

Legal Certainty and Halal Awareness on Non-Alcoholic Soju Products in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The presence of non-alcoholic soju products in Indonesia has sparked an interesting debate regarding their halal status. This article aims to explore the interaction between the Korean wave and the concept of halal, and how these products undergo transformation and negotiation to meet halal requirements and religious compliance principles. The main focus of this article is non-alcoholic soju products that are the object of research. This study develops Faegheh Shirazi's perspective on discussions around Islamic brands. The methodology used is a qualitative study with a case study approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews and participant observation of key informants related to the halal phenomenon in Korea. In addition, the study also uses various documents relevant to this topic. This article shows that the integration between the Korean wave and the concept of halal indicates the adjustment of Islamic values into secular products. Muslim producers or communities in Indonesia then adapt these products by adding halal labels, so that they are in accordance with Islamic teachings. A concrete example of this phenomenon is halal soju (non-alcoholic soju). Thus, these religious products serve as a means for individuals to express their piety in religious practices, while still engaging in global cultures such as K-pop or the Korean wave. Ultimately, this phenomenon creates a new consumption pattern that proves that loving Korean culture while remaining a devout Muslim is possible

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INTRODUCTION

The globalization of East Asian entertainment products has experienced significant development. The history of East Asian entertainment is marked by the introduction of Japanese anime in Indonesia in the early 1980s and its boom again in the 1990s, especially with the popularity of series such as Sailor Moon, Doraemon and Pokemon. This phenomenon continues to grow into the 21st century with the emergence of the term “wibu” to describe fans of Japanese pop culture who are very enthusiastic, have easy access via the internet, and form online communities (Rohlinger & Sobieraj, 2022) lay discourse, academic exhortations, pop culture narratives, and advocacy groups constructed new Information and communications technologies (ICTs).

After Japan, the Korean wave also gained popularity throughout Asia and then spread to various countries in Europe and the United States. This phenomenon began in the late 1990s, with Korean television dramas such as What Is Love All About, Winter Sonata and Dae Jang Geum becoming very popular in China and other countries in Asia (Muhammad, 2013). Korean cultural productions including television dramas, films, and pop music (K-pop) have dominated the entertainment market outside Korea and have made a major contribution in bringing Indonesian society closer to hallyu culture or the Korean wave (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008).

In the context of globalization, the encounter between East Asian popular culture and halal was initially seen in the cases of Ajinomoto from Japan and Samyang Noodles from Korea. From both cases, the issue of halal products from abroad became significant and encouraged the demand for halalization with halal certificates and the establishment of a special body to handle this issue. The awareness of producers and consumers regarding the importance of halal certification is also a factor inhibiting the sale of their products if they do not meet halal standards (Ajinomoto Halal Atau Haram - DATATEMPO, 2023).



Figure 1. Tempo magazine poster regarding the halal and haram issues of Samyang Noodle products

It can be said that Korean culture is spreading very rapidly in Indonesia and has caused many influences on society, one of which is the impact on the fondness for food and drinks from the country. This condition then made the Muslim

community in Indonesia to make Korean drinks that can meet halal standards such as the product “halal soju” (read: non-alcoholic soju).

The origins of the halal claim for soju involve the long history of the drink. Soju was originally a traditional Korean alcoholic beverage, made from rice or barley and has an alcohol content of around 16 to 25 percent. Modern producers tend to use additional ingredients or rice substitutes, such as wheat, grains, tapioca, or sweet potatoes. The drink is known for its variety of flavors and can be drunk either pure or mixed with other beverages. Soju is an important part of Korean social and culinary culture (Amroshy, 2014).

The development of soju drinking culture involved the transformation of a traditional fermented rice drink into a mass-produced alcoholic beverage. According to Hyunhee Park, soju first appeared in the 13th century Goryeo Dynasty, initially used for medicinal purposes at a high price. However, soju’s popularity as an alcoholic beverage increased when it was mass-produced in the 1960s, with the Jinro brand being a very popular pioneer (Molnar, 2023).

