

Exploring the Challenges of Digital Marketing Implementation to Promote Halal Brands among Businesses in Nigeria

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Abstract

Halal businesses in Nigeria face growing pressure to adopt digital marketing as a means of enhancing brand visibility and competitiveness. However, the implementation of digital strategies presents several challenges that limit their effectiveness in promoting halal brands. This study aims to explore the major barriers encountered by halal businesses in Nigeria when integrating digital marketing into their operations and to identify adaptive approaches used to overcome them. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen halal business owners and managers across various sectors. Thematic analysis revealed recurring challenges including inconsistent content creation, financial constraints, limited digital expertise, and difficulties in maintaining halal compliance within marketing practices. Additionally, gaps in analytical knowledge, such as the use of search engine optimisation and social media algorithms, were identified as major impediments to online growth. Despite these barriers, businesses adopt cost-effective strategies such as organic marketing, user-generated content, and collaborations with micro-influencers to improve brand presence. The findings highlight the need for targeted institutional support, including affordable training, funding, and policy initiatives tailored to the halal sector. It also recommends a growing need for halal businesses to leverage and become more versatile in the use of artificial intelligence, particularly for automating content creation, enhancing customer engagement, and analysing market trends in cost-effective ways. This study contributes to the understanding of how halal enterprises can balance religious values with technological innovation to strengthen digital branding in emerging markets.

Keywords: *Islamic Marketing, Halal Brand Visibility, Halal Businesses, Halal Branding, Digital Marketing Challenges, Nigeria*

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1. Introduction

The growth of digital technologies has transformed global marketing practices, offering businesses new avenues to connect with consumers, build brand awareness, and expand market reach. Across the world, companies are increasingly relying on social media platforms, search engine optimisation, and data-driven analytics to promote products and services effectively (Nim et al., 2024). Within this context, the halal industry, encompassing food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and financial services, has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors globally (Putra et al., 2023). As Muslim populations continue to expand and ethical consumption gains prominence, halal branding has become both an economic and cultural phenomenon (Wilson & Liu, 2010). However, despite the rapid rise of digital marketing, halal businesses in developing economies, such as Nigeria, face significant challenges in implementing these technologies effectively, limiting their visibility and competitiveness in an increasingly digital marketplace (Onoh & Agu, 2024).

While Nigerian halal industry holds vast potential due to its large Muslim population and growing entrepreneurial sector, its development remains uneven and under-researched (Adebayo & Salaudeen, 2021). Despite the steady expansion of halal markets globally and increasing consumer demand for products that align with Islamic values, Nigeria's halal ecosystem faces several structural and operational barriers that hinder its full growth. The absence of unified regulatory frameworks, inconsistent certification processes, and limited public awareness of halal standards have contributed to the fragmented nature of the industry (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020). Many small and medium-sized enterprises struggle to obtain credible halal certification or to leverage it effectively as a marketing tool, thereby restricting their competitiveness both locally and internationally (Adebayo & Salaudeen, 2021).

Moreover, research attention has largely focused on halal markets in Asia and the Middle East (Hashim et al., 2022), leaving African contexts like Nigeria comparatively unexplored. Thus, this has resulted in limited understanding of how Nigerian halal businesses navigate challenges, such as digital marketing adoption, consumer trust, and religious compliance. Although efforts have been made in this area of research, there is a growing need to bridge the knowledge gap surrounding the challenges of digital marketing implementation to promote halal brands among businesses in Nigeria. Previous studies on halal marketing have largely focused on consumer perceptions of halal products (Anwar, 2025; Farah, 2021; H. B. Jaiyeoba et al., 2020), halal certification processes (Al-shami & Abdullah, 2023; Darmalaksana, 2025), the global expansion of halal products (Azam & Abdullah, 2020), and related others. However, few studies have examined the operational challenges businesses face in the digital domain, particularly within African contexts and, more specifically, in Nigeria. This study, therefore, addresses an important research gap by examining the challenges faced in implementing digital marketing to promote halal brands among businesses in Nigeria.

By conducting this research, the researchers aim to make significant contributions to the field of halal marketing, particularly within the context of emerging economies. Firstly, it extends current understanding by shifting the analytical focus from consumer-centred perspectives to the operational challenges experienced by halal businesses themselves as they attempt to implement digital marketing strategies to promote halal brand in Nigeria. This business-oriented approach offers a more comprehensive view of the factors shaping digital engagement (Lundin, 2025), including financial constraints, skill gaps, content production difficulties, and the need to uphold religious values in brand promotion. Secondly, the study contributes context-specific insights to a body of

literature that has been dominated by research from Asia and the Middle East (Hashim et al., 2022), thereby addressing a notable geographical imbalance. In addition, the research highlights how socio-cultural, infrastructural, and economic conditions influence the digital capabilities of halal enterprises in Africa. Thirdly, the study provides practical contributions by identifying low-cost and adaptive strategies, such as organic marketing, user-generated content, and collaborations with micro-influencers, that businesses use to navigate digital limitations.

