

POSITIONING HALAL BRANDING IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims, first, to explore the implementation of halal branding in international company, and second, to analyze the positioning of international companies utilizing halal branding. These objectives are investigated through a qualitative approach using a case study method. The study focuses on the international company PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh. The company specializes in edamame products exported to Japan, Dubai, the UK, and various other countries worldwide. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed using interpretive analysis with the flow model stages of Miles and Huberman. Data validity was tested through source triangulation and technique triangulation. This research produced the following findings: first, international companies, despite holding various trade certifications such as HACCP and BRGC, must still possess halal certification. Second, international companies using halal branding can outperform competitors due to advantages in safety and health aspects. Halal branding serves as a differentiation, creating a safety barrier to entry. This study concludes that halal branding elevates products to become prestigious and differentiated offerings.

Keywords: Halal Branding, International Trade, Safety Barrier to Entry

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan pertama, mengeksplorasi perwujudan branding halal di perusahaan internasional, kedua, menganalisis posisi perusahaan internasional dengan menggunakan branding halal. Tujuan tersebut diteliti melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Studi kasus difokuskan pada perusahaan internasional PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh Kabupaten Jember. Perusahaan produk edamame yang melakukan ekspor ke Jepang, Dubai, Inggris dan berbagai negara di dunia. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis interpretif dengan tahapan flow model Miles dan Huberman. Keabsahan data diuji dengan triangulasi sumber dan triangulasi teknik. Penelitian ini menghasilkan temuan, pertama, perusahaan internasional meskipun sudah memiliki berbagai sertifikasi dalam perdagangan, seperti HACCP dan BRGC namun tetap harus memiliki sertifikasi halal. Kedua, posisi perusahaan internasional yang menggunakan branding halal mampu mengalahkan kompetitor karena memiliki kelebihan dari sisi keamanan dan kesehatan. Branding halal sebagai diferensiasi sehingga membentuk safety barrier to entry. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini, branding halal mampu membawa produk menjadi produk yang prestisius dan memiliki diferensiasi.

Kata Kunci: Branding Halal, Perdagangan Internasional, Safety Barrier to Entry

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Introduction

Country's International trade has become a significant activity that yields benefits for countries around the globe (Meltzer, 2024). Exporting and importing not only strengthen bilateral relations between nations but also serve as indicators of a country's progress (Prado, 2024). In the realm of international trade, regulations are implemented to restrict the import of certain goods, aiming to maintain national stability (Singh et al., 2024). Each country has its own set of rules. For example, Japan requires Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification for all products entering the country (Awuchi, 2023; Radu et al., 2023). European countries mandate British Retail Consortium (BRC) certification for imported products (Bravo-Paliz & Avilés-Sacoto, 2023). Similarly, kosher certification is necessary for products consumed by Jewish communities (Hossain et al., 2021).

In recent years, halal certification has become a global requirement in international trade, particularly in food products (El Ashfahany et al., 2024). The demand for halal-certified food is driven by consumers' concerns about the safety, comfort, and health of their food due to cases of harmful substances found in food ingredients, such as carmine, textile dyes, and pork derivatives (Riaz & Riaz, 2023). Additionally, the increasing global Muslim population is a key factor in the rising demand for halal products. On the demand side, the need for safe and healthy products makes halal certification a mandatory requirement in international trade (Hasan, 2024). Failure to meet this requirement prevents products from entering markets, especially in predominantly Muslim regions such as Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia. Even in non-Muslim-majority countries like the UK, non-Muslim consumers often prefer halal-labelled meat due to its perceived higher hygiene and safety standards, as halal certification requires traceability audits (Susanty et al., 2024). The principle of traceability obligates producers to ensure the halal integrity of their products throughout the supply chain, from upstream to downstream (Nasyiah et al., 2024).

In response, international companies increasingly seek halal certification for their products (Masruroh et al., 2023). One example is PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh in Jember Regency, East Java, where edamame products are processed into various types of snacks, beverages, and vegetables. PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh Jember has produced various product innovations to create diverse edamame products. Edamame-based products are divided into two categories: domestic products, which include Hygreen Edamame Original, Hygreen Edamame Salted, Hygreen Mukimame, and Fresh Edamame; and export products, which include Edatsuki, Edamame, and Mukimame. Additionally, edamame products have been further innovated by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) into items such as edamame milk, dried edamame, edamame-filled pastries, and crunchy edamame. Although PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh also produces other frozen vegetables such as okra, agenasu, potatoes, and several other frozen vegetables, its main production focus is edamame. Therefore, this research focuses more on edamame products. Frozen edamame is the most popular product abroad, especially in Japan. Initially, the primary market for edamame products was Japan, which accounts for 70% of the exported production and the remaining 30% is exported to Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Europe, the United States, the Middle East, Dubai, Thailand, Vietnam, Kuwait, Canada, and the Netherlands. Besides being an export commodity, since 2008, edamame products have also been marketed domestically.

The production and development of edamame in East Java is currently still centered in Jember. The management of this business falls under the subsidiary of PTPN X in collaboration with PT Kelola Mina Laut, a company with an export network spanning Asia and Europe. Another edamame processing company in Indonesia is PT Gading Mas Indonesia Teguh (GMIT), which operates under the auspices of PT Austindo Nusantara Jaya Tbk. This company is a newcomer to edamame processing, having entered the market in 2014. Initially, the company focused on palm oil and sago, but it began transitioning to edamame production in 2012, albeit initially only as a local producer. Since 2019, it has started exporting frozen edamame products to the

Asia-Pacific region, facilitated by AJI HK Limited. These developments position PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh as the only edamame exporter with an international trade network spanning more than 29 years, starting in 1994. On the other hand, PT GMIT is positioned as a new player in the edamame trade and a competitor to PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh.

PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh oversees the operational production and marketing of edamame. The company manages a total of 1,615 hectares of land for edamame cultivation, comprising both PTPN-owned land and partnerships with local farmers. The company employs approximately 2,000 daily workers in its factories and over 7,000 workers in the fields, in addition to 2,011 seasonal workers. The partnership model implemented between the company and local farmers requires the farmers to meet specific criteria: 1) owning at least 1.5 hectares of land, 2) having a sufficient and stable water supply, 3) efficient water drainage, and 4) the ability to produce a minimum yield of 8 tons per hectare. Each month, approximately 20 containers of edamame, each with a capacity of 22 tons, are exported internationally, primarily to Japan. This amounts to around 4,000 to 4,500 tons of edamame from Jember successfully reaching international markets every month, serving the consumption needs of global communities (interview).

All products aiming to penetrate international markets must comply with strict procedures and regulations. These rigorous requirements necessitate meeting domestic standards and the specific standards of the destination countries. Each country has its own regional policies for accepting imported products. Some countries require safety labels on edamame tailored to consumer demands in the target market. For example, Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia require halal certification, while the United States mandates kosher certification for Jewish consumers (Hossain et al., 2021).