In Korea, the presence of soju is not only limited to special places such as bars, weddings, funerals, or family gatherings. This drink is also a choice for Korean people to enjoy privately, often as a way to cope with stress. In 2015, South Korea even recorded the highest consumption of distilled spirits in the world, surpassing Russia. Until 2022, WHO (World Health Organization) noted that South Korea is on the list of countries with the highest life expectancy due to alcohol consumption (Molnar, 2023).

In addition to being a part of everyday life, soju has also become a significant element in Korean entertainment, especially in dramas. The use of Soju in Korean dramas reflects various aspects of culture and emotions (Jannah et al., 2023). In social and family situations, soju is often the drink of choice. It creates a relaxed atmosphere and provides an opportunity for characters to interact and share stories. Soju is used as a medium to express the characters’ emotions and feelings. In some scenes, characters drink soju to celebrate happiness, relieve stress, or overcome sadness. The romantic aspect is also often associated with drinking soju together. Scenes where couples drink soju can be moments of intimacy or turning points in their relationship. In some situations, soju is used for comedic effect. Scenes where characters drink too much to the point of being funny or silly can provide an element of humor in the drama. The product placement of certain soju brands in some dramas can be part of a marketing strategy, highlighting the brand in the context of the story. In this way, soju is not just a drink, but has become a rich cultural symbol and an important element in shaping the narrative in Korean dramas (Marinescu, 2014).

In Indonesia, soju has entered Korean restaurants and bars, and can be found easily on e-commerce platforms. However, this product is still considered haram and cannot be enjoyed by Muslim communities. As an alternative, imitation Korean soju drink products have emerged which are claimed to be halal soju. This product should be more accurately described as non-alcoholic soju, which is actually fruit-flavored soda water without alcohol content. This halal soju is not made through

a rice fermentation process like traditional Korean soju, and the price is more affordable than the original.

In fact, the presence of this product is a solution for young Muslims who want to enjoy Korean-style soda drinks in a safe atmosphere. Although this drink was initially received positively by the K-popers community, it eventually caused a polemic among Muslim consumers, who began to question the legal clarity regarding this drink. This will be discussed in a discussion that will answer several questions related to the legal clarity of “halal soju”, halal awareness of producers and consumers, and how the Korean wave element experiences negotiation and transformation towards the halal beverage industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The meeting between halal and hallyu occurred when the Korean wave began to spread colossally in Indonesia. Over time, this gave rise to a new pattern for the Muslim community in understanding the behavior of expression and consumption. For example, a new term emerged for Korean alcoholic beverages that were labeled halal. The use of the term “halal soju” is more common than “non-alcoholic soju”. Although both have the same meaning, which is safe for Muslims, the term halal soju is more often used on social media and online stores because it is easier for K-pop fans to pronounce. In short, the word “soju” reflects their identity as K-pop fans, while the word “halal” reflects their identity as devout Muslims. Although in the end the word halal soju reaps pros and cons because the drink actually contains alcohol.

Furthermore, this Islamic consumption behavior ultimately gives rise to a form of religious commodification, as explained by Greg Fealy who focuses on the discussion of the commodification of Islam and its effects on culture and religious thought. Specifically, he says that globalization and modernization have resulted in the shaking of the stability of religious identity and the search for moral certainty among middle-class Muslims. Fealy states that this commodification has resulted in diverse expressions of Islam for different market segments, but is also more vulnerable to change (Fealy & White, 2008).

In line with that, Appadurai said that the new consumption and expression patterns above are also caused by the influence of globalization. Technological aspects such as social media and the internet are one dimension in forming the complex dynamics of globalization (Appadurai, 1996). Faegheh Shirazi then explained that differences in cultural and religious values have influenced product innovation and guided the creation and adoption of new products not only in the Islamic market. In addition, marketing in the realm of spirituality and religion is common, even in secular consumer environments (Shirazi, 2016).

