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Halal Chicken Labelling in the United Kingdom: An Analysis of Power-Knowledge, Discipline, and Normalization through Michel Foucault's Perspective

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Abstract

The halal food industry in the United Kingdom has witnessed rapid growth over recent decades, driven in part by the increasing Muslim population and the growing interest of non-Muslim consumers in products associated with ethics, quality, and hygiene. Halal chicken has become one of the main products officially labeled and widely distributed by major UK supermarket chains such as Tesco and Sainsbury's. This article aims to analyze the dynamics of halal labeling on chicken in the UK through Michel Foucault's theoretical lens, particularly the concepts of power-knowledge, discipline, and normalization. This research employs a qualitative approach using a literature study and respondent interviews. Data were obtained from secondary sources such as journal articles, official websites of halal certification bodies in the UK, and information provided by several respondents residing in the country. Foucault's theoretical framework is used to understand how halal certification institutions not only set standards but also participate in the production of knowledge, oversight of industry actors, and the construction of consumption norms in society. The findings show that institutions such as the Halal Food Authority (HFA) and the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) perform power-knowledge functions by establishing and disseminating recognized halal standards. The stringent certification process reflects disciplinary practices within the production and consumption chain, while the availability of halal chicken in supermarkets represents the normalization of religious values within the UK's multicultural market. Thus, through Foucault's theory, the halal label on chicken is not merely a marker of religious compliance, but also a product of modern power relations that govern daily consumer practices.

Keywords: Halal label; Michel Foucault; power-knowledge; discipline; normalization; poultry industry; United Kingdom.

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Introduction

The growing religious awareness and consumer preferences for products perceived as more ethical and hygienic have significantly driven the global expansion of the halal food industry, including in Western countries such as the United Kingdom [1],[2]. Amid a continuously growing Muslim population and increasing interest from non-Muslim consumers in halal-certified food, halal chicken products are no longer limited to Muslim community stores, but have become a regular feature on the shelves of major supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's. Halal chicken refers to poultry slaughtered under Islamic rules, encompassing proper slaughtering methods and ensuring that all production processes, including additives and distribution, are free from non-halal elements. The halal label on chicken serves as a guarantee for Muslim consumers that the product they consume complies with religious requirements [3]. Moreover, the halal label is not merely a sign of religious compliance, but also a marker of quality, safety, and ethical animal production [4]. This is reinforced by Ahmad Fakhri Nizham, who notes that the halal label not only legitimizes the religious validity of food according to Islamic law but has also transformed into a commercial commodity beyond its original religious function [5].

In the UK, institutions such as the Halal Food Authority (HFA) and the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) play an important role in establishing and supervising halal standards. However, behind the widespread use of halal labels lies a complex power dynamic that has yet to be critically examined. Who holds the ultimate authority to declare a product as halal? How are such standards enforced? And how is the halal label received and understood by the broader public?

As a country with a growing Muslim population, demand for halal chicken in the UK continues to rise. Public expenditure on halal food and beverages is estimated at £4.64 million, accounting for 8% of total grocery spending in the United Kingdom [6]. Data indicates that Muslims in the UK consume 20 percent of the country's meat, with chicken being the most consumed type, followed by goat, beef, and lamb [7]. This is why this study focuses specifically on the labeling of chicken in the UK, given that chicken consumption surpasses that of other meats.

The growing demand for halal chicken among both Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the UK is driven by positive perceptions of its quality and ethical production. Major supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's now openly provide certified halal chicken products, indicating the integration of halal practices into the mainstream food market in the UK [8]. Several fast-food chains, including KFC, Nando's, and Subway, have also included halal labeling

on their products to meet consumer demand. Nevertheless, the implementation of halal labeling in the UK faces various challenges, including regulatory diversity and debates surrounding acceptable slaughtering standards [9].

Although studies on the halal industry are growing, there remains a lack of critical discussion on the hidden power relations behind halal labeling practices, especially in non-Muslim contexts like the UK. Previous research has mostly focused on fiqh issues, marketing strategies, or Muslim consumer behavior, while the dimensions of power and the social construction of halal have received little critical attention.

For instance, Bonne and Wright (2010) highlighted Muslim consumer motivations for choosing halal food in relation to ethics and identity [10], while Lever and Miele (2012) discussed the expansion of the halal market in Europe from a supply perspective [11]. However, these studies did not explicitly use a theoretical approach that reveals how halal is constructed through modern power mechanisms. Additionally, Moghaddam et al. (2022) contributed valuable insights into UK consumer preferences for halal food, especially regarding logos, country of origin, and ingredients [12]. However, this research did not address the discursive and power-laden aspects of halal labeling itself, which becomes the central focus of this paper through Foucault's theoretical lens.