Halal certification is one of the key competitive advantages in the edamame trade of PT Mitra Tani Dua Tujuh in Jember Regency. This certification is not limited to product certification but also includes a system certification known as the Halal Assurance System, which ensures the product's halal status and safety from chemical, physical, and biological contamination. This certification is not yet held by other foreign edamame companies. With the halal certification, edamame products can expand their market reach. Initially, the products were only exported to Japan, but they have since entered Middle Eastern, predominantly Muslim countries. Additionally, the halal certification enables edamame products to penetrate local markets in Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim, including cities like Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Malang, Bali, and Pekanbaru. It even allows entry into the Freeport area in Papua (interview).

The presence of halal certification for edamame products began in 2004, initially as product certification issued by the East Java branch of LPPOM MUI. This certification was limited to sales within the East Java region and could not be used for trade outside the area or internationally. It was not until 2016 that PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh established the Halal Assurance System, aiming to expand its market reach and meet buyer requirements (Masruroh et al., 2021).

This development aligns with Japan's implementation of halal certification requirements for imported products, which started in 2013. Japan adopted halal standards due to the growing Muslim population, the increasing number of Muslim students and tourists, and its aspiration to become one of the "global halal hubs," despite not being a Muslim-majority country. The influx of Muslim tourists from various countries, including Indonesia, has also contributed to the rise in Japan's Muslim population. Through the Association of Halal Food in Japan, the country began to recognize the potential of halal-branded products. Halal branding has since become mandatory for food products entering Japan (Takeshita, 2019). Although some restaurants in Japan adopted halal branding as early as 1995, its application remained limited to certain regions. Furthermore, the shift in consumer preferences toward healthy, hygienic, and safe food has prompted several non-Muslim countries to differentiate

their products through halal branding. Evidence suggests that halal branding can significantly boost product sales. For example, in the United Kingdom, halal meat sales increased by 11%, even though Muslims comprise only 3% of the total population. This increase is attributed to the perception of freshness and cleanliness, making halal products widely accepted in non-Muslim countries (Iranmanesh et al., 2019).

PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh recognized this phenomenon as an opportunity to expand its market share further. In 2016, the company began differentiating its products with Halal Assurance System (HAS) certification, enabling it to secure 22 corporate and distributor clients in Japan. Domestically, in Indonesia, PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh has at least 21 clients, including supermarkets, restaurants, cafes, and hotels in Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Malang, Bali, and Pekanbaru. The company also supplies several outlets, such as 7-Eleven Jakarta, which operates 140 stores.

This branding strategy was implemented to enable edamame products to penetrate markets beyond Japan, including the Middle East and other countries requiring halal certification for their products. Edamame exports increased steadily from 2016 to 2018, with export volumes reaching 7,100 tons, 7,800 tons, and 12,000 tons, respectively. The significant growth in 2018 was attributed to high demand and the addition of 1,700 hectares of farmland. By 2019, edamame production averaged 11,500 tons per year, with Japan accounting for 80% of the market and other countries 20% (interview). In addition to expanding its international market, PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh also focused on the domestic market due to increasing local demand driven by Indonesians' growing adoption of healthy lifestyles. Currently, edamame is not only sold offline but also marketed online through various e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, Bukalapak, and others.

The data above provides insights into how the innovation of food products using advanced technology and genetic engineering necessitates a guarantee of food safety. In Indonesia, food safety guarantees have been legislated under Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance. This law serves to reassure the public about the safety of processed foods sold in the market. Effective from October 17, 2019, the law mandates that all food producers obtain halal certification to ensure the safety and compliance of their products. This law applies indiscriminately to all producers, whether large-scale or small-scale businesses, requiring them to obtain halal certification. Non-compliance results in sanctions for the respective producers. The implementation of this law is being carried out in stages, in line with the government's preparedness as the executing authority (Ab Talib, Abdul Hamid, & Chin, 2016; Krisharyanto, Wijaya, 2019). Edamame products have held central MUI halal certification since 2016, supported by the implementation of the Halal Assurance System (HAS). All edamame product variants have been certified halal by MUI even before Law No. 33 of 2014 enforcement. PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh Jember conducts halal certification as part of its strategy to promote edamame products and enhance their competitiveness in global markets. Halal assurance is a critical concern for Muslims in ensuring the permissibility of the food they consume (Loussaief et al., 2024). Halal signifies the permissibility of consuming or using something according to Islamic law, although debates persist among Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia and globally regarding the halal status of certain goods or services (Vanany et al., 2019).

The data demonstrates that halal branding plays a significant role in international companies by increasing their sales capacity and volume through enhanced market penetration (Usman et al., 2024). This, in turn, contributes to strengthening the economy, particularly for the people of Jember Regency. PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh exemplifies this by maintaining a strong commitment to partnerships with local farmers, recruiting workers from the local community, and ensuring gender equality. Therefore, the research questions are: firstly, how is the implementation of halal branding in international companies, and secondly, how is the positioning of international companies through the use of halal branding?

This research remains relevant for further investigation, considering several prior studies. It was initiated by the researcher and team in 2021, focusing on halal branding in the international trade of agricultural edamame products. That study primarily examined the international trade process of edamame products. In contrast, this research extends the previous work by further exploring the positioning of halal branding in international trade (Masruroh et al., 2023). It goes beyond the certification process of edamame products to analyze the company's position in international trade. Similar studies have also been conducted, such as by Masruroh et al. (2023), which investigated the competitive advantage of edamame products after obtaining halal certification in international trade. Another study by Saima S., Firdaus R., and Sarjiyanto (2024) examined the challenges and advancements of SMEs in Malaysia utilizing halal certification, highlighting the competitive edge of SMEs with halal certification (Saima et al., 2024). Research by Ismail I. et al. (2023) delved into the halal concept adopted by SMEs in Malaysia, which significantly enhanced their international competitiveness (Ismail et al., 2023). Additionally, previous research by the same researcher explored the growing trend of halal branding in Indonesia (Masruroh, 2020). Based on these prior studies, this research remains both relevant and intriguing due to its novelty. It focuses on exploring and analyzing the positioning of international companies using halal branding in production. Furthermore, it examines the competitiveness of products in international trade, assessing their impact on sustainable economic growth, particularly in Jember, East Java.

Literature Review

In examining this topic, the researcher uses a literature review with the variables of halal branding positioning and international trade. This selection is made to strengthen and clarify the study conducted in this research

Positioning Branding Halal

In this study, the concept of positioning describes a business's competitiveness and standing when it has halal branding. To analyze this positioning, the researcher employs Michael E. Porter's competitive advantage theory. Achieving a competitive advantage can stem from unconventional methods of innovation. This innovation often arises from a company's determination to sustain its operations during crises, challenges, or obstacles. The pressure faced by the company stimulates greater creativity. Furthermore, innovation can impact economies of scale, customer relationships, as well as market targeting and segmentation. Michael E. Porter's competitive advantage model is encapsulated in the "Diamond Model."