Pam Nilan also examines cultural hybridity in the lifestyles of devout Muslim youth in Indonesia. She finds that some devout Muslim youth need to carefully select Western pop culture to maintain the positive aspects of modernity, while separating or ignoring aspects that do not fit with their cultural values and norms. The conclusion is that Islamic youth culture has its own icons, products,

and practices that maintain traditional cultural values and religious beliefs (Nilan & Feixa, 2006). Asef Bayat also agrees that while globalization brings challenges and changes, Muslim societies also have the ability to adapt, change, or deal with them in creative ways (Bayat, 2007).

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research with a case study method, namely a qualitative research approach that is carried out in depth on a particular case to explore knowledge about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The author collected data for approximately ten months. Data collection was carried out in three ways.

First, conducting interviews with stakeholders in the Korean halal industry, including producers, consumers, scholars and government officials. The author uses a semi-structured interview approach to obtain in-depth information on a particular topic, while still providing a wider exploration space.

Second, the author also conducted participant observation by becoming a consumer of one of the halal producers mentioned. This was done to be directly involved in the observed situation and gain deeper insight. Third, the author utilized documentation in the form of books, news, and online sources and related sites that were relevant to the research topic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Halal Soju Claims and Legal Clarity in Indonesia

The use of the term halal soju was first proposed around the end of 2019 by Sovi Rihmatul Afifah, a Korean culture enthusiast from Bandung. Sovi, who was initially curious about soju, tried to mix the drink herself without alcohol, even though she had never tasted the original before. This product, named Mojiso Sparkling Water, managed to gain high popularity. The founder revealed that most of the buyers were K-pop fans who were curious about the taste of soju. Although initially this product was marketed as soju with a halal label added to the product, this halal claim campaign was later reprimanded by the MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) after causing controversy and debate among consumers. Many Mojiso consumers expressed their doubts regarding the halal status of this product through comments on Mojiso's Instagram account.

According to the business owner, as a producer, they are not allowed to make their own halal labels. Therefore, they must obtain official halal permits from the MUI before they can use halal claims on their products. Finally, they registered their products with the Food, Drug and Cosmetics Assessment Institute (LPPOM MUI) by complying with several provisions, one of which was not to use the name soju on the product. Since obtaining halal certification from the MUI and permission from the BPOM (Food and Drug Supervisory Agency), Mojiso has never again stated that their products are soju. This is because the content is not soju from the start, but carbonated drinks with various fruit flavors. This statement can be seen from

Mojiso's post stating that they no longer use halal soju claims on their products. After this statement, consumer concerns regarding the halal status of the product decreased, although some still highlighted the similarity of the bottle packaging to real soju.

Currently, various products are following in Mojiso's footsteps, and Sooha's product is one of the most popular in Yogyakarta. Sooha is a Korean carbonated drink with various flavors, similar to Mojiso and does not contain alcohol. Sooha has flavors such as grape, lychee, peach and original flavors. Sooha even used to have other products with "red wine" packaging, halal or non-alcoholic versions. Initially, Sooha made many claims about the halal status of its products before obtaining certification, which sparked debate among consumers. Regarding halal status, in 2021 Sooha was still in the inspection stage by the Yogyakarta City BPOM, so it did not yet have legal halal status. Although they can claim halal based on non-alcoholic content, they have not received an official certificate. However, in August 2023, Sooha managed to obtain official halal certification from BPJPH, and since then, they have been committed to ensuring compliance with halal standards, procedures and criteria in Sooha's production. In an official statement, Sooha stated that their product is a non-alcoholic fruit-flavored carbonated drink, not a soju product like the one in South Korea. Sooha's red wine variant product will no longer be produced since the end of 2022, because Sooha is committed to continuing to follow halal regulations for consumer convenience.