Therefore, by identifying the core challenges and strategies adopted by halal businesses in Nigeria, the research provides evidence-based recommendations for industry stakeholders, policymakers, and support institutions. For academics, it enriches the literature on halal branding and digital entrepreneurship by situating the discussion within a Nigerian context – a region often overlooked in global marketing discourse. For practitioners, it highlights actionable approaches to overcoming operational barriers, enhancing brand visibility, and maintaining religious integrity in marketing communications. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of developing digital literacy, fostering institutional collaboration, and providing financial support to empower halal entrepreneurs. This research not only extends current theoretical frameworks but also offers practical insights for building a more inclusive and competitive halal industry in Nigeria in the digital era.

Meanwhile, this research is organised into six sections: an introduction outlining the study's context and relevance; a literature review identifying gaps; a methodology detailing the qualitative approach; an analysis and discussion presenting key themes; theoretical and practical implications offering contributions and recommendations; and a conclusion summarising findings, acknowledging limitations, and suggesting areas for future research.

2. Literature Review

The Development of Halal Brands in Nigeria

Globally, halal brand landscape has grown steadily over the past decade, driven by increasing consumer awareness, expanding Muslim demographics, and rising interest in ethical and faith-aligned products (Anwar, 2025). In Nigeria, halal brands span several sectors, including food and beverages, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, fashion, hospitality, and financial services (Adebayo & Salaudeen, 2021). Despite this diversity, awareness of halal standards among consumers remains uneven, and many businesses still operate without formal certification. Nevertheless, the industry continues to attract entrepreneurs seeking to serve both domestic and international markets. The halal label has gradually moved beyond its religious foundation to become a marker of quality, hygiene, and ethical production, making it appealing to a broader consumer base (H. B. Jaiyeoba et al., 2020). As global demand for halal products rises, Nigerian businesses and government are beginning to recognise the economic potential of tapping into the wider halal economy (Adebayo & Salaudeen, 2021; A. A. Muhammad et al., 2025).

Nonetheless, government influence on the development of halal brands in Nigeria has been more indirect than directive, emerging largely through broader regulatory functions and occasional engagements with industry stakeholders. Rather than offering dedicated halal policies, public institutions have contributed through general support for small and medium-sized enterprises, consumer protection efforts, and periodic collaborations with religious bodies and business groups (A. A. Muhammad et al., 2025). These interactions have helped raise awareness of the importance of credible standards and ethical business

practices, even if not formally targeted at the halal sector. In addition, discussions within policy circles about economic diversification and the growth of culturally aligned industries have opened space for recognising the potential of the halal economy as part of Nigeria's wider entrepreneurial landscape. Although such initiatives remain limited and not systematically structured, they indicate a gradual acknowledgement of the role that halal-oriented businesses can play in strengthening local enterprise development and enhancing consumer trust (Adebayo & Salaudeen, 2021).

Beyond government action, non-governmental organisations, Islamic institutions, and private certification bodies have made significant contributions to the visibility and credibility of halal brands in Nigeria. Organisations, such as the Halal Certification Authority Nigeria (HCAN), Jaiz Halal Certification Limited (JHCL), and Halal Compliance and Food Safety (HCF), play vital roles in auditing businesses, issuing certifications, and providing training on halal standards. Financial institutions offering Islamic banking services, such as Jaiz Bank and Taj Bank, have also supported halal enterprises through Sharia-compliant funding and advisory services (Tijanni Muhammad & Bin Ngah, 2020). In addition, entrepreneurial groups, industry associations, and academic researchers have increasingly promoted halal awareness through workshops, trade fairs, and capacity-building initiatives. These combined efforts have contributed to the gradual development of a more structured halal ecosystem, even though significant gaps remain in regulation, standardisation, and digital competitiveness.

Halal Branding

Brand is "a name, symbol, design, or some combination which identifies the product of a particular organisation as having a substantial, differentiated advantage" to promote value, image, status, or lifestyle to draw in and retain consumers (Murphy, 1988). A consumer might solidify favourable perceptions by sticking with a specific brand. A brand is made up of its product, packaging, name, promotion, advertising, and overall presentation. The owner of the company puts these qualities together and mixes them in a special way. Murphy (1988) defines a brand as a blend of rational, emotional, aesthetic, and physical components. Essentially, though, the final product needs to be both acceptable and stand out from rival brands; a buyer needs to be motivated to select one brand over other available options. Customers will buy brands if they appeal to them, transforming them into priceless assets over time. Maintaining and providing customers with the values they need makes brands enduring assets (Murphy, 1988). Brands also have a significant strategic impact. They allow the manufacturer to reach the customer directly, over the retailer's shoulder (Murphy, 1988).