In this research, positioning is viewed through the competitiveness of products that have halal branding. Theoretically, branding and halal are two separate concepts. This theory is an extension of the differentiation strategy initiated by Porter (1987). This study considers halal branding in the context of competitive advantage strategy through differentiation (Masruroh & Zahirah, 2019). Halal products are specifically intended for certain markets, becoming a unique selling point for the product. Therefore, halal can also be examined from a marketing perspective, as a strategy to boost sales within an industry. This research thus also needs to explore branding from a marketing standpoint to strengthen its position within the industrial economy as a form of market behavior (Masruroh & Shahrin, 2022). Halal is also discussed philosophically from the perspective of fiqh as the foundational study of halal issues.

A product that adopts halal branding must possess a halal certification, and its production process must adhere to halal supply chain standards (Haleem et al., 2020). Halal branding for a product inevitably impacts its position in the market. As discussed earlier, halal has now become a mandatory condition for the acceptance of a product (Ruiz-Bejarano, 2017). Therefore, for Muslims, branding cannot be separated from the faith of the producers (Garg & Joshi, 2018). Halal branding is a blend of religious and material aspects in life (Garg & Joshi, 2018; Rahman et al., 2017)

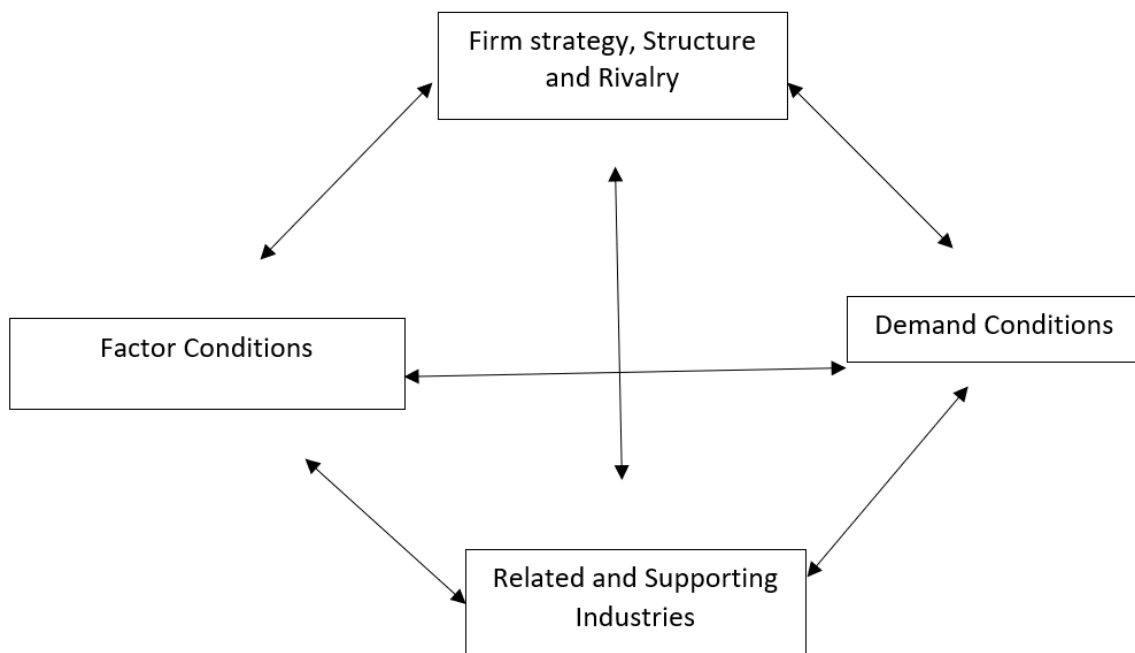


Figure 1: Diamond Porter Model

Source: Cho & Moon (2002)

Globally, there is a movement that has resulted in three phenomena (Randeree, 2019): 1) the desire to consume clearly defined products, 2) the movement towards using the term halal in various product brands, and 3) halal as a brand to achieve economic benefits. Halal branding helps identify products that may otherwise be doubtful or originate from non-Muslim countries (Asnawi et al., 2018; Mohd Zaid Mustafar & Joni Tamkin, 2013; Nurrachmi, 2018). Currently, products are offered with various halal brands according to the policies of each country, with some even labeled in Arabic (Azam, 2016). Halal branding is often implemented for market interests without considering the supply chain of the produced goods (Mohd Zaid Mustafar & Joni Tamkin, 2013). Products with halal branding not only have added value but also serve as tools to promote Islam in everyday life (Nurrachmi, 2018).

Therefore, products with halal branding are considered specialized products. According to Tjiptono (2005), this has implications for segmentation and target markets, and it will also impact the economies of scale produced, as stated by Porter (Porter, 1997; Tjiptono, 2005). Halal branding originates from Islamic branding theory, but a comprehensive theory has yet to be fully developed. This research aims to find the right formula for halal branding that can later be used by companies. In response to the trend of halal product standardization, the Indonesian government has enacted Law No. 33/2014 on Halal Product Assurance. Essentially, government regulations regarding halal product standards, particularly for food in Indonesia, are not new. Indonesia has had halal certification guidelines issued by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), namely the Requirements of Halal Certification HAS 23000 (Policies, Procedures, and Criteria). Additionally, various government regulations have been put in place to ensure the halal value chain for agricultural production (Chandra et al., 2019)

International Trade

In international trade, every country has barriers to entry that serve as filters for products entering the country. According to A. Koutsoyiannis' theory (1982), barriers to entry are used by companies to win markets and become monopolies. Barriers to entry are divided into two categories: first, legal barriers to entry, which are regulatory obstacles set

by governments to verify the products entering their countries. *Second*, economic barriers to entry pertain to production volumes, costs incurred, and profits earned. Legal barriers to entry are implemented because halal branding has become a form of compliance with government regulations. Halal branding facilitates market penetration and expansion, not just within the domestic market but also into various countries. As demand increases, the company's economies of scale grow. When economies of scale increase and the company operates for a long period, cost efficiencies occur. The larger the production scale and the longer a company has been operating, the lower and more efficient the costs become. *Third*, barrier to entry is the safety barrier to entry, which results from the integration of halal branding in international trade. Safety barriers to entry represent the implementation of global commitments toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Every company is required to implement SDGs within the framework of national and international development. In realizing development, a country must fulfill three objectives: 1) Development to meet SDG goals, 2) Development to meet ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) objectives and 3) Development to meet creative economy goals.

These development goals guide every country in its developmental process, with nations competing to become global halal centers in order to gain more trade benefits. The presence of halal branding leads countries to create regulations and standards aligned with the fatwas of local scholars. Halal branding impacts the changes in industries that implement it, such as production scale, sales volume, production, and manufacturing costs. Although the costs increase with halal branding, the benefits derived from it far outweigh the additional expenses. Therefore, even if an international company already holds various certifications, halal certification must still be acquired.

Additionally, halal branding is seen as a process of differentiating products with halal branding as a form of competitive advantage. Halal branding represents a product's journey from raw materials, processing, production management, quality management, all the way to marketing management. This process is also influenced by the producers' behaviors, particularly the employees' awareness of halal standards. Halal branding in international companies often arises not from their personal awareness but is imposed by the system they must follow (Masruroh, 2023). In developing awareness about halal products, the driving force comes from the system's compulsion, meaning halal branding is implemented consciously but not necessarily from an Islamic religious awareness perspective (Masruroh & Mahendra, 2022). Consumer demand and legal regulations are the primary reasons for implementing halal branding (Masruroh et al., 2021).

