

## Halal Indonesia: creating global nation branding through communication and diplomacy

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**Abstract** The global demand for halal products is continuing to rise in tandem with the growing trend of the halal lifestyle. Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population, aims to become a global halal hub, although it currently ranks fourth in the SGIE 2023 report. This study explored how Indonesia, through the BPJPH (Super body Government Agency for Halal Enforcement), utilised public communication and diplomacy to enhance its nation branding in the global halal industry. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, website analysis, social media content, and event documentation. Findings indicate that BPJPH promotes halal branding through the SEHATI campaign, bilateral cooperation, and strategic media approaches. These efforts demonstrate the role of public communication and diplomacy in enhancing Indonesia's credibility and visibility in the global halal industry. The study highlights the significance of soft power and multi-stakeholder engagement in supporting Indonesia's goal to lead the global halal economy.

**Keywords:** communication strategy; halal certification; public diplomacy

### INTRODUCTION

The halal industry has evolved into a global necessity that is no longer limited to countries with Muslim-majority populations. The trend of halal lifestyle in non-Muslim-majority countries is skyrocketing. The halal industry is positioned as a strategic economic opportunity to reach the emerging global market (Global Islamic Economy Report, 2022).

Global demand for halal products, including food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, fashion, and the service sector, continues to increase as the world's Muslim population grows, projected to reach 2.2 billion people by 2030. Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and Germany exhibit a high purchasing power for halal products, ranking among the top ten globally based on purchasing power parity (DinarStandard, 2023). This phenomenon has prompted these countries to take their development and adoption more seriously, as well as to discuss halal issues in various international economic forums (Thomson Reuters & DinarStandard, 2022).

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Indonesia, as a country with a Muslim-majority population, certainly wants to play an active role and appear at the forefront of the global halal industry. One of the monumental steps in building national halal infrastructure is the establishment of the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). BPJPH is a Non-Ministerial Government Institution (LPNK) that is directly responsible to the President of the Republic of Indonesia. This institution was established based on Presidential Regulation Number 153 of 2024 as a technical implementation of the mandate of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance. BPJPH serves as the implementing authority for the halal assurance system in Indonesia, encompassing regulations, certification services, coaching, and supervision of halal products circulating in the market (Rofi'ah et al., 2024). The primary purpose of establishing BPJPH is to ensure the halal nature of products as a whole, provide a guarantee of protection to Muslim consumers, and enhance the competitiveness of national halal products in the global market (BPJPH, 2024). With strong regulatory support, adequate institutional capacity, and synergy between the government, the business world, and the community, Indonesia has a real opportunity to become a leading global hub for the halal industry.

Along with the increase in halal styles in various countries, halal studies and discussions have been carried out both domestically and abroad. The study of halal-related literature covers multiple aspects, including the debate on the source of halal raw materials, the production process, packaging, storage, distribution, and product presentation (Kitayama et al., 2018). The Halal supply chain ensures the integrity of food from an entry perspective, especially for Muslims, who need Safe and reliable food, namely halal food (Jalil et al., 2018).

In Indonesia, numerous studies have been conducted on halal, related explicitly to halal products and halal certification. (Akim et al., 2019) (Santoso & Rachman, 2023). From 2018 to 2022, discussions about products, certificates, and policies, as well as the halal ecosystem, have been in the spotlight, sparking controversy in Indonesia. (Jubaedah et al., 2023). The shift in halal product assurance authority from BP POM MUI to BPJPH raises pros and cons (Faridah, 2019). A new era of halal certification in Indonesia enables the involvement of multiple stakeholders (Cahyawati et al., 2021). In this era, key actors in halal product assurance include the government (BPJPH), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Halal Inspection Institute (LPH), the Halal Product Process Assistance Institute (LP3H), and Business Actors (Maulidia, 2022). The Government of Indonesia issues halal certificates through BPJPH; however, the MUI still plays an important role, especially in organizations that issue halal fatwas (Azizah, 2022).

Among the many scientific works referenced in writing this article, there is still no journal article that discusses Indonesia's branding efforts as a leading player in the global halal industry. This article aims to provide insight into Indonesia's national branding as the centre of the world's halal industry.

Indonesia's efforts to become the centre of the world's halal industry not only reflect economic interests but also a long-term strategy to build its national image and identity in the global arena. In the context of Simon Anholt's (2007) theory of nation branding, a country can foster a positive perception in the eyes of the world through distinctive and consistent competitive advantages, including in the economic and cultural sectors. The halal industry is one of Indonesia's strategic assets in forming a national brand that prioritises religious values, production ethics, and commitment to sustainability.

Through a new approach to public communication and *diplomacy*, Indonesia can utilise more participatory and collaborative diplomacy instruments to promote halal products and halal lifestyles as part of a modern and inclusive national identity (Melissen, 2005). International marketing communication activities, such as participation in global halal exhibitions, halal lifestyle digital campaigns, and collaboration between countries in halal certification, serve as a medium to build international trust in Indonesia's halal assurance system, which BPJPH endorses. In this context, public diplomacy is no longer just the delivery of a one-way message from the state to the outside community; it involves dialogue and cooperation among various actors.

Nation branding, public diplomacy, and marketing communication are interrelated fields in the study of Marketing Public Relations. They are all focused on being used in shaping the country's image and reputation in a global context. Building national branding requires systematic communication using innovative strategies to create effective international audience engagement (Kelechi, 2024). A systematic and structured approach to public communication and diplomacy is crucial for establishing a national brand. (Dia et al., n.d.). Building a nation's image requires complex interactions and concepts, requiring unity and coordination between various stakeholders to promote the interests of national identity (Jiménez-Martínez & Dolea, 2024).