Meanwhile, halal is an Arabic term which means "permissible" or "lawful" and refers to products and services that comply with Islamic law (Azam & Abdullah, 2020). "Halal branding" in the context of branding usually refers to goods or services that abide by Islamic ethical and dietary regulations (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020). "Halal brand" constitutes goods and services that have been approved as meeting halal regulations. When it comes to ingredients, manufacturing procedures, and ethical considerations, there are often particular requirements that must be followed in order for products or services to be produced according to Islamic principles, this certification guarantees just that. In the worldwide marketplace, halal branding has grown in significance, especially in countries with sizable Muslim populations. Halal brands provide Muslim customers peace of mind that the goods they buy adhere to their dietary and religious standards. There are many organisations worldwide that provide certification services for halal products.

Notable among halal certification bodies in Nigeria include Halal Certification Authority Nigeria (HCAN), Halal Compliance and Food Safety (HCF), and Jaiz Halal Certification Limited (JHCL). Brands that receive certifications from halal certification bodies are allowed to insert the halal logo on their packaging, which helps customers identify and buy halal products. This range covers various categories, such as food, cosmetics, medications, and financial services. With the increasing demand for halal products and services worldwide, businesses can tap into the global halal market and cater to the needs of halal conscious consumers (Asia Lockett, 2013). Undoubtedly, digital marketing plays a significant role in enhancing the visibility of halal businesses by increasing their online presence, improving their search engine rankings, and raising brand awareness. The practical use of various online tools by business leaders can lead to new opportunities. Since the Internet is a trusted source that consumers turn to before purchasing products and services, business leaders are now mandated to use it as a marketing tool for financial success and to foster communication with the visibility and channels of online sales. This is because social media advertising has become a robust way to reach various markets for business expansion (Asia Lockett, 2013).

Challenges Facing Halal Businesses in Promoting Halal Brands in Nigeria

Despite the growing importance of halal industry in Nigeria, businesses in this industry are faced with several challenges when it comes to visibility. Specifically, limited awareness, fragmented market, lack of dedicated platform, limited digital presence, and consumer trust and authentication are some of the major challenges significantly impacting their ability to reach their target audience and maximise their potential in the marketplace (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020). This subsection therefore discusses the key challenges faced by halal businesses in promoting halal brands in Nigeria.

Limited Awareness

One of the major challenges facing halal businesses in Nigeria is limited awareness among the general population, particularly among non-Muslim consumers. While halal products are commonly associated with religious observance within the Muslim community, many people outside this demographic remain unaware of what halal truly means or the standards it represents. This limited understanding restricts the market reach of halal businesses and prevents them from tapping into wider consumer segments that could benefit from their products and services. Without adequate public knowledge, these businesses struggle to build brand recognition and grow beyond niche markets. (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020).

Awareness, defined as the capacity to sense, feel, and be conscious of certain things or situations, plays a pivotal role in consumer decision-making (Kurniawati & Savitri, 2020). In the context of halal, awareness goes beyond simply recognising the label; it involves understanding its ethical, health-related, and religious implications. According to Jaiyeoba et al. (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020), halal awareness is not only about familiarity with halal food, goods, or services, but also about having an active interest or personal experience with them. This deeper level of understanding is often lacking in Nigeria's diverse consumer landscape, where halal is still largely viewed through a narrow religious lens. The lack of halal awareness poses a considerable barrier to market expansion. For instance, many non-Muslim consumers are unaware that halal products often meet high standards of cleanliness, safety, and ethical sourcing – the qualities that could appeal to a much broader audience. As such, halal businesses miss out on potential customers who might value these attributes if only they were informed.

Additionally, misconceptions and stereotypes about halal practices can lead to hesitancy or rejection of such products, further complicating marketing efforts for halal brands trying to establish a more inclusive identity (Yusran et al., 2025). Another factor contributing to limited awareness is the inadequate use of strategic communication by halal businesses. Many fail to leverage digital platforms, public relations, or educational content to inform the public about the benefits and relevance of halal goods. Without targeted marketing and consumer education campaigns, the message about halal remains confined to a specific audience (Maulana et al., 2025). In a competitive consumer environment like Nigeria's, where various brands vie for attention, halal businesses must make deliberate efforts to demystify their offerings and emphasise their universal appeal.

Therefore, limited awareness remains a significant hurdle for halal businesses in Nigeria, affecting their brands, growth potential, and market integration. Raising public understanding of what halal truly represents, beyond its religious connotations, could unlock new market opportunities and broaden consumer appeal (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020). By investing in consumer education, strategic marketing, and inclusive messaging, halal businesses can overcome awareness-related challenges and position themselves as ethical, high-quality alternatives in Nigeria's dynamic marketplace.