It doesn't stop there, after the emergence of Mojiso and Sooha, now there is another product called Sol-Ju, which is also based in Bandung. This product is promoted as a Korean carbonated drink. What is interesting is that one of its products carries packaging with a picture of a "woman in a hijab", which is named by Sol-Ju as "Soju Nurul." This name appeared after a consumer found a picture of a woman in a hijab on the product he bought and called it Soju Nurul on Twitter, which then went viral and received various responses from netizens.

Controversy arose especially among Muslim consumers because of the image of a woman wearing a hijab that was presented with a product that is generally associated with alcoholic beverages. The Soju Nurul product received criticism from several consumers regarding the feeling of inappropriateness because it depicts an image of a woman wearing a hijab in a context that is identical to an alcoholic beverage. Even so, the drink with the hijab-wearing woman packaging actually comes with a lychee flavor variant. In addition, Sol-Ju also offers several other flavor variants, including peach, lemon, apple, berry, and grape.



Figure 2. View of Mojiso, Sooha bottles, and a woman wearing a hijab on Sol-Ju products

Sol-Ju’s packaging not only features images of women wearing hijab, but also other images such as Korean oppas and eonnis (Andini & Akhni, 2019) that can be paired with Korean idol characters. For example, Sol-Ju with an apple flavor and a mature atmosphere is suitable for S.Coups Seventeen, Sol-Ju Berry with a sweet and feminine taste is suitable for Hanni from the girl group New Jeans, and Sol-Ju Peach with a fresh and cheerful taste is suitable for Haechan NCT.

This drink, launched in 2020, went through a similar process to other Korean soda products. Initially, they claimed their product as halal. Then in 2021, they also received laboratory test results related to alcohol content from the Food Technology Laboratory, Faculty of Engineering, Pasundan University. So finally, in September 2023, they managed to obtain official halal certification from BPJPH (Halal Product Guarantee Agency).



Figure 3. Halal certificates for Mojiso, Sooha, and Sol-Ju products

Transformation of Halal Drinks: From Soju to Wine Halal Claims, to Dualism of MUI and BPJPH

Both *Mojiso*, *Sooha*, and *Sol-Ju* previously could not obtain halal certification because at that time they were still using the name soju, namely in the sentence “sparkling soju non-alcohol” or in the claim of halal soju. Epistemologically, the word “so” in Korean means burning, while the word “ju” means liquor or *khamar*,

so it means an alcoholic drink that burns. In essence, it is a bit of a stretch to make soju halal, because soju will realistically never be halal (Syam, 2024).

Several celebrities and influencers who wear the hijab (Muslims) also openly promote this halal soju, so that its advertisements are everywhere. From here it can be seen that education about halal and haram is very important for Indonesian society, even for countries with a Muslim majority (Syarif & Adnan, 2019). However, problems arise regarding products such as soju that have been certified halal. In essence, products circulating in Indonesia with bottled packaging like this should be categorized as carbonated drinks and must go through regular channels, not self-declare.

In addition, the product cannot be called halal soju because it violates MUI Fatwa Number 4 of 2003 concerning Halal Fatwa Standardization, especially the fourth part which discusses the use of names and ingredients. This fatwa stipulates several prohibitions: First, it is forbidden to consume and use the names or symbols of food/drinks that lead to infidelity and falsehood. Second, it is forbidden to consume and use the names or symbols of food/drinks that are related to objects or animals that are forbidden, especially pork and alcohol, except for those that have become a tradition (*'urf*) and are guaranteed not to contain haram elements, such as the names *bakso*, *bakmi*, *bakwan*, *bakpia*, and *bakpao*. Third, it is forbidden to consume and use mixed ingredients in food/drinks that produce the taste or aroma of objects or animals that are forbidden, such as pork-flavored instant noodles or bacon flavor. Fourth, it is forbidden to consume food/drinks that use the names of food/drinks that are forbidden, such as whisky, brandy, beer, and the like.

So from this fatwa, it is known that the naming of soju on the beverage product is referring to something that is forbidden, namely alcoholic beverages. Therefore, if Mojiso, Sooha and Sol-Ju want to get halal certification, then the name soju and anything that refers to it needs to be removed. This is also known in Islam as "*tasyabbuh*" which is imitating a style outside of Islam that tends towards sin (Kitiarsa, 2007).