The researchers classified communication and public diplomacy into three approaches. First is the technical approach of business communication, a discussion from the perspective of branding and marketing practitioners who aim to understand better how to utilise branding to gain a competitive advantage for their country. (Dineri et al., 2024). The second approach is a political strategy that typically focuses on the relationship between national branding and public diplomacy, where national branding is often associated with reputation and is considered a potential form of soft power (Goldsmith et al., 2021). Finally, the cultural approach is mainly related to the influence of national image on identity politics (BJ Ali, 2021). These developments also began to arouse academic interest in a wide range of disciplines, including business communication and marketing, economics, sociology, anthropology, and, to a lesser extent, international relations and politics.

The role of communication and public diplomacy in shaping the opinion of the international community encompasses two key points: 1) public diplomacy necessitates efforts to communicate strategies whose primary objective is to influence public opinion within the global community. 2) Soft power in public communication and diplomacy needs to be emphasised because social, sports, and art elements can improve a country's image (FRİDOLİN, 2022). Public diplomacy requires adaptive strategies for global challenges and crises (Mellisen, 2002). A national branding strategy includes practices that create and manage a national identity to achieve economic and political goals (Jiménez-Martínez & Dolea, 2024).

Developing countries often rely on bilateral partnerships to enhance their security and reputation, focusing on shared interests and based on cosmopolitan values (Reyaz & Ahamed, 2022). There are many ways to conduct public communication and diplomacy internationally (Jiménez-Martínez et al., 2024). On the other hand, communication, public diplomacy, and national brands are often built through internal agreements and external perceptions, emphasizing the dynamic nature of national identity in the globalised world.

National branding is essential not only to create an international image (Supriyadi et al., 2024), But it is also a necessary part of the study of communication sciences. National branding is the implementation of a marketing communication strategy that aims to create a reputation for the country (Muhammad Fahrizal et al., 2022). By applying communication theory and best practices, countries can effectively convey their desired image, foster relationships with key target groups, and achieve their national brand goals (Clarke, 2024).

An example of the tremendous success of country branding is South Korea's efforts, exemplified by the Korean Wave. A campaign that combines elements of South Korean cultural construction to stimulate exports and revive the domestic economy with the tagline 'World halal tourism hub'. Nation branding is built through various forms of communication media and public diplomacy such as film, music, and drama. Currently, South Korea has cultivated a positive image in the eyes of the world. Several studies have cited the success of South Korea's national brand, which examined the relationship between exports and the economy as part of the Korean Wave campaign (Razak et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, Pakistan is using cultural and digital diplomacy to improve its international image. Promoting art, music, and film on various global platforms undertakes cultural diplomacy, as exemplified by the international recognition of the film 'Joyland' at the Cannes Film Festival and arts and cultural exchanges abroad. This approach helps Pakistan build a progressive, tolerant, and attractive image for international tourists and investors (Ashraf Kayani & Saif your Rehman, 2022).

The implementation of halal nation branding in several countries has been consistently carried out. In several international forums, it has been stated that halal branding is not only related to Muslims and Muslims (Razak et al., 2020). South Korea even claims to be the world's halal tourist destination, Thailand and Japan are the world's halal kitchen centres; Brazil has built the country's branding as a halal poultry exporter, Australia as a producer of halal beef, while Malaysia is known as a country that implements halal product guarantees very well (Rachmiatie et al., 2022).

Halal studies related to state branding are still relatively small, considering that non-Muslim majority countries are more focused on the issue of financial benefits from the halal product business (Lever & Miele, 2012)(Atiko Putri et al., 2021). It is very different from Indonesia, where nation branding is not only aimed at business interests but also the interests of the normal values and life system of Muslims (Badrudin et al., 2012) (Yusuf et al., 2021). For this reason, the study of the branding of the Indonesian halal nation is interesting and distinguishes it from previous halal studies.

Studies of the national imagination and public diplomacy reveal some unknowns, especially regarding the interaction between state narratives and grassroots movements. While traditional research has focused on state-sponsored branding efforts, this new study highlights the critical role of social movements, as well as the involvement of the business world and government, in shaping national identity and public opinion. These dynamics imply a more complex relationship between branding, communication, and diplomacy than previously understood (Li et al., 2024).

Methodological gaps in current literature research reveal contextual limitations in understanding the interaction between public communication, diplomacy, and national branding, particularly in the digital age. Innovative communication strategies that adapt to changing global contexts are needed, emphasizing the coherence of government agencies (Kelechi, 2024).

Based on the cases mentioned above, it is clear that a country's brand, communication, and public diplomacy play a crucial role in shaping its national and international image through the enhancement of culture, tourism, and the promotion of the country's products and reputation. Demonstrates that successful communication strategies, when planned and integrated, can increase the attractiveness of countries to global markets (Shamsuddin Bolatito & Wahab, 2024).

Based on this background, the researcher wants to see how public communication and diplomacy develop the state brand of 'Indonesia Halal for the world community'. In particular, this study examined two critical points, namely (1) how BPJPH utilises strategic communication to promote Indonesia as a halal product centre globally and (2) how this approach contributes to the country's brand goals.