The halal branding process is driven by market demand, followed by the implementation of Law No. 33/2014 on Halal Product Assurance. In its concept, halal branding is not just a label or brand; it encompasses raw materials, production processes, storage, distribution, and marketing—all of which must adhere to a halal value chain. Thus, halal branding can be categorized if it has a competitive advantage or differentiation by applying a halal value chain. This ensures that different divisions within the company are interconnected. In this context, the differentiation used is horizontal differentiation, which arises from the relationships established to create a competitive advantage.

The implementation of halal branding starts with halal certification (HC), which involves the government through BPJPH. The state is also directly involved in both national and international trade. Therefore, the concept of free trade proposed by Adam Smith does not apply. Instead, the concept of international trade is based on Keynes' theory, which asserts that the government must intervene in the trade processes of companies within their borders. The concept of international trade is no longer based on the absolute advantage of a country or its natural resources, but on the competitive advantage created by each company competing in the international market. Thus, the state must regulate and provide guidelines to prevent trade disruptions.

According to [Krugman & Obstfeld \(2009\)](#), there are at least six causes of international trade, including:

- a. Differences in natural resources across countries.
- b. Countries being unable to produce goods that meet the demand of their populations.
- c. The production output of a country failing to meet societal needs.
- d. Differences in technological advancements.
- e. Differences in production cost savings due to the natural resources available.

Among these six causes, technological advancement is now the main factor that each country can innovate. Even if a country lacks sufficient natural resources, creativity and innovation can allow it to compete in international markets.

Halal branding is also a form of product differentiation in international trade. The differentiation concept in this dissertation uses Michael E. [Porter's \(1990\)](#) idea, which is a strategy companies use to face market competition by offering unique or differentiated products. These products ultimately stand apart from others, not only in terms of physical appearance or product quality but also in the raw materials used and the marketing process. [Michael E. Porter's \(1990\)](#) differentiation concept requires a unique advantage or difference at every production unit. Differentiation enables companies to offer superior performance compared to other firms. This differentiation concept grows from the company's value chain because each value activity can be a potential source of uniqueness. The procurement of raw materials and other inputs can affect the final product's performance, thereby influencing differentiation.

Research Method

This study used a qualitative approach because the data was descriptive ([Zaki et al., 2023](#)). This study explores in depth the phenomenon of halal branding that occurs in international companies. Thus, this study chose phenomenology as the type of research. The phenomenological theory presented by Edmund Husserl states that phenomenology is to reveal the consciousness of the research subject being studied ([Maskur et al., 2023](#)). In this study, halal branding carried out by international companies is a phenomenon that does not come from producer awareness but from government regulations. It turns out that this is not only a case but a phenomenon, that halal branding is carried out by producers because of compliance with the law and wider market penetration.

This reality is further deepened through phenomenological research to enhance the understanding of the informants' experiences regarding the halal branding efforts carried out by PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh in Jember. Phenomenology is based on the experiences of PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh employees who have been involved in the halal branding process in the international edamame trade. Phenomenology is used to systematize the informants' experiences, understand the pure consciousness found within those experiences, and seek the true meaning that the informants hold ([Chu, PH. and Chang, 2017](#)).

Thus, during the interviews, the researcher attempts to delve into the informants' experiences, exploring their awareness of carrying out halal branding on the products they produce. This is because phenomenology not only reveals a phenomenon related to the growing trend of halal branding but also the awareness of the practitioners in expressing the true meaning of halal branding as they understand it. Additionally, it explores the implementation of halal branding in the production process and its implications on sales, even contributing to the country's foreign exchange.

In selecting informants, the researcher used the snowball technique. The HR department provided the researcher with one key informant, who also served as a guide during the study at PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh, Jember Regency. The key informant is the halal

supervisor at PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh, Jember Regency. Below is an illustration of how the number of informants increased, similar to a snowball effect.

In addition, the researcher also determined the research subjects using a purposive sampling technique to obtain data related to the halal certification policy from LPPOM MUI, BPJPH, and the Indonesian Entrepreneurs Association (GPEI).

In the search for qualitative data, a series of activities were conducted. These activities are interconnected with each other to answer the research questions that arise. In phenomenological research, the researcher attempts to build closeness with the informants to understand the experiences they have regarding halal branding at PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh, Jember Regency (Ishtiaq, 2019). Research of a phenomenological type emphasizes interviews with informants in its data collection process. Therefore, the data collection techniques in this research include:

Firstly, observation is also understood as the act of watching, meaning the researcher collects data through observation. The researcher builds rapport with the informants, but in this case, the researcher does not use participatory observation. Instead, the researcher acts as an outsider who is not involved in the halal branding process at the research site. The researcher uses non-participatory observation, where they are not directly involved in the informants' daily activities but only serve as a researcher. Nonetheless, the researcher maintains closeness with the informants to ensure the credibility of the data obtained. The researcher is able to enter the edamame production area and observe the production process, from the reception of new goods to the packaging process and shipment in containers. Additionally, the researcher has witnessed an audit (conducted by a surprise inspection) by BPOM of Jember Regency. Furthermore, the researcher has observed work culture regulations, certifications held by PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh, and the communication and management patterns at PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh in Jember Regency.