Yakar's (2021) study traced the trend of halal food in the UK, particularly how Muslims integrate their religious identities into the local food culture through cultural transmission, regulatory adaptation, and market dynamics. The article emphasized the key role of certification institutions, Muslim migration, and responses from non-Muslim producers in shaping a more established halal ecosystem in a secular society [13]. However, this paper takes a different direction by examining halal chicken labeling as a mechanism of power that not only ensures religious compliance but also produces forms of surveillance, bodily regulation, and norm internalization through labeling practices. Using Michel Foucault's genealogical and conceptual approach, this study seeks to unravel how the halal label functions within the logic of discipline and normalization, and how it constructs Muslim subjectivity within the contemporary social and consumer spheres.

Based on analysis of previous studies, this article aims to fill certain gaps by adopting Michel Foucault's approach, which views power as operating not merely through direct coercion, but also through the production of knowledge, regulation of bodies, and the formation of social norms. Employing the concepts of power-knowledge, discipline, and normalization, this article offers a new perspective on understanding the dynamics of halal labeling in the UK's poultry industry. The central argument of this article is that halal labeling on chicken in

the UK is not merely a religious marker but also the result of power-knowledge processes, industrial discipline, and market normalization via modern mechanisms. Thus, this study seeks to provide deeper insight into the dynamics of halal certification and its social and economic implications in the UK context.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at understanding phenomena in depth within specific social and cultural contexts. The methods used include literature review and interviews, chosen to obtain comprehensive and reflective data on the dynamics of halal certification of chicken products in the United Kingdom. The literature review was conducted by examining secondary sources such as academic journal articles, research reports, and publications from the official websites of halal certification bodies in the UK, including the Halal Food Authority (HFA) and the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC).

In addition, interviews were conducted with several respondents residing in the UK who are directly involved in the consumption practices of halal chicken. These interviews aimed to explore the experiences, understanding, and critical perspectives of both Muslim and non-Muslim communities as consumers of halal products. Data collection was conducted purposively, taking into account the respondents' social and religious backgrounds to obtain a representative overview.

The theoretical framework used in this study is Michel Foucault's concepts of power-knowledge relations, discipline, and normalization. The theory of power-knowledge explains that knowledge is never neutral or free from power. For Foucault, knowledge is always produced within and through power relations, and in turn, knowledge also reinforces power. Power not only represses but also produces truth, subjects, and particular ways of thinking in society [14]. In relation to halal certification of chicken products in the UK, this theory is used to analyze how halal certification institutions act not merely as technical regulators but also as agents involved in the production of discourse on halalness in the UK.

Furthermore, Foucault's theory of discipline describes how power operates through hidden and indirect mechanisms, which he refers to as "discipline." Discipline is not merely about coercion or repression, but involves the control and shaping of bodies and individual behavior to be more effective and obedient in fulfilling their roles [15]. When applied to the case of halal chicken labeling in the UK, this theory allows us to understand how certification bodies such as the Halal Food Authority (HFA) and the Halal Monitoring

Committee (HMC) act not only as technical regulators but also as agents of power that shape Muslim consumption behavior through disciplinary mechanisms.

Foucault's concept of normalization, meanwhile, refers to the process of establishing 'normal' standards of behavior, followed by evaluating, correcting, or punishing deviations from those standards. Through normalization, power operates by encouraging individuals to voluntarily conform to social norms without the need for direct physical force [16]. In the context of halal certification for chicken products in the UK, this theory can be applied to analyze how power operates through certification institutions such as the HFA and HMC. These institutions not only determine whether a chicken product is halal or not, but more than that, they construct normative standards of what is considered "properly halal" by the Muslim community in the UK.

In other words, certification bodies are understood as part of a knowledge regime that constructs truth, exercises surveillance over industry actors, and shapes consumption norms among Muslim communities. With this approach, the study seeks to reveal the dimension of power embedded in the processes of certification and halal labeling distribution in multicultural societies such as the United Kingdom.

Result and Discussion

Foucauldian Analysis of Halal Chicken Labelling in the United Kingdom

Power-Knowledge: Who Determines What Is Halal?

In the context of halal chicken labeling in the UK, institutions such as the Halal Food Authority (HFA) and the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) hold formal authority to define halal standards. Through the certification process, these institutions produce "truths" that are accepted by the Muslim community as valid references [17].

According to its official website, the Halal Food Authority (HFA) is an independent, non-profit organization established in 1994 in the UK. HFA provides comprehensive halal certification and auditing services for food and non-food producers. Committed to maintaining the highest halal standards, the organization monitors production processes, evaluates ingredients thoroughly, and ensures appropriate halal labeling. HFA is accredited by leading international halal organizations, ensuring certified products meet globally recognized standards [18].