This article provides essential insight into how Indonesia's image as the centre of the world's halal industry is constructed through public communication and diplomacy, influencing the formation of global public opinion. Therefore, this study aims to explore the public communication and diplomacy strategies employed by BPJPH in contributing to the strengthening of Indonesia's image as 'Indonesia Halal for the World Community' at both national and international levels. Theoretical studies in this context suggest that effective public diplomacy can be a valuable tool for enhancing a country's global competitiveness. This research aligns with the theory of communication and public diplomacy proposed by Jan Melissen, who posits that public diplomacy involves the government and various non-state actors in conveying positive messages related to the state's image.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilising a case-based research method. The case study design used a single-case and multi-level analysis. The case taken is a single case, namely the nation branding of Indonesia as the centre of the world's halal industry. The multi-level analysis encompasses analysis at the government level, conducted by BPJPH, the community level, specifically business actors, and the level of BPJPH's partner institutions, including MUI, foreign certification bodies, and LP3H, which are spread throughout Indonesia.

The data collection employed a semi-structured interview method with four primary informants, comprising two BPJPH public relations staff members, one staff member involved in

overseas activities, and one collaborator staff member. The recruitment of resource persons is based on purposive techniques. This technique is employed because the selection of informants is crucial for key persons, including policyholders and technical implementers, in the field. The profiles of the informants are as follows: Sugeng Pamuji (head of the public relations team), Marfu'ah (Centre for Halal Registration and Certification Cooperation), Farhan Kamal (member of the first special committee for public relations), and Ahmad Izzat Maimun (service analyst, Foreign Cooperation Team). The researchers chose four individual resources because they have roles directly related to research issues. Resource persons were selected based on their technical knowledge and experience in the halal certification process, as well as their skills in communication and public diplomacy, to collect data related to public diplomacy communication and halal certification. These key informants have access to essential and strategic information related to the halal certification program, which serves as a tool for BPJPH's public communication and diplomacy.

This research also involved three additional resource persons (Ade Robiah, Apriyani, Zahra, and Rayhan). These resource persons were selected to obtain information on state branding activities, including non-BPJPH institutions and selected resource persons involved in collaboration at the national and international levels. These three key supporting informants represent the community (Business actors: Rayhan and Zahra) and BPJPH partner institutions (MUI, LP3H; Ade Robiah and Apriyani). This resource person provided information about the socialization of the mandatory halal certification program. The researchers then collected data from observations conducted on the official BPJPH website and social media, as well as documented event activities. They collected journal articles to analyse problems related to this research so that the data obtained was more comprehensive and multi-perspective.

The study presents data collected from interviews on several communication strategies, public diplomacy, and country branding. The data obtained is in the form of activities proposed by BPJPH to create the 'Halal Indonesia for the World Community' brand for the national and international community.

Data were analysed using a qualitative descriptive approach with thematic analysis techniques through a manual coding process. The stages of analysis include: a) Data reduction: The researcher screened data from interviews, documentation, and observations based on the study's primary focus, specifically public communication strategies and halal diplomacy by BPJPH. b) Manual coding: Interview transcript data is read repeatedly and coded based on emerging themes. This coding process is carried out without the aid of software but rather through manual recording to maintain the depth of interpretation. c) Categorisation and thematisation: The codes that emerge are then grouped into main categories and themes, such as *communication strategies*, *public diplomacy*, and *Indonesian halal nation branding*. d) Conclusions: Thematic results are interpreted in light of the theory of public diplomacy and nation branding and are grounded in empirical findings from the practices of other countries.

Data triangulation was carried out through the comparison of interview results with official BPJPH documentation and observations of social media and official websites. This approach aims to ensure the consistency of the information obtained and improve the validity of the findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

According to the Global Islamic Economy Report (Muawanah, 2024), Indonesia is currently in third position as the world's halal producer in 2024. Ironically, Brazil and Taiwan have surpassed Indonesia, two countries with relatively small Muslim populations. The nickname of the world's largest producer of halal products is Brazil, which is known as the largest producer and exporter of halal chicken meat (Boni & Forleo, 2019). This condition occurs because Indonesia still plays a more significant role as a consumer of halal products, with 12.6 percent of halal food needs imported into Indonesia. In the halal food sector, Muslim consumer spending on food increased by 9.6% in 2022 to US\$1.4 trillion, up from US\$1.28 trillion in 2021. Indonesia remains the most significant market (ranked 2nd globally) in terms of consumption. Trade cooperation, such as the ASEAN bilateral trade agreement, opens up new opportunities for halal products in the trade sector. Additionally, the demand for halal meat certificates in the East Asian and South African markets presents promising opportunities for the expansion of halal trade (IAEI, 2024). For this

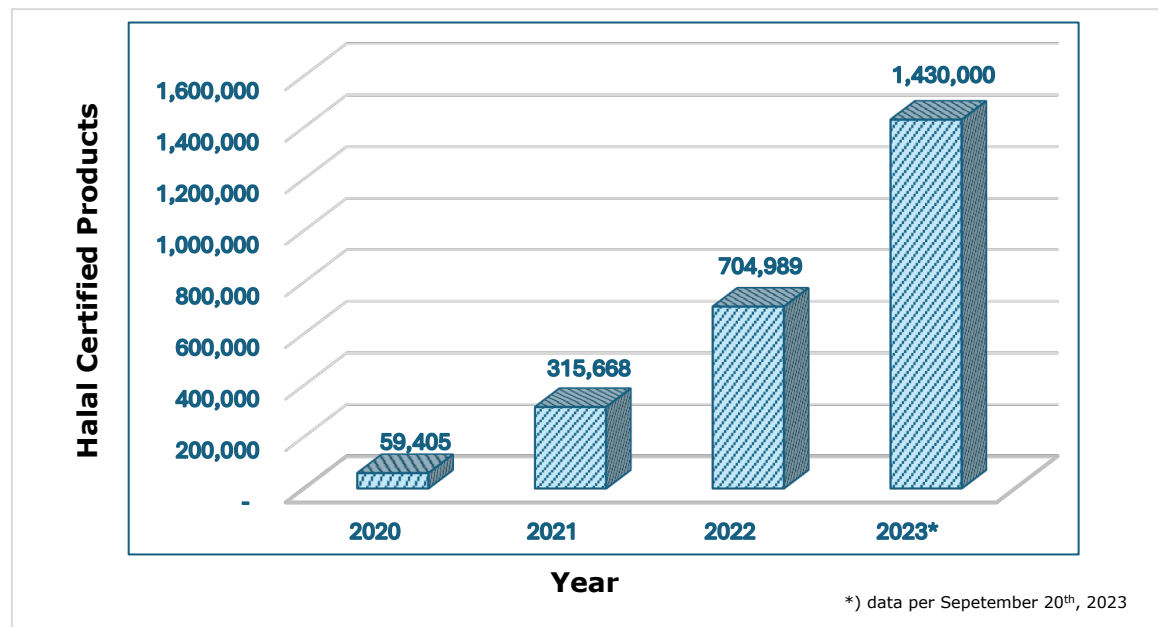
achievement, BPJPH's communication and public diplomacy strategically support the country's branding efforts as 'Indonesia Halal in the World Community'.