In practice, it was found that business actors and reseller agents made mistakes by marketing products that violate halal standards, namely using words or sentences associated with something that is forbidden, such as the claim that soju is halal. If this practice continues, the consequences can be in the form of blocking halal certificates, prohibiting the distribution or sale of products, revoking halal certificates (if violations continue), as well as imprisonment and fines.

Regarding consumer questions when Sooha was first formed, quite a lot of consumers asked about the legality of the halalness of this product. Some asked whether this product was really halal, some asked about its halal certification from LPPOM MUI, and some even asked about the halal claim by Sooha itself. Based on the statement of one of the members of the MUI Fatwa Commission, Kyai Nurul Irfan explained that Sooha products cannot get halal certification if they still resemble haram products according to the MUI Fatwa. In addition, the name soju should not be included and the packaging must also choose a safe one.

Likewise, according to a statement from one of the members of the Halal Fatwa Committee of the Ministry of Religion, Kyai Fajar Abdul Bashir, said that if foreign products such as Korean-style products are difficult to manage, only big businessmen can enter. Access is through the regular route, while the Halal Fatwa Committee only handles self-declaration. The Halal Fatwa Committee is an institution that can be said to be new, but based on the Omnibus Law, when there is a product that cannot be handled by the MUI for three days, and cannot be resolved, then it can be handled by the Halal Fatwa Committee. In essence, this party does not seize the authority of the MUI and its nature is to help matters that cannot be resolved by the MUI. According to Fajar's statement, the regular route is still handled by the MUI and the Ministry of Religion does not yet have an international standard laboratory, and there is also an agreement with other Committee members not to take care of the regular route first. They help with matters that cannot be handled by the MUI, while ensuring that the performance of the MUI is maintained in accordance with applicable laws. However, according to the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs (KMA) Number 297 of 2023 concerning the Halal Product Fatwa Committee Task Force, it is explained that this team is also tasked with providing halal determination for regular halal certification applications. This authority is actually the responsibility of the MUI, but if it passes the time limit, the fatwa hearing may be carried out by the Halal Fatwa Committee.

After the soju case claiming halal, a new case emerged with the same context regarding alcoholic beverages, namely grape juice drinks. In July 2023, the halal industry in Indonesia was shocked by the case of a grape juice product branded Nabidz, which was claimed as halal wine by one of its agents via the YouTube and Instagram platforms. This Nabidz grape juice turned out to be a fermented product that did not meet the requirements for halal certification through the self-declare route, so its halal certificate was blocked.

This issue was then responded to by the MUI which stated that the *Nabidz* brand beverage product was haram. The Head of the MUI Fatwa Division, Kyai Asrorun Ni'am stated that alcoholic beverages were haram to be consumed either in small or large amounts, this was based on valid information obtained from three different credible laboratory tests containing alcohol with quite high levels. Thus, based on the product samples that had been tested, the Nabidz product was haram for consumption by Muslims. Even though the product had obtained a halal certificate, it was certain that the certification was problematic.

In the end, Nabidz's halal certificate was revoked, with the chronology on August 15, 2023, the product certificate was declared to have committed a violation in which the PPH (Halal Product Process) assistant with the initials AS, was sanctioned by having the PPH Assistant Registration Number revoked by BPJPH. The reason is that AS did not carry out validation verification and did not submit the product through the regular route, and manipulated the data to be submitted via self-declare. Then, a business actor with the initials BY committed a violation by including a halal label on a product that did not comply with the halal certificate. The halal label which should have been for grape juice was deliberately included on the Nabidz branded wine product.