Fragmented Market

The halal market in Nigeria is notably fragmented, with businesses scattered across diverse sectors, such as food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, finance, and fashion, operating in various geographic locations. This dispersion creates challenges for both consumers and businesses (Muhammad et al., 2020). For consumers, it becomes difficult to identify reliable halal products or services due to the absence of a centralised directory or verification platform. As a result, many halal-compliant businesses struggle with visibility and credibility, while potential customers remain unaware of the range of halal offerings available to them. One key factor contributing to this fragmentation is the lack of unified oversight or cohesive leadership within the Nigerian halal ecosystem (Muhammad et al., 2020).

Without a central body to regulate and coordinate activities, many businesses operate in isolation, developing their own standards and practices without alignment with national or international guidelines (Aufi et al., 2024). This disjointed approach mirrors challenges observed in the global halal industry, where a failure among international halal authorities to cooperate and establish a standardised masterplan has led to uncertainty, duplication, and inefficiency (Davids & Sabrain, 2022). The absence of a unified voice hinders the industry's collective growth and weakens consumer confidence. Another consequence of this fragmented market is the inconsistency in halal certification. In Nigeria, multiple certifying bodies exist, each with its own procedures, credibility levels, and recognition standards (Ademola et al., 2024). This creates confusion for businesses seeking certification and for consumers trying to determine which certifications are trustworthy.

Globally, the proliferation of self-regulating halal accreditation bodies further complicates matters, making it difficult for independently certified businesses to gain international recognition. As noted by Davids and Sabrain (2022), the lack of mutual recognition among certifiers leads to added costs and bureaucratic hurdles, ultimately slowing down the expansion of halal trade. For Nigerian halal brands, this fragmentation translates into higher operational costs and lost market opportunities. Businesses aiming to export or attract international Muslim consumers often have to obtain multiple certifications to meet the varying requirements of different countries and markets.

Domestically, the lack of standardisation reduces trust among consumers who may be uncertain about what constitutes a genuinely halal product (Muhammad et al., 2020). Additionally, without a coordinated effort to promote halal branding and raise awareness, businesses are left to compete in a market where consumer knowledge is already limited and inconsistent (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020).

Thus, the fragmented nature of the halal market in Nigeria presents a significant barrier to growth, visibility, and trust. To overcome this challenge, there is a pressing need for collaborative efforts between halal businesses, certification bodies, industry associations, and government regulators (Muhammad et al., 2020). By working together to establish unified standards, centralise information, and promote transparency, stakeholders can create a more cohesive halal ecosystem. This would not only streamline business operations but also enhance consumer confidence, making it easier for halal brands in Nigeria to scale and compete both locally and globally.

Limited Digital Presence

In addition to the earlier discussed challenges, limited digital presence remains a significant challenge for many halal businesses in Nigeria. A large number of these businesses operate without a professionally developed website, active social media profiles, or accurate listings on online directories. In a digital era where consumers increasingly rely on the internet to research, compare, and purchase products and services, being invisible online can drastically limit a business's reach and competitiveness (Francis & Elijah, 2025). The absence of a digital footprint not only affects visibility but also undermines trust and credibility, as modern consumers often associate a strong online presence with professionalism and legitimacy.

Several structural and internal issues contribute to this limited digital engagement. According to Alomari et al. (2020), Nigerian businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), struggle with a lack of skilled personnel, insufficient upper management support, and limited confidence in digital technologies. Many halal businesses fall within the SME category and face these exact challenges. Moreover, regulatory concerns, data privacy issues, and poor website performance, such as slow loading times, discourage businesses from adopting digital strategies and consumers from engaging with their online platforms (Oyewole et al., 2024). This technological stagnation stifles growth, especially for halal brands that rely heavily on consumer trust and consistent brand communication.

Furthermore, another factor hindering digital advancement is the cultural and operational resistance to online marketing. Many business owners are not fully convinced of its value or are uncertain about how to implement it effectively (Talwar et al., 2020). There is also a lack of alignment between digital initiatives and actual business development, leading to poorly managed platforms that fail to deliver results. Halal brands, which already operate in a niche market, need more than just visibility—they require meaningful engagement and reliable communication channels to build strong relationships with their audience. Without a consistent and strategic digital presence, their ability to compete with mainstream brands remains limited.

Therefore, the restricted digital presence of halal businesses in Nigeria significantly affects their market growth, consumer engagement, and overall sustainability. Building and maintaining robust online platforms, through updated websites, active social media engagement, and digital marketing strategies, is essential for creating awareness and fostering trust (Maulana et al., 2025). To overcome this challenge, halal businesses must invest in digital literacy, training, and infrastructure while receiving greater support from

industry stakeholders and policymakers. A deliberate and strategic push toward digital transformation will not only enhance their visibility but also position them to better serve a growing, tech-savvy consumer base.