### **SEHATI, as part of BPJPH's public communication and diplomacy campaign 'Indonesia Halal for the world community'**

To become the centre of the global halal industry, the first thing BPJPH does is to prepare its infrastructure both at home and abroad. The government must be present and side with business actors. The government's presence is evident in providing convenience for obtaining halal certification, as the global public will readily accept products certified halal and can enter international trade.

Based on the results of interviews with resource persons from BPJPH, who represent the government, BPJPH claims that halal certification is a crucial element in shaping Indonesia's reputation as a major producer of halal products in the international arena. Through various public diplomacy tools, BPJPH has successfully increased the number of certified halal products and strengthened Indonesia's position in the global halal industry (Mazahir et al., 2023). This success is inseparable from the implementation of communication and diplomacy strategies that have a positive impact. The success of the SEHATI program campaign is marked by the active participation of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

The main findings of this study show that since BPJPH took over the management of halal certification from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in 2017. Before BPJPH managed halal certification, the average could only issue fewer than 100 halal certification products per year. Since BPJPH introduced this certification system in 2019, the number of certified products has increased significantly. In 2022, the number of products that receive halal certificates is expected to reach 704,989. In 2023, this figure is projected to rise to 1.43 million products, and by 2024, it is likely to grow to more than 4 million products (Erlina F. Santika, 2025). This data shows that the mandatory halal certification program launched by the government (SEHATI) through BPJPH has a significant impact on efforts to build global trust in Indonesian halal products and improve Indonesia's international reputation. The Figure 1 provides information on the success of the halal certification program carried out by BPJPH.



**Figure 1.** Number of Halal certificates

Source: Databox website and the Secretary of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (2023)

The results of interviews with industry participants and stakeholders show that halal certification has a positive impact on global consumer confidence. The MSME actors interviewed revealed that halal certification has helped improve the image of these products in the international market, especially in Middle Eastern countries that highly value halal labels. Nevertheless, some issues also arise, especially those related to the accessibility and simplicity of the certification process for small businesses. One MSME entrepreneur stated that, although this program is beneficial, the procedure can be complicated and needs to be simplified.

Recognising the importance of halal certification, the socialisation offered by BPJPH emphasises the need to increase awareness of halal policy development. This program provides ten million quota-free halal certification quotas to micro and small business participants through an online self-declaration mechanism led by the Halal Product Process Companion (P3H). On the other hand, large and medium-sized businesses are generally aware of the importance of halal certification, so the socialisation offered by BPJPH focuses more on increasing awareness of halal policy development.

In line with the strengthening of halal infrastructure and certification, BPJPH has also begun to build a national branding. The increase in the number of halal-certified products is also inseparable from the importance of communication and public diplomacy in shaping and enhancing Indonesia's global image. Public communication and diplomacy are the government's strategic steps to engage with the global foreign community, build relationships, and foster a positive perception of the Indonesian state (Goldsmith et al., 2021). This diplomacy involves utilising various communication channels, including traditional media, cultural exchange, and digital platforms, to project Indonesia's values, interests, and image to international audiences (Surwandono & Aulia, 2024).

### **BPJPH's public communication and diplomacy strategy in building national branding**

National branding is the process of creating and managing a country's image and identity in the global market (Alderman & Eggeling, 2024). This process systematically distinguishes the Indonesian state from other countries, highlighting its unique characteristics, including its culture, history, and economic potential (Holmes & White, 2024). The intersection of public diplomacy and national branding is crucial. BPJPH can utilise effective public diplomacy to enhance national branding. Through intense public diplomacy, the government can foster a positive and strong national image that attracts foreign investment, strengthens the halal product and tourism industries, and increases its geopolitical influence (Muhammad Fahrizal et al., 2022). Based on the data obtained in the field, Table 1 outlines the communication strategies and public outreach conducted by BPJPH.

In the context of public communication and diplomacy, the results of this study identified six leading indicators proposed by Jan Melissen that BPJPH used to achieve the goal of the national brand, 'Halal Indonesia for the World Community'.

This network-based approach enables BPJPH to reach out to all segments of society, ensuring widespread acceptance of the message about the importance of halal certification. BPJPH Public Relations collaborates with the media as a key partner in issuing halal certification to disseminate information quickly. BPJPH also collaborates with halal companies to educate consumers directly, increasing public trust in halal-certified products.