Figure 4. Appearance of Nabidz halal wine product packaging

Considering the above case, halal claims with self-declare pathways are very important in discussing the halal status of food or beverage products. Manufacturers who claim halal products raise pros and cons. Wine is an alcoholic beverage made from fermented grapes. The alcohol content in wine ranges from 12 to 15 percent. According to MUI Fatwa Number 10 of 2018, fermented beverage products containing less than 0.5 percent alcohol-ethanol have halal status as long as they are not medically harmful, so what if a fermented beverage product produces zero alcohol (Romario, 2022). The MUI Fatwa Commission has stated that zero alcohol wine products will not be able to obtain halal certification because the product resembles a product that is prohibited in the claim, this is also in accordance with MUI Fatwa Number 4 of 2003 concerning Halal Fatwa Standardization which has been explained previously.

If we look at other regulations such as the Decree of LPPOM MUI Number: SK46/Dir/LPPOM MUI/XII/14 concerning the Criteria for the Form and Name of Halal Certified Products and the Fatwa of MUI Number 11 of 2009 concerning Alcohol Law, then it becomes clear that the halalness of a food or beverage product is required to meet the requirements and procedures of the halal assurance system that has been set by the MUI. Not only the raw materials and production process are halal, the naming and characteristics of the product (colour, taste, smell and aroma) must also not refer to haram products or those that have been declared haram based on the MUI fatwa.

From several cases above, such as claims of halal soju and halal wine, the public finally conducted a review regarding the performance of Indonesian halal certification registered in "SIHALAL" or BPJPH's Halal Information System. Why in SIHALAL names that are clearly according to halal standards cannot be certified halal, can pass to get a certificate, then how is the performance of the PPH assistants and the Fatwa Committee under the Ministry of Religion so that products with these names can pass, how is the performance of the SIHALAL administration so that registration with these names can pass, is the product a self-declared halal product

or the result of an LPH (Halal Inspection Institution) audit, and does the recently established LPH have adequate competence.

In addition, it has never been found that MUI has approved products that do not meet halal standards (Dzukroni & Aniq, 2023) focusing on the roles of the main Islamic organizations in Indonesia, namely the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI). With the self-declare, there were cases of errors in its implementation, and the Fatwa Committee of the Ministry of Religion was recently formed and has been able to pass names that do not meet the MUI Halal standards, so there must be improvements and the government is willing to accept input so that halal certification in Indonesia does not decline. That is, pursuing quantity should not forget the quality of halal certification with this kind of leak. There needs to be good traceability that can be done by consumers to find out which products are audited and self-declared halal. This is certainly a note for the government, when currently there are two fatwa institutions, namely the MUI Fatwa Commission and the Ministry of Religion's Halal Fatwa Committee.

Considering the discussion and debate above, it actually creates dualism between the MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) and BPJPH (Halal Product Guarantee Organizing Agency) regarding halal certification (Hutama Syam & Ichwan, 2023). This is a challenge for the halal industry itself, although Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance has been ratified and has begun to be implemented, this dualism is still visible. Although the halal certification mechanism has changed from MUI to BPJPH, in fact there is still a lack of synergy through the separate authorities of the two institutions. This can be seen that MUI has its own LPH (Halal Inspection Institution), namely LPPOM to audit and test the halalness of a product. Meanwhile, BPJPH also has its own LPH through cooperation with several state universities in building LPH and auditing the halalness of a product.

In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs through BPJPH has its own information system in serving halal certification and checking halal products, namely SIHALAL. MUI also has its own site to cross-check the halalness of a product, namely through Halal MUI, the problem is then compounded by the existence of regulations and decisions of the Minister of Religious Affairs which states that the Halal Fatwa Committee of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs can decide on halal fatwas from regular halal management to SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) business actors which previously could only be handled by MUI, in addition, this Halal Fatwa Committee is also authorized to manage self-declare halal certification for UMK (Micro and Small Enterprises).

Seeing the problem regarding the claim of halal soju and also halal wine or food and beverage products that still contain haram elements, most do not know that to take care of certification, you have to go through the regular route and not through self-declare. The fact on the ground is that this halal fatwa institution is divided into two and is not centralized (Hasyim, 2022), of course this causes confusion for the public when they want to check the halal status of a product, it does not appear on the SIHALAL site but appears on the MUI Halal site or vice versa. This causes a lack of synchronization between the Ministry of Religion and MUI, although the solution is that food producers must check their products in both

information systems, but this dualism still causes its own problems for the Muslim community.