HFA has certified over 1,000 clients worldwide, with more than 40,000 certified products to ensure full halal compliance. Its services include compliance verification, product audits, documentation reviews, and ongoing support to

help producers meet Islamic dietary laws and industry standards. HFA's team of technical and sharia auditors conducts on-site inspections to ensure adherence to Islamic dietary regulations as defined in their Halal Standards. Additionally, HFA offers export certification services to help producers expand into international markets while maintaining halal compliance. With over two decades of experience, HFA has become a trusted partner for producers aiming to build brand credibility and increase revenue through reliable and authentic halal certification [19].

Alongside HFA, the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) is another recognized authority in the UK authorized to issue halal labels. It is an independent, non-profit charitable organization established to ensure that meat and food products consumed by Muslims in the UK are genuinely halal. HMC conducts inspections, monitoring, and certification of halal products, providing assurance to the Muslim community. With support from more than 600 mosques in the UK, HMC is recognized for its strict and transparent certification process – from slaughterhouses to retail outlets. It also promotes animal welfare, food safety, hygiene, and product quality in line with UK laws and Islamic teachings.

To ensure product halalness, HMC adopts widely accepted universal criteria. It operates in EU-approved slaughterhouses under the supervision of veterinarians from the Meat Hygiene Services (MHS), who are responsible for animal welfare, health, and hygiene. HMC does not collaborate with non-EU-approved facilities. Besides certification, HMC engages in advocacy and education activities to raise awareness of the importance of consuming halal products. It organizes educational programs in madrasahs, open days at certified shops, and local community events to educate the public about the halal certification process and its significance [20].

The certification processes conducted by both institutions impact not only producers, who must adhere to specific standards, but also consumers, influencing how they understand and choose products. Information about the halalness of chicken becomes a marketable commodity through specialized labeling, creating segmentation within the meat market. This reflects how power-knowledge operates within everyday consumption: directing practices, shaping demand, and normalizing preferences. As Foucault wrote, "...power and knowledge directly imply one another." Thus, halal labels are not merely religious markers, but also instruments of power that regulate markets and society [21].

Discipline: Controlled Production and Consumption

Foucault's concept of discipline refers to how modern power functions through surveillance, regulation, and the shaping of individual behavior in

everyday life. Within the UK halal chicken industry, disciplinary power is evident in the strict procedures producers must follow, from slaughter methods to product distribution and labeling. Halal certification bodies not only set standards but also conduct inspections, audits, and oversight of the supply chain to ensure compliance with halal principles, as exemplified by the practices of the Halal Monitoring Committee.

Discipline also applies to consumers. Muslim consumers, for instance, often feel religiously obligated to choose halal-certified products, resulting in consumption patterns that conform to standards established by such institutions. This represents an internalization of oversight that is not coercive but voluntarily accepted by individuals. Even non-Muslim consumers have started to follow these norms, associating halal labels with quality, hygiene, and ethical animal treatment. As Foucault describes, discipline creates “docile bodies” through constant and detailed surveillance mechanisms, reflected here in how both industry and society shape consumption behavior based on halal certification standards [22].

Normalization: When Halal Becomes the New Standard

Foucault’s theory of normalization describes the process by which certain practices are institutionalized as norms to be followed, shaping what is deemed “normal” in society [23]. In the context of halal chicken labeling in the UK, normalization is evident in the widespread use of halal labels not only by producers targeting Muslim consumers but also by major supermarkets like Tesco and Sainsbury’s, which serve the general public, where non-Muslim consumers constitute a large portion of buyers.

As demand for halal chicken grows among both Muslims and non-Muslims, the halal label has come to be associated with quality, hygiene, and ethical production. Halal products have become part of general consumer preferences, not just a religious necessity. This indicates the emergence of a new norm in which halal is considered part of acceptable food quality standards. This process aligns with Foucault’s observation that modern power operates subtly through normalization, making certain practices socially default.

Nevertheless, resistance persists. Some groups criticize halal labeling as a form of religious symbolism in public spaces or question the slaughter methods used [24]. Even so, dominant market discourses and narratives of quality have succeeded in maintaining halal labeling as a normalized aspect of the UK food industry.

The phenomenon of halal labeling in the UK demonstrates how religious practices can be transformed into market standards through normalization mechanisms. Halal labels, once exclusive to Muslim communities, have now

entered the mainstream of UK society. Their broader acceptance indicates that religious values are no longer confined to the private sphere but have permeated public and economic spaces through market logic [25]. To better understand how power-knowledge, discipline, and normalization operate in everyday life, the next section presents case studies of halal chicken labeling practices in major UK supermarkets and restaurant chains.