BPJPH's public communication and diplomacy in the country include various government and non-government sectors, including mass media institutions, private companies, and community organisations, to support the socialisation and education of halal products. Sugeng Pamuji, in an interview, explained that;

"We see the media as the main partner, but we follow other political parties outside the media, including the private sector. They are partners in implementing and encouraging socialisation, education, and literacy related to halal product assurance. In addition, banks, state-owned enterprises, associations, institutions, communities, and community organisations are also involved" (November 2024).

**Table 1:** BPJPH public communication and diplomacy strategy

Category	Domestic Public	Overseas Public
<b>Network</b>	BPJPH partners with the media, businesses, and the community to promote halal education.	BPJPH is connected with foreign halal bodies to recognise Indonesian standards.
<b>Strategy</b>	BPJPH educates SMEs, offers free certifications, and organizes halal events.	BPJPH collaborates with importers, evaluates foreign accreditations, and participates in global events.
<b>Positive Image</b>	BPJPH organizes MSME exhibitions, partners with ministries, non-governmental halal guarantee institutions, LP POM MUI, and utilizes media for educational purposes.	BPJPH organizes and/or attends exhibitions and conferences. Publications involve international media. Embassies and diplomatic missions abroad are an extension of the government, helping to build national branding.
<b>Info Management</b>	BPJPH monitors negative issues through social media, television, and print media.	BPJPH provides information in English and works with embassies and the Indonesian people.
<b>Communication</b>	BPJPH socializes and makes guidelines and campaigns in tourist villages.	BPJPH spoke at the event and assessed foreign halal objects.
<b>International Relations</b>	BPJPH held a forum to strengthen Indonesia's role as a global hub for halal products.	BPJPH collaborates with foreign businesses and represents Indonesia in IMT-GT.

Source: Author processed results (2025)

In addition to the media and business, BPJPH involves banks, state-owned enterprises, associations, and community institutions in disseminating information and increasing public awareness. The bank provides financial services to support the halal industry, while associations and community institutions conduct educational campaigns in various communities (Rachmiatie et al., 2021). BPJPH also collaborates with e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and Blibli to make it easier for consumers to identify halal products. Shopee offers halal products through Shopee Food, while Blibli offers special sheets for Blibli Hasanah, which controls halal products. This initiative will make it easier for consumers to find halal products, thereby increasing public demand and awareness of the importance of halal-certified products.

BPJPH's public communication and diplomacy are effective at home and abroad in collaboration with selected global institutions and foreign governments. This networking approach facilitates information exchange and cooperation with various international actors, such as global media and companies, as well as halal certification organisations. BPJPH aims to align Indonesian halal standards with international standards, thereby facilitating the export and adoption of Indonesian halal products in the international market. Participating in international exhibitions and seminars, as well as disseminating information through international media, will also help increase global awareness of the benefits of Indonesian halal products.

This partnership strengthens Indonesia's position as a global leader in the halal industry, enabling manufacturers to meet international standards and expand their exports of halal products. With a flexible and inclusive approach, BPJPH has promoted halal products more effectively, opening access to the global market and creating a positive image of Indonesia. The success of this public diplomacy will increase the competitiveness of halal products and strengthen Indonesia's position as a global hub for the halal industry.

### **Domestic public communication strategy: improving MSE education and participation**

In Indonesia, communication and public diplomacy related to halal certification focuses on providing general education to the general public, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs). BPJPH, which is responsible for halal certification, has conducted a socialisation program throughout the province to increase the understanding of micro and small business actors about the importance of halal certification in attracting Muslim consumers. One of its flagship programs is SEHATI (free Halal certification). This program offers micro and small business participants 10

million free halal certification quotas through an online self-declaration mechanism led by the Halal Product Process Companion (P3H).

On the other hand, large and medium-sized enterprises, which are often involved in activities with foreign countries, public communication, and diplomacy related to halal certification, focus on strategic cooperation with importers and international institutions to ensure the halal certification of raw materials imported into Indonesia. BPJPH collaborates with importers to encourage raw material producers to obtain halal certification immediately and aims to accelerate the recognition of their accreditation by foreign halal bodies. This approach aims to reduce problems related to raw materials that enter without halal certification. This effort shows BPJPH's proactive approach to meeting the set halal standards. In addition, BPJPH is reviewing and evaluating foreign halal institutions to collaborate with 118 registered agencies sourced from 46 partners.

In addition to direct cooperation, BPJPH is actively involved internationally, such as through the Makkah Halal Forum, in negotiating halal certification obligations and providing information services through various communication channels, allowing international parties to access the information. The public communication and diplomacy strategy also includes a memorandum of acknowledgement, which facilitates the entry of products from partner countries into Indonesia without the need for recertification. The President has also strengthened Indonesia's commitment to promoting halal certification at various international events, emphasising that halal issues are a national priority. Overall, this approach reflects Indonesia's commitment to ensuring that all products entering the country meet the halal standards set.

### **International public diplomacy: building strategic cooperation and global recognition**

The purpose of public communication and diplomacy in the country is to build and strengthen Indonesia's positive image through social and educational programs carried out by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). The strategy encompasses a range of events and exhibitions designed to enhance the understanding of halal certification among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

The government is accelerating halal certification of food and beverage products for SMEs by providing information through programs in 3,000 tourist villages and opening halal certification services in 405 locations in 27 provinces. In addition, it will open the expo to the public. BPJPH is working with relevant ministries to expand the scope of socialisation through mass media and social media, disseminating information about the importance of halal certification. Additionally, BPJPH offers consulting services to entrepreneurs, helping them understand certification procedures and increasing consumer awareness of halal-certified products.