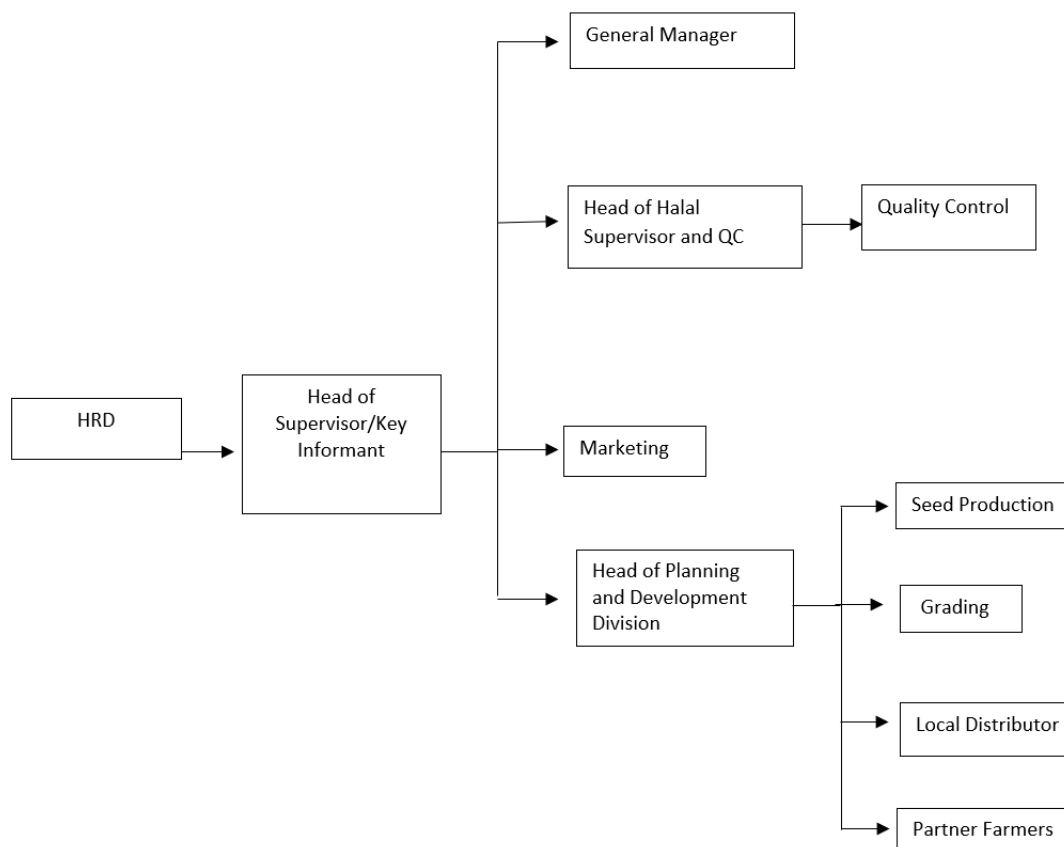


Figure 2: Determining Informants Using the Snowball Technique

Second, interview. In the process of exploring the informants' experiences regarding halal branding, data is collected through interviews. Interviews are a technique for gathering information from informants by asking questions and communicating directly. In this research, the type of interview technique used is in-depth interviews, which are focused interviews on each research topic that serves as the question. The researcher has a draft of questions as a guide, making the interview a semi-structured interview. The researcher creates an interview guide first, which is then developed further as needed for the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Third, documenter. in this research, in addition to observation and interviews, documentation is also used as a technique. The documentation technique involves collecting data in the form of photos related to the halal branding process, photos of the location, photos of products, photos of interviews with informants, and photos of certificates held by PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh in Jember Regency.

Once the data is collected, the next step is for the researcher to analyze it. In this research, the data analysis is aligned with the type of research being used. Since this is a phenomenological study, before analysis process, use *ephocing* for data coding (Wita & Mursal, 2022). Then the data analysis uses descriptive and interpretive methods. Case descriptions are conducted so that the researcher can reveal findings related to the themes or issues explored in the case study. After describing the case, the researcher interprets the data obtained from the field (Creswell, 2003).

The data collected through these techniques must be validated. To test the validity of the data, this case study research employs source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation involves comparing data obtained from one informant and cross-checking it with information from another informant to ensure validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Method triangulation is also utilized in this research to assess the data's validity by comparing one data collection method with another. For instance, interview data is cross-referenced with documents or files and supported by observations. In addition to these two methods of data validity checks, the researcher also conducts prolonged observation, meaning the researcher returns to the research site until valid data is gathered (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

During interviews, the researcher does not ask just one source but multiple sources related to halal branding on edamame products. Additionally, the researcher repeats the interviews at different times, with three informants being interviewed more than once, and some even more than twice, especially key informants. The researcher also confirms the data not only with one method but also with two methods. Therefore, the data is obtained not just through interviews but also through observation and documentation. Finally, the researcher conducts prolonged observation, meaning they return to the research site when the validity of the data is still unclear, particularly related to the halal branding process.

Results and Discussion

The Realization of Halal Branding in an International Company

The halal branding process for edamame products begins with the submission of a certification application following the procedures or regulations that have been established. Starting in 2004, PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh applied for halal certification from LPPOM MUI East Java. At that time, government regulations did not mandate companies to have halal certification. Edi Krisharyanto et al. (2019) state that the mandatory halal certification requirement was only implemented on October 17, 2019, although the law, UU JPH No. 33 of 2014, was enacted in 2014.

This situation had an impact on the company's behavior when applying for halal certification, as it was voluntary at the time. Therefore, PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh only applied for certification from LPPOM MUI East Java. The halal certification was pursued by PT Mitratani

Dua Tujuh due to consumer demand. Consumers are considered kings to producers, and any standard they require will be followed by producers (Masrurroh, 2023). The company fulfilled consumer demand in order to expand its market share. This market expansion ultimately leads to the maximization of profits or gains from trade. According to Krugman & Obstfeld (2009) a company can earn profits if it can specialize, especially if the company competes in the international market.

The specialization carried out by PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh is realized by implementing the Halal Assurance System (HAS) certification, which became mandatory with the enactment of Law No. 33 of 2014. PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh applied for HAS certification in 2016. Since the law came into effect, it has mandated that every company apply for halal certification. The requirement for halal certification, which was previously voluntary, became mandatory. This means that before the enactment of Law No. 33 of 2014, the government did not require all companies to obtain halal certification, but after the law, it became a requirement for all companies to possess halal certificates. The HAS standard not only focuses on the halal status of a product but also its safety. HAS is required for companies competing in international markets.

The halal branding of edamame products is carried out by embedding halal value at every stage and line of production. This is in line with Porter's theory of differentiation, which states that companies can achieve greater profits if they can offer differentiation or specialization in the products they produce. In fact, through his generic strategy, Porter also highlights that not only differentiation but also low production costs can lead to business success (Hole et al., 2019). However, in the case of edamame products, the concept of low cost is not fully implemented, although efforts are made to keep costs down.

Quality standards in the edamame product show its advantage by prioritizing quality standardization. This can be seen from the types of certifications held, including HACCP, BRC, and HAS. The costs incurred to implement differentiation are indeed considerable, as each process involves halal value. According to Porter's differentiation theory, each stage must have value. In the case of edamame products, the analysis reveals that each process adds value that makes the product superior compared to other products.

The halal value chain is evident in the differentiation process of PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh's edamame products, which gives it an advantage over other companies' edamame products. Differentiation through the halal value chain has not yet been fully theorized. The halal value chain is an idealized theory within the halal certification process. Achieving the halal value chain is considered the most perfect achievement because halal certification is not only about the halal label but also encompasses all elements, from raw materials, production processes, and packaging, to marketing, which must all adhere to halal principles (Dzikrulloh & Koib, 2020).

The halal value chain has not yet become a standardized theory, but it can be implemented if halal logistics are met (Effendi et al., 2023). In the differentiation process applied to edamame products, the differentiation is not limited to just the product or a single unit; instead, it involves the entire unit engaged in the differentiation process. Porter's differentiation theory can be proven in the edamame product, but it needs to be refined with the concept of the halal value chain. Porter's differentiation theory requires value at each stage (Weil, 1985). In the case of edamame products, each stage has halal value, meaning that halal considerations are carefully observed at every step. The product is audited and professionally controlled to ensure that it is truly halal and in compliance with regulations.