Overview of Korean Halal Product Consumers

The explanation below is to illustrate the experiences of various consumers to understand the extent of their awareness of halal and how important the influence of halal is to their consumption behavior. The two consumers I chose were female and one male. This selection was based on consumer data from followers of the Instagram account @sooha.id.

Nurvita, a student from Universitas Terbuka in Yogyakarta, stated that although she is not really a fan of K-pop, she is more interested in Korean dramas. So far, she has never tried Sooha products but has a desire to taste the taste of soju in halal packaging. Nurvita explained that her motivation to try Sooha was inspired by her desire to learn more about the drink, especially after seeing it often in Korean dramas. Nurvita also gave her views on halal awareness in its consumption. Although she does not yet have in-depth knowledge about halal certification, she believes that as a Muslim, it is important to avoid consuming alcohol. Although Nurvita does not fully understand the halal signs, she tends to choose restaurants that claim to serve halal food. For example, when visiting an all-you-can-eat restaurant, even though the restaurant does not yet have an official halal certificate, their claim to be a 100 percent halal restaurant without pork or fat is still a consideration for Nurvita.

In addition, Ilham, an activist and student at Yogyakarta State University (UNY), explained that although he had never consumed Sooha or non-alcoholic soju, he was curious about the taste of the product. As an individual who cares about halal, Ilham expressed his interest in the halal status of the product. The question that came to his mind was whether Sooha had obtained a halal certificate from the MUI or not. Ilham highlighted the importance of halal certification from the MUI as a determining factor in consumption decisions. The desire to ensure the halalness of the product reflects Ilham's awareness of the importance of understanding the religious aspect in daily consumption choices. Although he has not consumed Sooha, his curiosity and desire to ensure the halalness of the product demonstrate a critical and responsible attitude as a Muslim consumer.

However, on the other hand, Rina, a student in Yogyakarta, has the view that eating or drinking at a Korean restaurant is generally considered halal. Her belief is based on the fact that if a restaurant is not halal, the information will definitely go viral, especially with the number of people consuming at the restaurant. Rina believes that the popularity of a restaurant and the number of customers can be an indicator of halalness. Rina's decision to consume Korean cuisine without looking at the halal logo is based on her knowledge that the substances used in the cooking do not contain haram ingredients. She expressed her curiosity about the existence of the halal logo, but felt confident that the restaurant met halal standards. Rina also highlighted the view that people with an orientalist orientation often choose to buy food at foreign restaurants with the assumption that authentic taste can only be found through original recipes. Her view reflects the belief that the aroma, smell, and atmosphere of a restaurant can be a determinant of whether a restaurant

is halal or not. Rina's approach shows that consumers involve more than just a rational view, but also aspects of sensory experience and environmental nuances in assessing the halalness of a restaurant.

CONCLUSION

Based on research on non-alcoholic soju products in Indonesia, it can be concluded that the emergence of the 'halal soju' phenomenon reflects an integration between popular Korean culture and the halal concept within Indonesian Muslim society. These products, adapted to be alcohol-free, allow Muslim consumers to safely enjoy a Korean cultural experience that aligns with their religious values.

This study finds that the presence of 'halal soju' products offers a solution for Muslim consumers who wish to enjoy Korean-style beverages without violating halal principles. However, this halal claim also raises debates concerning the legal clarity of these products, especially as the term 'soju' has an alcohol-related connotation that contradicts halal values. This highlights the ongoing need for education on halal products and the importance of official certification, both of which must be prioritized by producers and consumers in Indonesia.

The integration of popular culture with halal principles creates a new consumption pattern, indicating that an affinity for foreign cultures, like Korean culture, can still harmonize with faith and adherence to religious values.

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