Consumer Trust and Authentication

In addition to limited digital presence, consumer trust and authentication remain critical challenges for halal brands in Nigeria, where the legitimacy of halal claims can often be questioned. In a market where religious adherence and ethical considerations significantly influence consumer behaviour, the authenticity of halal certification becomes essential (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020). Many consumers are sceptical of products that are merely labelled as “halal” without any official verification or recognised accreditation. This doubt can deter even Muslim consumers from engaging with certain halal businesses, thereby limiting their customer base and weakening brand loyalty. Building trust in halal products requires clear, visible, and credible certification processes (Faisal et al., 2024). As noted by Quoquab et al. (2020), the presence of recognised halal logos or seals is vital in reassuring consumers that the product has met the necessary religious and safety standards. Without such logos, businesses risk appearing unreliable or inauthentic, even if their products do meet halal requirements (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020).

In a competitive market, especially within sectors like fast food, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals, halal brands must visibly demonstrate their compliance with recognised standards to gain and retain customer trust. Moreover, inconsistencies in halal certification processes across different regulatory bodies further complicate matters. With no single, universally accepted halal authority in Nigeria, multiple organisations issue certifications, often using differing criteria (Ademola et al., 2024). This fragmentation can lead to confusion and erode consumer confidence, especially when counterfeit or fraudulent certifications emerge. For halal businesses, this not only presents an operational challenge but also a reputational risk, as even a hint of doubt can tarnish the brand’s credibility and long-term viability.

Therefore, gaining consumer trust through proper authentication is a cornerstone of success for halal brands in Nigeria. Clear certification, transparent processes, and the consistent use of recognised halal logos are essential in reinforcing product integrity and building long-term loyalty (Faisal et al., 2024). Halal businesses must not only ensure that their products meet the highest standards, they also need to communicate this clearly and confidently to their audience. Only by addressing consumer concerns about authenticity can halal brands strengthen their market position and foster deeper, more trusting relationships with their customers.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the challenges faced by halal businesses in implementing digital marketing to promote their brands in Nigeria. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research sought to capture in-depth insights, lived experiences, and contextual realities that cannot be adequately represented through numerical data alone (Lim, 2025b). The adoption of this research design is further supported by previous studies, such as Islam et al. (2025), Shahid et al. (2028), and Business et al. (2018), in halal marketing. Thus, this design allowed the researchers to investigate the nuanced ways in which financial constraints, religious considerations, digital skills, and content-related issues shape marketing practices among halal enterprises. The interpretivist paradigm underpinned the study, recognising

that the participants' subjective experiences provide meaningful understanding of the operational barriers encountered in the digital environment (Lim, 2025a).

Based on the adopted research design, purposive sampling, as advocated by (H. B. Jaiyeoba et al., 2025), was used to select participants with direct experience in managing or implementing digital marketing activities within their halal businesses in Nigeria. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen halal business owners and managers operating across various sectors, including food, cosmetics, fashion, and services. Semi-structured interviews combine predetermined guiding questions with the flexibility to probe further, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that key themes relevant to the research are consistently explored (Naz et al., 2022). The semi-structured format provided flexibility for participants to elaborate on issues relevant to their unique contexts while also ensuring that core themes related to digital marketing implementation to promote halal brands among businesses in Nigeria.

The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis, which is a popular method for analysing qualitative data, according to (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This method enabled the identification of recurring patterns and emergent themes across participants' narratives, such as content creation difficulties, limited digital expertise, financial barriers, and the impact of religious values on marketing choices. The analysis follows the steps of familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation (Christou, 2023). To ensure trustworthiness, the study incorporated strategies, such as maintaining an audit trail, member checking, and reflexive note-taking throughout the research process (Udayanga, 2025). Ethical considerations were adhered to by securing voluntary participation, ensuring anonymity, and protecting all data collected (Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2025). Therefore, this methodological approach provides a rigorous and credible foundation for understanding the complex challenges surrounding digital marketing implementation to promote halal brands in Nigeria.

4. Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the data gathered from interviews with halal business owners and managers, highlighting the key themes that emerged in relation to the challenges of implementing digital marketing in Nigeria. The analysis draws on participants' experiences to illustrate how financial limitations, content creation difficulties, religious considerations, and digital skill gaps shape their marketing practices and brand visibility. Each theme is discussed in detail to provide a clear understanding of the operational realities faced by halal enterprises within the country's evolving digital landscape. Through this thematic exploration, the section offers insight into the complex interplay between resources, values, and technological demands that influence the adoption and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies among halal businesses.

