Arabic labelling provides consumers with assurance about the product's safety and compliance.

Arabic translations also help SMEs comply with international halal standards, which often require labelling in the local language of the importing country, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. By labelling products in Arabic (Benajiba et al., 2019), SMEs ensure that their products align with the regulations and halal standards set by certification bodies in these countries. This not only facilitates a smoother halal approval process but also enables the products to compete in markets governed by strict legal frameworks (Rajagopal et al., 2011) and high halal standards.

The study highlights that Arabic translation on labelling enhances the competitiveness of SMEs' halal products, especially when competing against international products (Hussein, 2020) in Middle Eastern markets. Consumers tend to prefer products with labelling in a language they understand, as this adds value in terms of comfort and confidence in their purchasing decisions. In this context, SMEs adopting Arabic labelling find it easier to penetrate these markets since consumers feel more at ease with products that use their native language.

Arabic labelling goes beyond simply translating product information; it serves as a medium of communication that respects the language and culture of the target consumers. This is particularly important in the context of global marketing (Badi, 2019), where respecting local cultures can strengthen business relationships and enhance the reputation of SMEs in international markets (Dauletova & Al-Busaidi, 2024). Accurate Arabic translations, which include essential information such as ingredients, usage instructions, expiration dates, and Shariah compliance details, help prevent consumer confusion and misunderstandings. This not only improves the effectiveness of communication but also raises consumer awareness about the added value of the products.

Research Question 2: What Challenges Do SMEs Face In Ensuring The Accuracy Of Arabic Translation On Halal Product Labels?

Previous studies have highlighted that the cost of providing accurate and high-quality Arabic translations poses a major challenge for many SMEs. Producing translations that require expertise in Arabic often necessitates professional services (Ahmed, 2023), adding to the operational expenses of SMEs, which typically operate with limited capital. Additionally, incorporating specific Arabic labelling on product packaging increases production costs. For SMEs entering the global halal market, these expenses can be a significant barrier to effective competition, as they must balance the quality of translation (Hartono & Azman, 2019) with the need to control production costs.

A lack of deep knowledge about the Arabic language and the cultural nuances of target markets presents another challenge for SMEs. Literal translations are often insufficient because halal-related terms in Arabic have specific meanings that cannot be directly translated (Silviyanti et al., 2022). SMEs unfamiliar with the subtleties of Arabic language and culture risk misinterpretations that can undermine the effectiveness of communication with consumers. Even minor translation errors can cause confusion or raise doubts about the authenticity of a product's halal status, with significant implications for credibility (Dr Mohamad Hussin, 2023) and consumer acceptance in Arabic-speaking markets.

In addition to language challenges, SMEs face complexities in ensuring their labelling complies with the diverse halal standards of different countries, especially in the Middle East. Each country may have its own halal certification standards and specific requirements for halal

product labelling in Arabic (Amer, 2023). These variations force SMEs to adapt their labelling to meet the specific demands of target countries, requiring an in-depth understanding of local regulations and frequent adjustments to labelling, which increase costs and effort.

Arabic has numerous dialects and variations in terminology used across Arabic-speaking countries (Alnosairee & Sartini, 2021). Although formal Arabic is generally used in product labelling, certain halal terms may have different interpretations among consumers in different regions. SMEs must ensure that the terms they use are accurate (Anis Shahirah Abdul Sukur, 2022) and universally accepted by Arab consumers to avoid confusion. Errors in selecting inappropriate terms or language can lead to misunderstandings or doubts about a product's halal status, ultimately impacting consumer trust.

Another significant hurdle is the difficulty of obtaining internationally recognized halal certification (Abu Bakar et al., 2019) that is accepted by target countries. Securing halal certification for Middle Eastern markets can be complex and requires adherence to strict labelling regulations (Benajiba et al., 2019), including verified Arabic translations. This process is often time-consuming and incurs additional costs, which may burden SMEs, particularly if multiple certifications are required to enter various markets (Rajagopal et al., 2011). A lack of expertise in navigating certification procedures across different countries can hinder SMEs' ability to expand in the global halal market.

Discussion

The Role of Arabic Translation

Previous studies emphasize the critical role of Arabic translation in ensuring that halal products comply with Shariah laws, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. Accurate translation on halal product labels not only serves as a communication tool but also acts as a significant assurance influencing Muslim consumers' trust in the halal status of the products (A. L. Zul Ariff et al., 2021). Properly translated labels provide clear and reliable information about the product's adherence to halal standards, which is essential for Muslim consumers who rely heavily on this information to make purchasing decisions that align with their religious beliefs (Hendijani Fard & Seyyed Amiri, 2018).