BPJPH actively participates in national forums, discusses selected issues, and facilitates the exchange of experience and knowledge between various parties. By actively participating in these discussions, BPJPH strengthens its commitment to promoting and developing the halal industry in Indonesia. The argument is that this education and socialisation program will be beneficial for entrepreneurs and increase public awareness of the importance of choosing halal products and creating a better ecosystem in the country.

To conduct public diplomacy abroad, BPJPH participates in international exhibitions, promotes Indonesian halal products, and works to create a positive image of Indonesia as a quality producer, as Marfuah stated:

"We participate in various exhibitions abroad. We are also actively involved in this activity. This election has become a common concern among other ministries, such as the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Certification Agency (BSN). They often participate in international events. Therefore, BPJPH is already known in other countries because Indonesia enforces election obligations with clear legal regulations" (November 2024).

In addition, BPJPH is actively involved in international conferences and seminars. If discussed, the selected issues allow communication with stakeholders abroad and establish international cooperation. They also collaborate with the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and international institutions to accelerate the recognition of Indonesian halal

certification in the global market, including the signing of memoranda of understanding with foreign halal certification bodies.

BPJPH promotes Indonesian halal products at events organised by the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises abroad and uses international media and social media to raise global awareness of halal certification. Participating in the Global Forum allows BPJPH to network and share knowledge on best practices for halal accreditation. In essence, this public diplomacy strategy aims to create a positive image of Indonesia as a globally recognised halal producer and ensure that Indonesian halal products can compete effectively in the international market.

### **Communication management and public diplomacy: international approaches, media, and collaboration**

To strengthen Indonesia's position as the centre of the world's halal industry, the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) implements various integrated communication and public diplomacy strategies. This approach not only focuses on disseminating information domestically but also expands its reach to the international community through mass media, digital platforms, and collaborations with various national and global actors. This section outlines how BPJPH strategically manages public communication and diplomacy, including news management, strategic communication, and establishing sustainable relationships with domestic and international partners to build a positive image and foster global trust in Indonesian halal products. In addition to using the three leading indicators of public communication and diplomacy, this study also uses the spectrum of public communication and diplomacy (Snow & Cull, 2020). Farhan Kamal, Public Relations Office of BPJPH I Institution, has conveyed BPJPH's content design approach to support the success of the mandatory halal certification program as follows;

"Public information is packaged in infographics, news or publications, photos, and videos regarding the obligation to prove elections. We also use English to make information accessible to people living abroad" (November 2024).

BPJPH does this to provide clarity and insight to the public, both at home and abroad, so that the implementation of halal industry guarantees in Indonesia can run smoothly. BPJPH actively uses mass media, digital platforms, and social campaigns to disseminate information related to halal certification obligations in Indonesia. The 'Mandatory Halal 2026' campaign is a clear example of such communication and public diplomacy efforts, where the government aggressively advocates for the importance of halal certification through various media. With this method, BPJPH can build a positive image of Indonesia as a producer of high-quality halal products both domestically and abroad.

BPJPH is committed to disseminating information and shaping the right message for different audiences. International campaigns and partnerships with selected global institutions, such as those in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, are essential for this strategy. With the cooperation of various countries and international organizations, BPJPH has strengthened Indonesia's halal reputation in the global market. Using platforms such as social media, official websites, and international conferences also helps to convey these messages of public communication and diplomacy effectively.

Indonesia is committed to disseminating information and building long-term relationships with various international actors. The signing of cooperation agreements with several countries, including Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and South Korea, reflects Indonesia's commitment to strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations that support the development of global industries. This partnership will help distribute halal certification and strengthen Indonesia's position as a worldwide hub for the halal industry.

In addition, BPJPH also makes various efforts to establish and strengthen long-term relationships through multiple activities to achieve the goals of public diplomacy, said Marfu'ah during an interview.

"Since 2017 until now, we have held various forums, discussions, symposiums, seminars, and conferences. This activity is in collaboration with other countries. For example, Indonesia is a member of IMT GT (growth triangle of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand), which regularly organises such activities every year" (November 2024).

Holding regular forums, discussions, symposiums, seminars, and conferences, as Indonesia has done at IMT GT, is an example of efforts to build and strengthen such relationships. Ultimately, the relationships forged help create a favourable international image through foreign public engagement. In general, communication and public diplomacy carried out by BPJPH, both domestically and internationally, aim to promote Indonesian halal products widely and effectively, increase public awareness and understanding, and strengthen Indonesia's position in the global arena. The Indonesian government has recognised the importance of cultivating a strong national identity and promoting it globally, particularly through the concept of 'Indonesia is halal for the world community'.

Public communication and diplomacy play an essential role in this effort. It is a strategic approach to build relationships and strengthen understanding between countries and foreign publics (Jiménez-Martínez et al., 2024). In particular, digital communication and diplomacy have enabled the Indonesian government to reach a wider global audience and engage with them in a more personal and interactive way. Through various initiatives such as socialisation trips, participation in international exhibitions, and social media platforms such as Instagram, the Indonesian government has showcased its rich culture, natural beauty, and various halal offerings to the world (Mazahir et al., 2023, Dubé et al., 2016).

The data and graphs above demonstrate that the branding of Indonesian people through the halal industry has proven effective in creating a positive global image of the country. Taking advantage of its immense potential as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has significantly increased the number of certified halal products through BPJPH. Since the management of halal certification was transferred to BPJPH in 2017, the number of certified products has increased from approximately 100,000 per year to over 4 million by 2024. Reflecting the significant impact of the halal certification program in building global trust in Indonesian halal products.