Thematic analysis

Content Creation

The most recurring theme is consistency in content creation. Some of the interviewees lamented the demanding nature of producing unique, creative, and relatable content for online customers, as it poses a major challenge to their digital marketing efforts. But this consistency is affected by other factors, like limited budgets, time spent managing the business, processing orders, engaging with the audience, and a lack of creativity in producing high-quality content. The inconsistency is due to managing other business

areas and resources to provide this content, as shown in the following verbatim quotations from Interviewee 10 and Interviewee 13 below.

“Budget constraints are a challenge. High-quality content and effective ads can be expensive. Another issue is staying consistent with posting while managing other aspects of the business.” (Interviewee 13)

Another recurring challenge is the financial commitment that comes with managing ads and producing content. Occasionally, these may require the help of an expert. For small-scale businesses, budgeting such funds may affect the financial stability of the growing businesses.

“One challenge is creating high-quality content consistently. It can be time-consuming and requires resources. We are also still figuring out how to fully leverage paid ads for better reach.” (Interviewee 10)

Halal Compliance and Values

In terms of religious values and adherence to halal standards, all the interviewees reported facing challenges in balancing religious sensitivities with modern marketing practices, albeit to varying degrees. A significant issue in this context is the use of imagery and make-up in advertising beauty products; specifically, halal brands tend to avoid content involving music or visuals that do not reflect the modesty prescribed by Islamic teachings. This approach may appeal to Muslim consumers, but it may not appeal to non-Muslims, who may find it unattractive or outdated. The participants commented on their challenges with halal compliance and how they resolve these issues.

“There is a fine line between staying trendy and adhering to halal values. For example, we avoid certain music or imagery in our campaigns.” (Interviewee 1)

“Yes, especially with makeup ads. We ensure our visuals and messaging align with modesty and halal principles.” (Interviewee 5)

The use of marketing language presents two challenges: deceitful promotions and terms that may not apply to a broader audience pose another religious sensitivity barrier for these brands. Hence, some of the interviewees acknowledged the difficulty in reconciling Islamic sensitivities with the demands of digital marketing. For example, a non-Muslim might consider the term “halal” in brand awareness as insensitive to their religious beliefs. However, the term halal is not specifically religious but rather could hold some linguistic connotations when it comes to business and marketing. (Wilson, 2014). The following verbatim quotations from interviewee 8 and interviewee 12 reflect these findings:

“Yes, especially when choosing imagery and language that appeals to a broad audience while staying true to halal principles.” (Interviewee 8)

“Yes, we are mindful of the content we post, ensuring it aligns with Islamic values. For example, we avoid promotional content that could be seen as inappropriate. Maintaining the balance between modern marketing strategies and respecting religious guidelines is important to us.” (Interviewee 12)

Despite these challenges, they prioritise aligning their digital marketing efforts with the values and ethics inherent in Islam. These observations are consistent with the findings of Iqbal (2023), where it was emphasised that halal businesses must ensure that their digital marketing and transactions remain legitimate under Islamic contract law. This conclusion suggests that halal businesses ought to be acutely aware of their marketing activities to ensure that they do not contravene Islamic principles (Iqbal, 2023).

Knowledge and Skill Gaps

Subsequently, when asked about the knowledge and skills gap that hinders the digital marketing strategies of halal businesses, a major challenge highlighted was the difficulty in making use of analytics and SEO to improve marketing performance. The majority of the representatives mentioned that their business finds it difficult to understand how to make a better use of analytics beyond likes, views, and the number of engagements. For example, interviewee 4 and 14 expressed their challenges in the following manner:

“Advanced analytics and content strategy planning are areas where we lack expertise.” (Interviewee 4)

“We lack advanced knowledge in analytics, which limits our ability to fine-tune campaigns effectively.” (Interviewee 14)

Knowledge of Search Engine optimisation is critical for enhancing online visibility and business rankings. Ghotbifar et al. (2017) conclude that the issue of skill gaps is particularly pronounced in the realm of digital marketing, and many companies lack essential skills related to the principles of communication and the ability to forecast future trends. Such limitations in knowledge can hinder the ability of halal businesses to effectively optimise marketing opportunities. This phenomenon is evident in the claims made by these businesses regarding their unfamiliarity with search engine optimisation (SEO) techniques. When asked regarding this issue, interviewee 12 responded as:

“We could benefit from more knowledge about SEO and how to optimise our website to appear higher in search results. Additionally, we need more expertise in using analytics to better understand our audience and improve our campaigns.” (Interviewee 12)

Moreover, researchers have noted that individuals now have access to a wealth of data that enable them to make informed decisions, a development largely attributable to the advancements in digital technologies in the 21st century (Nunan & Di Domenico, 2019). Despite this, there remains a pressing need for individuals to cultivate a diverse set of skills, including soft skills, tool skills, technical skills, and conceptual knowledge. These competencies are essential for the holistic application of analytics in marketing practices (Kurtzke & Setkute, 2021). The ability to create quality content that embodies creativity remains a significant skills gap for several brands. As indicated in the previous analysis, in addition to analytical skills, interviewee 4 acknowledged a deficiency in expertise related to planning strategies for effective content creation. Similarly, interviewees 3 expressed a noticeable gap in their ability to produce advanced content.