Accurate translation strengthens the relationship between producers and consumers, building a foundation of trust that supports long-term loyalty and confidence in the products. Dr. Mohamad Hussin (2023) found that any confusion or inaccuracies in translation could cause consumers to doubt the halal status of a product. For instance, if the terms or information on a label appear inconsistent with halal principles, this may negatively affect consumer perceptions of the brand, leading them to avoid the product. In the halal industry, where trust and Shariah compliance are paramount, translation accuracy is a vital requirement directly impacting Muslim consumers' purchasing decisions and the success of products in broader markets (Mohd Azidan Abdul Jabar et al., 2024).

Arabic translation plays an essential role for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in catering to the needs of Muslim consumers. In an increasingly globalized market, SMEs must compete in diverse markets where Arabic-speaking consumers require clear and accurate information about a product's halal status (Amer, 2023). Proper translation ensures that all details about

ingredients, production processes, and halal certification are accurately conveyed, enabling consumers to make informed purchase decisions.

Accurate translation also ensures compliance with the halal regulations and standards set by authorities in Arabic-speaking markets (Khan & Khan, 2017). Each country has different regulations for halal certification, and failure to accurately translate the required information can result in non-compliance with local laws (Abu Bakar et al., 2019). This could lead to legal issues, damage the product's reputation, and reduce consumer trust. High-quality translation is thus a crucial step in safeguarding the position of SME products in competitive markets and ensuring consumer satisfaction and trust.

Arabic translation also plays a role in ensuring compliance with international halal standards for SME product labelling. Products marketed to Muslim consumers worldwide must meet established halal standards, which include verifying that they contain no prohibited ingredients and are produced following Shariah-compliant processes (Rajagopal et al., 2011). Accurate and high-quality translations are essential to convey clear information about the halal status of products. Translated details about ingredients, manufacturing processes, and halal certifications help SMEs ensure that consumers understand and trust their products, thereby increasing consumer confidence and purchase intent (Hendijani Fard & Seyyed Amiri, 2018). Accurate translation also enables SMEs to meet the requirements set by regulatory bodies in different countries, avoiding legal issues and product recalls while expanding their opportunities in international markets (Dameshifa et al., 2023).

In the era of globalization, Muslim consumers are increasingly attentive to the halal status of the products they purchase (Mohd Azidan Abdul Jabar et al., 2024). They seek not only certified halal products but also expect clear and accurate information about the ingredients used and the production processes followed. This reflects their desire for products that not only comply with halal standards but also align with their values and beliefs (Rusalan et al., 2018).

High-quality translation is key to conveying this information in a manner that is easy to understand, enabling consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. By providing well-translated labelling, SMEs can meet Muslim consumer expectations and build trust in their products (Hendijani Fard & Seyyed Amiri, 2018). Accurate translation not only ensures that halal status information is communicated clearly but also helps avoid any misunderstandings that may arise from language differences (Koe & Majid, 2014). When consumers can easily understand the provided information, they are more likely to trust and choose the product, thereby enhancing satisfaction and fostering a positive reputation for SMEs within the Muslim community.

Arabic translation is crucial in preventing legal and labelling errors, which can have serious implications for SMEs. Incorrect or misleading product labelling (Dr. Mohamad Hussin, 2023) can lead to significant legal consequences. For example, if information about a product's halal status is mistranslated, it may be deemed non-halal by consumers or regulatory bodies. This can erode consumer trust and result in high fines, product recalls, or even legal action, causing financial losses and harming the company's performance (Alfoqahaa, 2018).

Accurate and high-quality translations ensure that all information related to halal status—such as ingredients, production processes, and halal certifications—is clearly and precisely communicated to consumers. By meeting these requirements, SMEs protect themselves from legal risks and maintain consumer trust in their products. Trust is a crucial asset in competitive markets, where Muslim consumers are increasingly vigilant about the halal status of their choices. Arabic translation is thus essential in ensuring legal compliance and accurate labelling of halal products (A. L. Zul Ariff et al., 2021).

Challenges for SME Entrepreneurs

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) face various challenges in ensuring the accuracy of Arabic translations on the halal product labels. One of the issues is the availability of professional translation services and the high costs required to obtain quality translations (Hartono & Mohamed Nor Azhari Azman, 2019). SMEs often operate with smaller budgets, which makes it difficult for them to invest in accurate and consistent translations for their products. This barrier can impact Muslim consumers' perception of the halal status of the products, as language accuracy is crucial in ensuring the product is accepted as meeting halal standards. This is supported by Amer (2023), who emphasizes the importance of institutional support in helping SMEs meet international halal labeling standards. With the help and guidance of halal certification bodies, such as providing quality translators, training, or guidelines on halal labeling standards, SMEs can improve their product labels and enhance their competitiveness in the global halal market. Through this support, SMEs not only meet international demand (Dameshifa et al., 2023) but also strengthen Muslim consumer trust in their products.