The findings in this research differ from the theory proposed by Kotler, who states that product differentiation is based on appearance and the end product used by consumers. Kotler's marketing theory prioritizes the end product as a form of differentiation, meaning he disregards the role of the production process in creating the product (Kotler, 2012). Thus, a

product is said to be different or unique if its physical appearance is attractive, regardless of the raw materials or production processes used to create it. Porter, on the other hand, suggests that in order to achieve competitive advantage or win in market competition, a company must be able to create value from the beginning to the end of the process, meaning from raw materials to post-consumption services provided to the buyer (Porter, 1997) Differentiation is not only about the product itself but also the value that exists from the initial stages of product formation until it reaches the consumer. Based on this, the following illustrates the development of the edamame industry using halal branding:

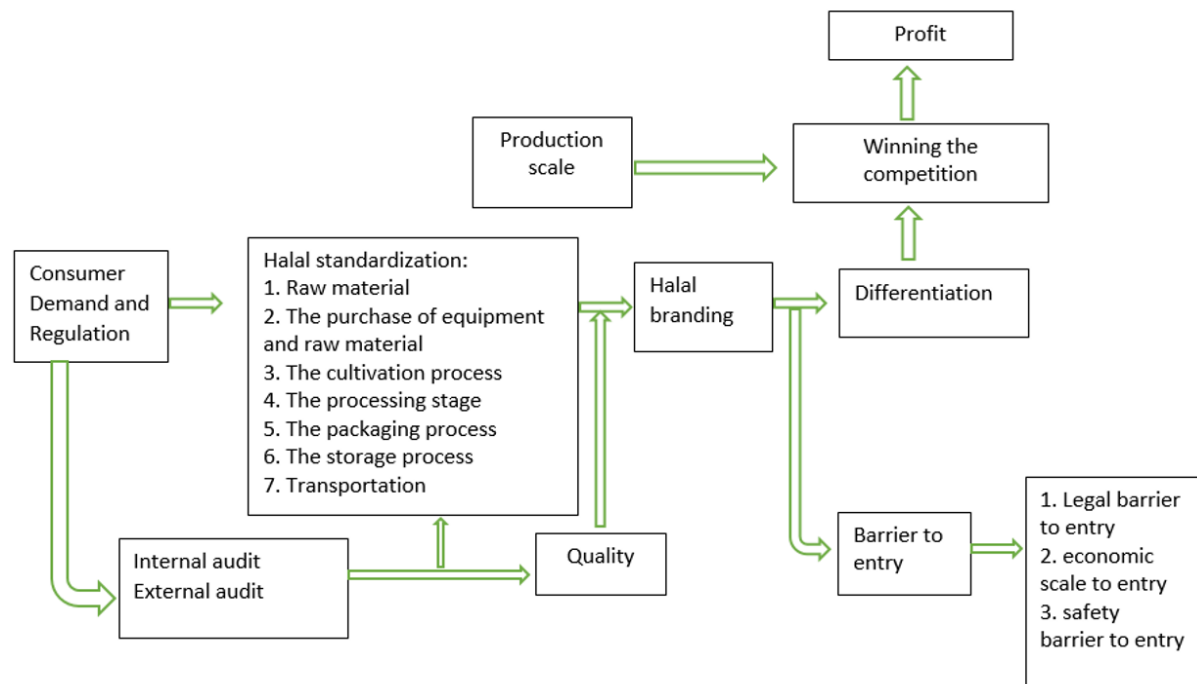


Figure 3: Development of the Edamame Industry through Halal Branding with Competitive Advantage Analysis

The image above illustrates that PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh has implemented halal standardization, starting from the logistics phase all the way to the final stage, which is the shipment of goods, due to consumer demand and the company’s compliance with government regulations regarding halal certification. Both internal and external audits are essential to ensure the edamame products meet high-quality standards. The presence of halal branding on PT Mitratani’s edamame products represents a form of differentiation, meaning that the halal branding becomes a competitive advantage, with halal value embedded in every step of the production process.

Additionally, the implementation of halal certification creates another barrier for companies wishing to enter the edamame market. There are legal barriers (legal barrier to entry), barriers from an economic perspective (economies barrier to entry), and an additional barrier, the safety barrier to entry, which is derived from the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The ultimate goal of these considerations is for the company to become a market leader, thereby maximizing profits (Devadason et al., 2018; Haleem et al., 2020). From an international trade perspective, there is currently no difference in the export procedures for halal-certified food products versus non-halal food products. The only differences arise in the handling during transportation and the certification required, which may be needed if the destination country requests such certification.

This aligns with the classical economic thinking of Keynes, who stated that “demand creates its own supply,” meaning that the production of edamame is driven by consumer needs and criteria. Production occurs when there is demand from consumers. This theory supports

the idea that consumer preferences are constantly changing and the market always responds by supplying what consumers need (Randeree, 2019). Without consumers realizing it, every emerging trend in consumer behavior is captured by the market, which creates industries to fulfill those needs. Similarly, halal products, particularly halal food, are introduced to the market by food industries through research on consumer behavior, which tends to choose products that align with their religious beliefs. Therefore, producers, through the government, are required to meet established criteria. Certification has become a mandatory requirement for food producers to compete in both local and international markets (Alqudsi, 2014).

Keynes' theory contrasts with the one proposed by Jean-Baptiste Say, who argued that "supply creates its own demand," meaning that while a market may exist if the supply is not identified by producers, consumer needs will not be met. In this case, it is the producer who must first provide the supply before it is sold in the market. According to Mill, "demand is reciprocal demand," meaning demand has a reciprocal relationship. If consumers are economic optimizers, they can buy any goods or services they need. Classical economics suggests that consumers have insatiable desires (Grieve, 2016). Consumers sell their labor in exchange for income to buy goods. The value of money earned should correspond to the value of the output produced. Thus, an accumulation of unsold goods could lead to losses (Zaki et al., 2023).

The demand for edamame products indicates that the industry follows the principle of "demand creating its own supply." Consumer demand has created the market for PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh's edamame products. According to interviews, the presence of processed edamame products such as chocolate, pia, milk, and others is adjusted to consumer demand. PT Mitratani always prioritizes consumer needs in their production. The demand for "halal standardization" is also a part of consumer demand. The presence of halal certification gives PT Mitratani's edamame products a competitive advantage. In this case, the competitive advantage stems from a religious-based product that the producer designs to meet market needs (Masrurroh, 2020). This competitive advantage positions PT Mitratani to dominate the market and potentially monopolize the international edamame market. As a result, PT Mitratani's edamame products are differentiated. According to Michael E. Porter (1990), differentiation creates a value chain at every stage. Edamame is a differentiated product with a halal value chain (Polo & Weber, 2010). These findings align with the thoughts of Ibn Khaldun and Mannan (1970, 1994), who stated that differentiation arises from producers' learning over time (Al Fachrodzi, 2022; Patoni, 2021). The excellence of a product results from human creativity as the primary source of production. Human resources are the most important factor in production. Therefore, humans must be aware of the products they produce (Fountain & Zimmerer, 2020; Jelinek & Porter, 1992). At PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh, the awareness of halal branding is driven by production motivation, which is profit-oriented. However, it is not based on the religious consciousness of the industry players. The awareness of halal branding is built based on government regulations and consumer demand, meaning halal branding becomes a bridge for the company to achieve profit.