“Advanced content creation and running professional ad campaigns are areas we want to improve.” (Interviewee 3)

Interviewee 3 specifically highlighted the desire to enhance capabilities in advanced content creation and the execution of professional advertising campaigns. This evidence suggests that the underlying issue may not reside in the quantity of content produced or the strategies and plans devised for its creation. The content’s quality, uniqueness, and creativity in development and presentation may be lacking in richness and depth.

Strategies in Addressing Digital Market Challenges

The interview conducted showed that these halal businesses are putting in effort to address the challenge they face when implementing digital marketing. They believe that financial restriction is a major constraint. In the absence of financial limitations, they can utilise the knowledge of experts in data analysis, SEO, and content creation. Pertaining to the issue of low budget, halal businesses focus on low-cost ads that are organic. This approach ensures consistency and limited expenditure on marketing. Furthermore, micro-influencers who charge low costs are used to promote their product online at a reduced cost. In addition, user-generated content is used for marketing to ensure adherence to organic content and growth. Below are verbatim quotations from interviewee 3 and interviewee 6:

“We focus on organic growth by creating relatable content and engaging directly with our audience.” (Interviewee 3)

“We make use of free tools like Canva for design and rely on organic reach through engaging content.” (Interviewee 6)

The rationale behind the focus on a low-cost strategy was better put into perspective by interviewee 9, who stated that their business is a small-scale business; therefore, they cannot go over the budget for marketing. Halal businesses also benefited from a low-cost strategy, which allowed them to stay online and compete with larger, better-funded businesses.

“We focus on organic reach and use influencer collaborations for more exposure. Since we are a small business, we prioritise what works best without going over budget.” (Interviewee 9)

Digital marketing has recognised content creation as an important aspect (Altamira et al., 2022). It requires creativity in terms of visualisation and delivery. Hence, the use of user-generated content provides an opportunity to limit the burden of being creative with content to share. Nevertheless, halal businesses must use the user content creatively and ethically in a way that fosters trust and transparency in line with Islamic principles (Altamira et al., 2022).

Supporting Halal Digital Marketing

A common theme across all that participated as interviewees in this research was trading and workshops by halal certification bodies on digital marketing tools and strategies. Some of those interviewed pointed out the necessity for affordable training, grants, and networking within the halal industry, highlighting the need for financial and educational

support for digital growth. In addition, some stressed that halal enterprises would benefit from tailored digital marketing resources that consider cultural sensitivities and market trends to engage effectively with their target audience. The following quotations illustrate this finding:

“Affordable training programmes, access to grants, and more networking opportunities within the halal industry.” (Interviewee 7)

“I believe halal businesses would benefit from better access to digital marketing training and resources that cater to their specific needs, especially in understanding cultural sensitivities and market trends.” (Interviewee 10)

“Halal businesses would benefit from more access to digital marketing training and resources, particularly in areas like content creation and data analysis. Government support in terms of grants or programs would also be helpful.” (Interviewee 12)

“Training on advanced marketing tools, funding for campaigns, and collaborations with larger halal-focused platforms would be immensely helpful.” (Interviewee 1)

Overall, the findings of this study reveal several interconnected challenges shaping the digital marketing efforts of halal businesses in Nigeria. Consistency in content creation emerged as a major concern, with many businesses struggling to produce high-quality and engaging material due to limited budgets, time constraints, and a lack of creative skills. Alongside these operational difficulties, interviewees highlighted the tension between maintaining halal compliance and adopting modern marketing practices, particularly in relation to visual presentation, language choices, and the need to appeal to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. Knowledge and skill gaps further compounded these issues, as many businesses reported limited understanding of analytics, SEO, and content strategy, which are key elements needed to enhance online visibility. Despite these obstacles, halal businesses are adopting low-cost and organic strategies, such as relying on micro-influencers, user-generated content, and free design tools, to manage their digital presence. Participants also emphasised the need for greater institutional support, including affordable training, access to grants, and culturally sensitive marketing resources, noting that improved skills and funding would enhance their ability to navigate digital platforms effectively. Together, these themes illustrate the complex interplay between financial limitations, religious values, capability gaps, and strategic adaptation in shaping halal digital marketing in Nigeria.