The contribution of public communication and diplomacy in building the Indonesian Halal community brand for the world community is at least three important things: (1) Improving Indonesia's global position and encouraging international community involvement. By promoting the halal industry, Indonesia aims to establish itself as a significant hub for halal products and services. (2) International participation, in this case Indonesia, is actively involved in trade exhibitions, the halal industry, and global economic activities. (3) National branding, both directly and indirectly, attracts the global community to understand the potential of the halal economy, including Indonesia's product and service industry, cultural potential, natural beauty, and tourism. Creating economic and social impact for national brands increases global competitiveness and drives economic growth. Community engagement and economic impact are critical to the halal ecosystem, where local communities play a key role in producing, distributing, and serving halal products.

### **Theoretical Discussion**

In recent years, awareness of halal consumption worldwide has increased significantly, driving the growth of the halal industry (Andani et al., 2024). Indonesia capitalised on this phenomenon to capture the world's attention by launching the national branding tagline "Halal Indonesia for the World Community."

The increase in halal consumption is not only happening in Muslim-majority countries but also countries such as Thailand, Korea, and Japan (A. Ali et al., 2020). Not only that, forward-thinking companies have evolved their business strategies to cater to the faith-based segment, with Muslim consumers being the fastest-growing demographic worldwide (Boni & Forleo, 2019). Indonesia takes advantage of this opportunity through a public diplomacy and nation branding strategy that integrates religious values, legal commitments, and a reputation for high-quality halal products. Based on the above opportunities and challenges, Indonesia can enhance its image as a global hub for the product industry by strengthening its position among other countries through planned public diplomacy and strategic branding approaches. The GIFA Award Championship affirms the success of Indonesia (BPJPH) in Halal certification at the 14th World Islamic Finance Award 2024.

Indonesia aims to become the centre of the global halal industry. As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has a unique opportunity to lead the

worldwide market of halal products and services. The largest Muslim population also influences halal consumption, making Indonesia a critical player in the global halal industry market (Adiweno et al., 2018). Unfortunately, although Indonesia has the best halal development potential in the world, it is currently the fourth-largest country in the Global Islamic Economy (SGIE) after Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (Siregar & MA, 2024).

Indonesia's vision as the centre of the halal industry must be carried out by building a global community related to the commitment to implement halal product guarantees. In response to these developments, the Government of Indonesia has implemented various strategic policies, including strengthening halal regulations, establishing Halal Hubs in multiple regions, increasing international partnerships, developing halal value chains, and accelerating the halal certification process for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (KNEKS, 2023).

Indonesian Law No. 33 of 2014 was implemented mandatorily in October 2023. To accelerate the implementation of halal product guarantees, the government provides free certificate facilities through the SEHATI program (Hasan & Latif, 2024a). This program facilitates small business actors in obtaining halal product certification through self-declaration. (Sunardi et al., 2024). SEHATI is one of Indonesia's initiatives to establish itself as a global hub for the halal industry (Khalimy et al., 2023). To address the challenge of shaping Indonesia's image as the global hub of the halal industry through effective communication and public diplomacy, influencing the formation of international public opinion, an analysis of the research findings is necessary.

Nation branding is a strategy employed by countries to establish and promote a favourable perception of the international community (Wicaksono et al., 2023). In an increasingly globally connected world, countries must be more proactive in building strong reputations, especially in strategic sectors (Putro et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, the halal industry is a sector with great potential to contribute to a practical national branding effort (Rhee et al., 2024).

National branding is also closely linked to public communication and diplomacy, where the state communicates directly with people at home and abroad to form favourable opinions about the country (Moscovitz, 2024). Public diplomacy not only relies on intergovernmental communication (G2G) but also includes direct communication with the public (Suleman et al., 2021). Public communication and diplomacy are crucial for strengthening national branding (Dubinsky, 2023). In this discussion, it is evident that BPJPH has adopted the Theory of Jan Melissen (2005) to establish the centre's image in the global halal industry. It can be seen in the five results of the analysis that (1) a paradigm change in diplomacy has occurred. Melissen emphasised that modern diplomacy has shifted from the traditional model (country to country/state) *government-to-government* to become more open and participatory, involving direct communication between the state and foreign communities (*government-to-people*). (2) Public diplomacy as soft power Public diplomacy is a key component of the strategy of soft power, which involves persuasively influencing foreign public opinion through values, culture, foreign policy, and a positive image of a country. (3) Multi-actor and multidirectional public diplomacy is not only run by the government but also involves non-state actors such as the media, NGOs, academics, diaspora, and cultural actors. The relationship is no longer one-way (the country, → public), but dialogical and two-way. (4) Communication as a strategic tool Melissen emphasises the importance of strategic communication in conveying a national message to a global audience. The state must be able to adapt the message to the cultural, media, and local contexts of the target audience. (5) National branding and global reputation. Public diplomacy, according to Melissen, is a crucial tool in shaping the country's image and reputation in the eyes of the world. It includes cultural promotion, cooperative foreign policy, and participation in global issues

In Indonesia, the implementation of public communication and diplomacy is carried out through the Halal certification program of the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). This halal certification is significant for Indonesian citizens and plays a crucial role in attracting international consumers, especially in Muslim-majority countries, non-Muslim countries, and those with Muslim communities (Atiko Putri et al., 2021). In this context, the goal of national branding is to increase economic competitiveness and create a strong national identity in the eyes of the world (Idris et al., 2022).

The halal certification required for products in Indonesia is one of the strategic steps taken by the government to improve Indonesia's image as a country that produces high-quality halal products (Gunawan Aji et al., 2023). The branding aspirations of the Indonesian nation centre on the halal industry, encompassing various sectors, including food, beverages, cosmetics, and services.