This research focuses on the producer side. The construction of halal branding at PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh is done through the awareness created by the government and consumer demand. This aligns with economic rationality for profit generation in the company. The company's orientation is profit, but with halal certification, the business orientation should be to achieve *falah*—happiness and well-being in both this world and the hereafter. This contrasts with the economic rationality concept for producers in conventional markets. A company that adopts halal branding should be aware of the consequences. In Islam, values for production are already outlined in the Qur'an and Hadith, and a Muslim should produce food according to Islamic principles, even without halal labeling. This aligns with Islamic values in production. However, at PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh, halal certification is a system that has been adjusted according to government regulations. This regulation binds the production system of edamame. The issue of institutionalizing halal certification is explored, as PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh still uses LPPOM MUI standards rather than those from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

This indicates a shift in authority regarding halal certification from being voluntary through LPPOM MUI to mandatory through BPJPH. This becomes a challenge for the company in adhering to the standardization. The involvement of the state in the halal certification process reflects the state's involvement in trade processes. What was once a private religious matter is now a public issue, making halal-labeled products a public good. Halal branding is no longer just a religious issue for producers but has become a business matter. Halal branding serves as a tool for producers to achieve their rationality and motivation, which is profit maximization.

According to [Iranmanesh et al. \(2020\)](#), religious commitment positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions for halal products. This is supported by [Asri & Ilyas et al. \(2022\)](#), who state that the halal value chain influences consumer concern for purchasing halal-labeled food. This could be a determinant in the development of the halal industry in the 5.0 era ([Asri & Ilyas, 2022](#)). Halal market segmentation is closely linked to countries' efforts to increase trade volume for a product. Consumer research related to concern and awareness of halal products has shown that religious values significantly impact purchasing decisions for halal-labeled products ([Alam et al., 2023](#)). Companies strive to fulfill this demand to maintain consumer loyalty. When consumers are loyal to a product, consistent sales can also be achieved. According to [Marco Tieman \(2015\)](#), a halal environment is needed to create halal products, which is proven in this study. The company has created a halal value chain, from cultivation to consumer hands. This value chain does not need to be in the form of clusters, as suggested by Tieman, but it is sufficient if each part of the company is differentiated by using a halal value chain ([Tieman & Tieman, 2015](#)).

Moreover, halal branding offers several advantages, including enabling consumers to recognize the product well, providing better opportunities for product differentiation, creating brand loyalty and repeat purchases, enabling premium pricing, and making demand for the product more inelastic ([Griffin, 2005](#)). These advantages contribute to the increase in the trade volume of edamame products. Without branding, edamame would not be easily recognized by consumers, and its differentiation would be less noticeable. Therefore, halal branding becomes one of the key advantages driving the growth of trade volume. Industrially, no significant changes have occurred, but internalization of the standards met in the production of edamame is needed. This internalization will raise awareness in the production system. The only industrial change is the inclusion of trace codes on each part and greater care to prevent contamination of the product, reflected in the use of checklists.

Positioning of Edamame Products Through Halal Branding in International Trade

As outlined above, PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh has the potential to become a monopolistic company. However, it cannot yet be classified as a pure monopoly since there are still competitors in the market. Nevertheless, the company continuously engages in market penetration and expansion to increase profits and production scale. According to Walter Nicholson, to achieve a monopolistic market position, a company must establish barriers to entry. These barriers aim to position the producer as the sole supplier in the edamame trade.

Such barriers include restrictions on entering new markets. Monopoly power can stem from exclusive resource access, cost-efficiency advantages, or government-granted monopolies. PT Mitratani has implemented several barriers, including:

1. Patent rights and monopoly privileges (legal barrier to entry): The government often creates monopoly power through patents and monopoly privileges, such as legal frameworks or government regulations granting exclusive rights to a company.
2. Economic scale of production (economies barrier to entry): Efficient companies or those operating at an economical production scale act as deterrents to other companies entering the market. This can be identified when the production volume closely matches market demand.

Indirectly, PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh has established these two barriers in its trading practices. However, entry barriers extend beyond these two factors. In a competitive advantage-driven market, creating barriers to entry aims to achieve a low-cost economy, making it difficult for competitors to remain viable in the edamame product market (AbidHaleem et al., 2018). According to A. Koutsoyiannis (1982), cost minimization is a product advantage that can serve as an entry barrier. Costs are also linked to government regulations that create hurdles for other companies. Koutsoyiannis categorizes cost-related entry barriers into several elements: a) Costs and entry barriers, b) Costs and market structure, c) Costs and Company Growth Policies, d) Costs and Industry Regulations.