Additionally, the diversity of dialects in Arabic poses a significant challenge for SMEs in ensuring accurate translations on halal product labels. Arabic has various dialects, such as Egyptian Arabic, Levantine Arabic, and Gulf Arabic, each with its own linguistic characteristics. These differences can affect how information is conveyed and understood by consumers. For example, terms used in one dialect may not be recognized or may have different meanings in another dialect (Alnosairee & Sartini, 2021). If SMEs do not take this diversity into account when translating, there is a risk that information regarding the halal status of the product may become unclear or misleading, which could impact consumer trust in the product. Therefore, selecting translators who understand the relevant dialect for the target market is crucial to ensure accuracy and clarity (Anis Shahirah Abdul Sukur, 2022). Furthermore, each country or region may have specific terms used to refer to ingredients, production processes, or halal certification that may not be common elsewhere. For instance, terms used to refer to certain ingredients may vary between Arab countries, and if the translation is not adapted to the local context, it could cause confusion among consumers. SMEs need to ensure that translations are not only linguistically accurate but also culturally relevant (Koe & Majid, 2014) and meet the needs of consumers in the region. If the terms used in the product label are not suitable or not recognized by consumers, it could lead to misunderstandings about the halal status of the product, which could damage the SME's reputation. Therefore, collaborating with experienced translators who understand the nuances of the Arabic language as well as the local context is an important step to ensure translation accuracy (Mohd Roji Kawi, 2023) and effective halal labeling.

Moreover, compliance with different legal requirements is another significant challenge for SMEs in ensuring the accuracy of Arabic translations on halal product labels. Each country has its own legal framework and regulations related to product labeling, including specific requirements for halal information (Amer, 2023). For example, some countries may require halal certification from certain bodies before a product can be marketed. This means that SMEs need to interact with recognized certification bodies and ensure that all documents and product labels meet the established standards. In other countries, the requirements may be more lenient, but still require compliance with certain guidelines (Mohd Azidan Abdul Jabar et al., 2024) related to halal labeling. This process not only requires high language proficiency but also a deep understanding of the legal and regulatory context in different countries. If the translation is inaccurate or does not meet the legal requirements, the product may be deemed unmarketable. As a result, this could negatively impact the operations and performance of SMEs, leading to lost market opportunities and consumer trust (Ghouse, 2020). Therefore, it is essential for SMEs to seek professional translation services and legal advice to ensure that they meet all legal requirements related to halal product labeling.

Furthermore, maintaining translation consistency is also a challenge for SMEs. In business, especially for products with multiple variations or types, it is crucial to use consistent terms and phrases (Mohd Roji Kawi, 2023). Inconsistent use of terms can cause confusion among consumers, who may not understand the information clearly. For example, if an ingredient like "gelatin" is translated with a different term on different labels, consumers may doubt whether the product is truly halal. This confusion can undermine consumer trust in the product. To address this challenge, SMEs need to have a clear and systematic translation guide (Anis Shahirah Abdul Sukur, 2022). This guide should include terms used consistently, along with examples of how the terms are applied in different contexts. With such a guide, all translators involved in the translation process can follow the same standard, which helps reduce the risk of inconsistencies in translation (Benajiba et al., 2019). Additionally, SMEs can consider using translation tools such as translation memory, which stores previously translated terms and phrases, to ensure that the same terms are used consistently across all labels and related documents. With this systematic and organized approach, SMEs can ensure that the information provided to consumers is clear, accurate, and consistent, which in turn can enhance consumer trust in the halal products offered (Zakraoui et al., 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of Arabic translation on halal product labeling by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is not only crucial for compliance with Islamic law (Sharia) but also plays a significant role in building consumer trust, particularly in markets with a majority Muslim population. The findings and discussions emphasize the importance of accurate translation in enhancing product competitiveness, while translation errors can severely damage brand reputation and cause confusion among consumers regarding the halal status of the product. SMEs often face challenges in producing high-quality translations due to resource limitations, but the use of translation technology and collaboration with reputable halal certification bodies can help overcome these difficulties. Moreover, a deep understanding of the cultural context is essential for producing translations that are not only linguistically accurate but also aligned with Islamic values and norms. Overall, this study underscores that well-translated halal labeling is a determining factor in the success of SMEs in the global market and in building long-term trust among Muslim consumers.

For future studies, the researcher suggests further exploration of the role of technology in facilitating the translation process for SMEs, particularly the use of artificial intelligence and specialized translation software aimed at reducing translation errors. Empirical research could also be conducted to assess Muslim consumers' perceptions of halal product labeling that uses automatic translation and its effects on consumer trust and purchase intentions. Additionally, future research can focus on developing collaborative models between SMEs and halal certification bodies to ensure more accurate translations, while also evaluating the effectiveness of specialized training in Sharia-compliant translation in improving the quality of halal product labeling in the international market. This will provide a deeper understanding of the integration of technology and expertise in enhancing translation practices for the halal industry.

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