As part of its public diplomacy strategy and efforts to build Indonesia's image as the centre of the world's halal industry, the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) has collaborated with various foreign halal institutions through the signing of a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). As of October 2024, BPJPH has signed 52 MRAs with halal certification bodies from 24 countries, including South Korea, the United States, Taiwan, Thailand, New Zealand, Chile, and Japan. This cooperation enables the mutual recognition of halal certificates, facilitates trade in halal products, and enhances Indonesia's position in the global halal market (BPJPH, 2024).

Additionally, BPJPH is actively involved in establishing bilateral cooperation with countries such as Iran, Hungary, and Mexico. For example, in May 2023, Indonesia and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Halal Product Assurance Cooperation, which is part of the Iranian President's official visit to Indonesia. This cooperation demonstrates the commitment of the two countries to strengthen the halal industry and increase trade in halal products (Tribulation, 2023).

BPJPH has also involved various embassies in public hearings related to the registration of foreign halal institutions as part of efforts to socialise Indonesian halal product assurance regulations. This activity was attended by representatives from eleven countries, including Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Denmark, Turkey, Uruguay, Australia, Vietnam, the United States, and South Korea. This step embodies an inclusive and collaborative approach to public diplomacy, promoting Indonesia's halal standards globally (Scott, 2022).

Through this international collaboration, BPJPH not only expands the reach of Indonesian halal certification but also strengthens Indonesia's position as a key player in the global halal industry, in line with its vision to become the centre of the world's halal industry.

Through public communication and diplomacy involving mass media, digital platforms, and collaboration with international institutions, Indonesia can strengthen its 'preferred image for the world community'. The exchange of BPJPH information, both domestic and international, is crucial in establishing trust in the quality of Indonesian halal products.

Indonesia has great potential in the halal industry, both in production and consumption. To maximise this potential, Indonesia needs to develop an effective communication strategy to introduce Indonesian halal products to the global market (Ashraf Kayani & Saif Rehman, 2022). The concept of public diplomacy plays a key role here. In the case of Indonesia, public diplomacy through halal certification helps strengthen the Indonesian brand on the global stage.

Over time, the definition of the halal industry has become broader due to the increasing awareness that halal products are a healthy consumption choice. Additionally, there is a growing demand for halal products and services worldwide (Kim et al., 2021). Halal products must be healthy because they have passed the halal test in the laboratory. Halal certification procedures in Indonesia involve verifying the origin of staples and additives, as well as the production, packaging, and distribution processes of food products.

The halal industry refers to businesses engaged in production activities that process raw materials into products or provide services, whose input and output processes comply with Sharia principles. The halal industry has experienced significant growth, drawing the attention of numerous countries worldwide (Bolin & Kunelius, 2023). The halal industry is considered the main driver of economic development in the country's industrial sector.

With a dominant Muslim population, Indonesia presents a promising market for selling products that meet the standards of Muslim consumers (Mohib & Carroll, 2024). Indonesia's status, with a large number of Muslims, makes the government ambitious to make Indonesia the largest halal industrial country in the world. Right now, the biggest challenge is trying to catch up with countries that have a smaller percentage of Muslims but are instead producers of halal products.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this study states that public diplomacy is carried out in various approaches, including collaboration with domestic and international actors. National branding can strengthen Indonesia's reputation as a global leader in the halal industry.

Based on the analysis results, the effectiveness of BPJPH's international communication and public diplomacy strategy demonstrates that a systematic, collaborative, and value-based communication approach plays a crucial role in enhancing the credibility and reputation of Indonesia's halal system globally. Although BPJPH has successfully cooperated with various overseas halal certification bodies and gained international recognition, the effectiveness of this strategy cannot be measured solely by the number of partnerships or mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) that have been signed. The actual effectiveness lies in the strategy's ability to shape positive perceptions, increase global confidence in Indonesia's halal certification, and strengthen Indonesia's position as the centre of the world's halal industry.

From the perspective of Melissen (2005), public diplomacy is no longer just the delivery of messages by the state but is an interactive process that involves various actors and is oriented toward shaping international public opinion. This approach is relevant in the context of Indonesia's halal nation branding, which requires a dialogical, collaborative, and value-based communication strategy. In practice, BPJPH's public diplomacy and strategic communication involve various vital actors, both at the domestic level, such as local governments and business actors, at the national level including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Religion, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Halal Inspection Centre (LPH), the National Committee for Sharia Economics and Finance (KNEKS), and the Indonesian Embassy abroad. At the international level, BPJPH collaborates with foreign halal certification bodies, including JAKIM (Malaysia), ESMA (UAE), CICOT (Thailand), and HFFIA (Japan), as well as with international organizations such as the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), ASEAN, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This synergy contributes to strengthening the branding of the Indonesian nation as a global leader in the halal industry.

BPJPH has strengthened Indonesia's position through a comprehensive public diplomacy approach, which not only aims to inform the domestic public about the importance of halal certification but also accelerates the recognition of Indonesia's halal certification in the global market. The use of conventional mass media and digital platforms—such as television, newspapers, radio, and social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook—has successfully expanded the reach of information and increased awareness of the quality of Indonesian halal products.

Furthermore, this study highlights that public diplomacy and halal certification are strategic tools for enhancing Indonesia's international competitiveness. Through campaigns, publications, and participation in global halal exhibitions, BPJPH can build a positive image of the country while supporting the growth of the halal industry ecosystem. However, challenges such as accessibility for micro and small businesses, as well as the complex certification process, need to be addressed for improvement so that the benefits of the halal industry can be felt equally by all.

Overall, this study confirms that BPJPH's public communication and diplomacy strategy has strengthened Indonesia's reputation in the global arena and has excellent potential to position Indonesia as a world leader in the halal industry.

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