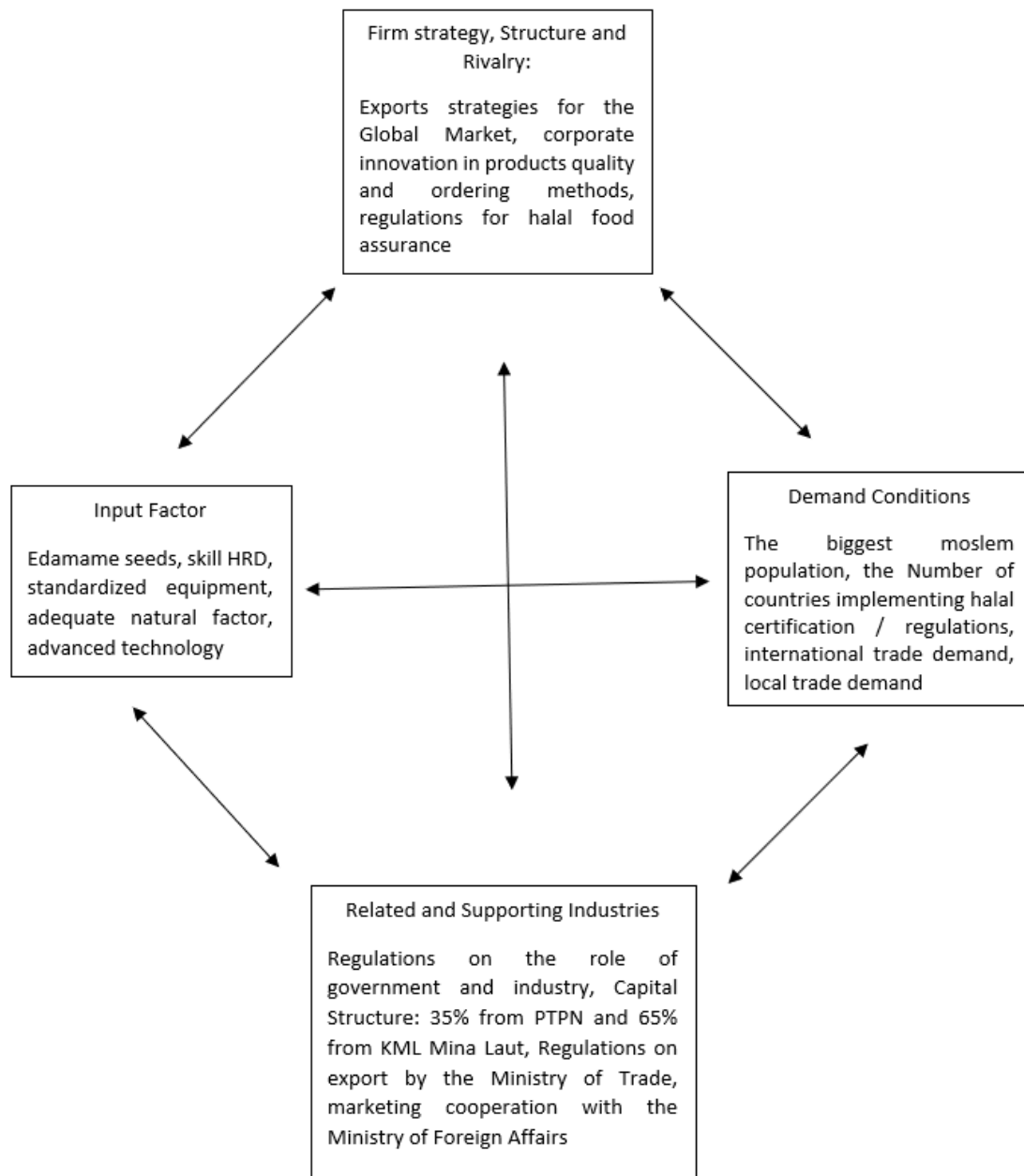


Figure 5: Competitive Advantage Analysis in the Edamame Industry

In the context of edamame trading practices, the barriers to entry are not limited to the theories mentioned above. Based on interviews and observations, this research introduces a new concept—safety barrier to entry, which has not been extensively covered in previous theoretical references. Safety barriers to entry present a unique challenge for companies.

The analysis shows that PT Mitratani Dua Tujuh integrates halal branding not only to comply with government regulations but also to respond to market demands. Production scale has increased following the implementation of halal branding. Thus, this research expands on Koutsoyiannis’ theory, which identifies legal barriers and economies of scale as the primary tools for creating monopolistic markets. It adds a new factor: safety barrier to entry.

Safety barrier to entry emphasizes the importance of adhering to proper procedures and delivering high-quality products that meet consumer needs. This consumer-centric approach enables companies to adapt to market trends and requirements effectively. When analyzed through the lens of competitive advantage, the framework emerges as in figure 5.

The research that has been conducted has several implications for future studies. These implications include: *first, theoretical implications:* This research contributes new insights regarding halal branding through halal value chain differentiation. It also advances the theoretical development of Islamic branding, which has not been widely explored and is often understood only as a mere label. Additionally, this study contributes to the theory of barriers to entry, particularly with the introduction of the **safety barrier to entry**, which refers to a market entry barrier based on a buyer approach by ensuring the safety and health of the product for consumers. While market entry barriers have generally been divided into **legal barriers to entry** and **economies barriers to entry**, this research adds **safety barriers to entry**, as the safety and quality of products released by a company can fulfill the SDGs goal that products must be safe for both consumers’ physical health and the environment. If these criteria are met, consumer loyalty will be gained, and consumers will not need to incur switching costs to switch to substitute goods. *Second, policy implications:* based on the findings, this research is expected to lead to changes in the institutional framework and greater commitment to overseeing the halal certification process. *Third, practical implications:* this research can serve as a reference for entrepreneurs to be more creative and committed to halal branding for the products they intend to sell. Additionally, its implications extend to the internalization of Islamic values in production activities. The following is an outline of the theoretical implications of this research:

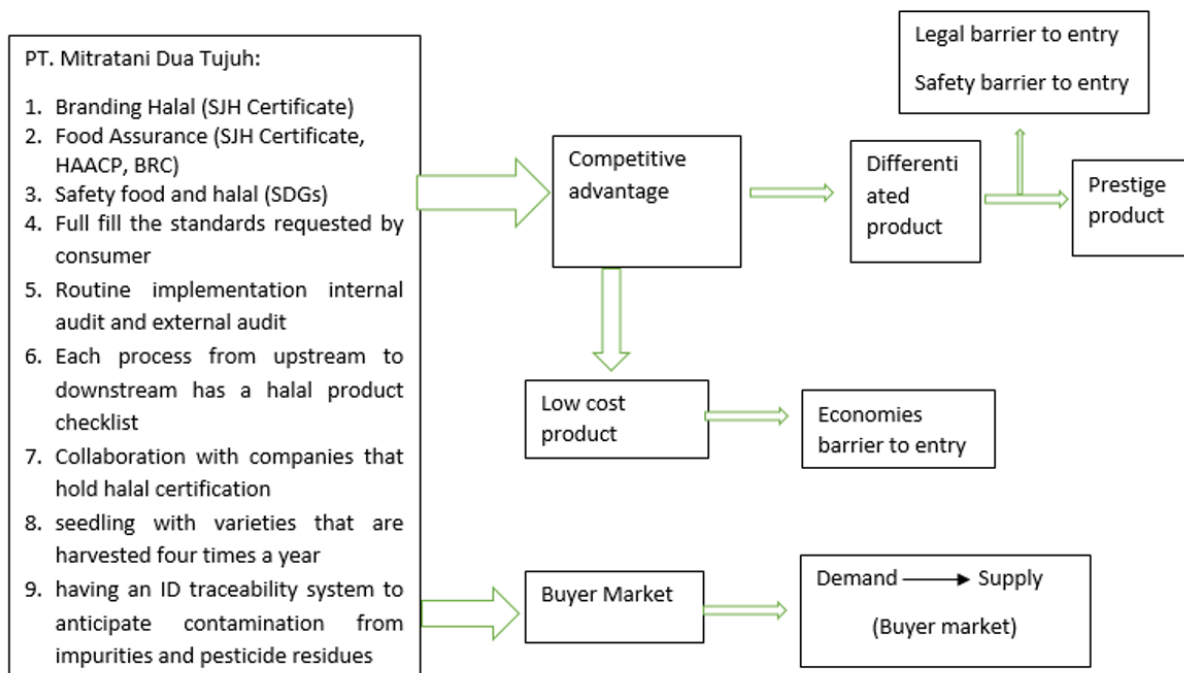


Figure 6: Theoretical implications

Conclusion

The data provided above leads to the following conclusions: *First*, halal branding in international trade aligns with consumer demand, which continuously changes according to their lifestyle. The halal lifestyle has become a growing demand, with consumers increasingly seeking halal-labeled food. International companies must fulfill this demand in order to capture the existing market. Halal branding can be realized through a differentiation model adopted from Michael E. Porter's generic theory, which states that for a country to achieve a competitive advantage, it must have differentiation. Halal branding represents a form of differentiation through the halal value chain model. *Second*, international companies using halal branding can become market leaders and maintain a strong position against competitors. The position of halal branding serves as a barrier to entry for other companies that do not hold halal certification. In this context, the barrier to entry is a safety barrier to entry. Therefore, if an international company holds halal certification, it will strengthen the economy, especially in East Java.

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