5. Research Implications

The findings of this study offer important theoretical contributions to the fields of halal marketing, digital entrepreneurship, and faith-based business studies. By examining the challenges faced in implementing digital marketing to promote halal brands, the research extends existing theoretical discussions that have primarily focused on consumer behaviour, certification, and global halal expansion. It highlights the intersection of religious values, technological adoption, and resource limitations, thereby showing that digital marketing within halal enterprises is shaped not only by market forces but also by cultural and ethical frameworks. The study advances understanding of how faith-based branding influences digital decision-making and provides empirical grounding for future models that integrate religious compliance with digital marketing behaviour in emerging

economies. This contributes to closing a notable theoretical gap by situating halal branding challenges within the broader discourse on digital transformation in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Practically, the study offers several practical implications for halal businesses in Nigeria seeking to strengthen their digital marketing capabilities. Firstly, the findings highlight the need for improved digital literacy and skills development among business owners and marketing personnel. Many halal enterprises struggle with analytics, search engine optimisation, content strategy, and effective use of social media tools. Training programmes tailored to the needs of halal businesses, particularly those run by certification bodies, business associations, or digital marketing consultants, would help enhance their ability to create consistent, high-quality, and compliant digital content. Capacity-building initiatives should focus on practical, low-cost techniques that are suitable for SMEs operating with limited financial resources.

Secondly, the findings underscore the importance of developing affordable and culturally sensitive digital marketing support systems. Halal businesses frequently face financial constraints that limit their ability to invest in paid advertising, professional content creation, or digital consultancy services. Policymakers, Islamic financial institutions, and entrepreneurial support organisations can play a vital role by offering grants, subsidised digital tools, and Sharia-compliant financing options that reduce the cost burden on halal businesses. Additionally, resources such as templates for halal-compliant visual content, guidelines on ethical digital branding, and advisory clinics would provide enterprises with clearer direction on maintaining religious compliance while remaining competitive online. Given the rapid advancements in digital technologies, there is also a growing need for halal businesses to leverage and become more versatile in the use of artificial intelligence, particularly for automating content creation, enhancing customer engagement, and analysing market trends in cost-effective ways.

Finally, the results point to the need for stronger collaboration among industry stakeholders, including halal certification bodies, business networks, and digital marketing practitioners, to improve visibility and trust in halal brands. Certification bodies can increase their involvement by offering educational workshops on digital brand communication, while business associations can create networking opportunities that encourage knowledge-sharing among halal entrepreneurs. Digital experts can develop partnerships with halal SMEs to support organic marketing strategies, such as micro-influencer collaborations and user-generated content, which are financially accessible and effective. By fostering a more integrated support ecosystem, stakeholders can help halal businesses build stronger online identities, improve consumer trust, and expand their market reach in Nigeria's evolving digital economy.

6. Conclusion and Limitations

This study explored the challenges associated with implementing digital marketing to promote halal brands among businesses in Nigeria. The findings revealed that halal enterprises face a combination of financial constraints, limited digital expertise, inconsistent content creation, and difficulties balancing religious compliance with modern marketing practices. These challenges significantly affect their ability to build strong digital identities and compete effectively within an increasingly technology-driven market. Despite these difficulties, the study also highlighted the adaptive strategies businesses employ, such as organic marketing, user-generated content, and micro-influencer collaborations, which demonstrate resilience and innovation among halal

entrepreneurs. The research contributes valuable insights to the growing field of halal marketing by illuminating how faith-based values intersect with digital transformation in an emerging African context. It also acknowledges a growing need for halal businesses to leverage and become more versatile in the use of artificial intelligence, particularly for automating content creation, enhancing customer engagement, and analysing market trends in cost-effective ways.

Nevertheless, the study is not without limitations. Its qualitative design, while effective for generating in-depth understanding, relied on a relatively small sample of sixteen business owners and managers, which may not fully represent the wide diversity of halal enterprises across Nigeria. The participants' experiences, shaped by their specific sectors and geographical locations, may differ from those of halal businesses operating in other regions or industries. Additionally, the use of semi-structured interviews means that findings are based largely on self-reported experiences, which can be influenced by personal perceptions, memory, or social desirability. Thus, future research could address these limitations by adopting mixed-method approaches, incorporating larger and more diverse samples, or conducting comparative studies across different regions or countries.

Moreover, Quantitative studies could provide broader insights into the digital marketing challenges faced by halal businesses by measuring the scale, frequency, and impact of these issues across larger samples. Such an approach would allow researchers to examine relationships between resource constraints, skill levels, and marketing outcomes in a more systematic way. Longitudinal research would also be valuable, as it could capture how digital marketing practices evolve over time in response to technological changes, shifting consumer expectations, and growing institutional support for the halal sector. These alternative research designs could deepen our understanding of the halal digital marketing landscape and reveal trends that may not be immediately visible through qualitative exploration alone.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest. We confirm that the submitted manuscript is an original work and is not under consideration or review by any other publication.

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