Case Study

After outlining how the concepts of power-knowledge, discipline, and normalization operate in theoretical terms, this section presents concrete case studies to demonstrate how these three mechanisms materialize in the practice of halal chicken labeling in the United Kingdom. By highlighting the roles of major supermarkets and certification bodies, this case study illustrates how modern forms of power manifest within everyday production and consumption chains.

Halal Chicken Label at Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's, one of the leading supermarket chains in the UK, offers a variety of halal products to cater to the needs of Muslim consumers. Its halal product category includes fresh meats such as minced beef, diced beef, whole chicken, chicken thighs, and chicken cuts for curry preparation. These products are designed for a wide range of cooking needs, from traditional British dishes like cottage pie to Asian specialties like curries and grilled meals.

In addition to fresh meat, Sainsbury's also provides convenient ready-to-eat halal meals. These include Indian dishes such as biryani and korma, as well as vegetarian items that comply with halal standards from several Asian countries. These products are particularly suited for consumers seeking quick meals without compromising their adherence to halal principles [26].

According to its official website, Sainsbury's emphasizes the importance of clear labeling on its halal products, ensuring that consumers can easily identify items that meet their dietary requirements. While Sainsbury's private-label products are not halal-certified, due to the use of pre-slaughter stunning methods, they do sell certified halal products from other brands, such as Tariq Halal, which are officially recognized and meet the accepted halal standards in the UK [27].

By offering a wide range of high-quality and accessible halal products, Sainsbury's demonstrates its commitment to meeting the diverse needs of its consumers. The availability of these halal options not only supports Muslim consumers in fulfilling their dietary obligations but also reflects Sainsbury's attention to cultural and religious diversity in British society.

Halal Chicken Label at Tesco

Tesco, one of the largest supermarket chains in the United Kingdom, offers a wide range of halal food products to meet the needs of Muslim consumers. Under the "Halal Food" category on its official website, Tesco provides various items, including processed meat such as seasoned chicken fillets, smoked chicken sausages, and sliced turkey meat. These products are sourced from brands such as Najma, Takul, and Jaldee Eats, which are known for their commitment to halal standards. Additionally, ready-to-eat meals like chicken fajita pizza and samosas are also available, providing convenient options for consumers seeking quick meals under halal principles [28].

However, not all meat products sold at Tesco are halal-certified. Tesco states that most of the meat it offers, including halal products, is processed using pre-stunning (stunning before slaughter), a common practice in the UK. This may be a point of concern for certain Muslim consumers who adhere to specific guidelines regarding slaughter methods. According to a report by *The Guardian*, approximately 85% of animals slaughtered using halal methods in the UK are stunned before slaughter [29].

Tesco has also expanded its halal product offerings by adding a variety of fresh and processed meats from brands such as Shazans [30]. This move reflects Tesco's commitment to meeting the diverse demands of the market and providing products aligned with the dietary needs of Muslim consumers. For instance, some of the newly available Shazans products at Tesco include Chicken Peri Peri Platter (1.6 kg), Diced Chicken Breast (450 g), Chicken Mince (500 g), Lamb Chops (400 g), Diced Beef (500 g), Diced Lamb (500 g), Rump Beef Steaks (340 g), and Lamb Mince (500 g) with 20% fat content.

In addition to these, Tesco has introduced new Shazans products such as Thai-Style Chicken Burger, Smokey BBQ Chicken Drumsticks, Japanese Teriyaki Beef Stir Fry Strips, Salt, Chilli & Pepper Chicken Thighs, and Tandoori Chicken Kebabs. This initiative is part of Tesco's broader effort to provide more high-quality halal options for its customers.

Analysis of Halal Chicken Labels in UK Supermarkets (Sainsbury's and Tesco)

As a concrete illustration of the concepts of power-knowledge, discipline, and normalization in the implementation of halal labels, this study highlights the role of two major UK supermarkets: Sainsbury's and Tesco. These two retail chains have collaborated with certification bodies such as the Halal Food Authority (HFA) to ensure that their chicken products meet established halal standards. Information regarding slaughter procedures, product sourcing, and

certification logos is usually presented transparently on packaging and official websites [31].

From the perspective of Foucault's power-knowledge theory, it can be argued that Sainsbury's and Tesco are not merely retailers but also disseminators of knowledge about halal to their consumers. For example, they openly state that their own-brand meat products are not halal-certified due to the use of pre-slaughter stunning—this type of knowledge positions the supermarkets as intermediaries helping to define what is considered halal, based on the authority of recognized halal certification bodies such as HFA and HMC. The involvement of such institutions shows how power-knowledge becomes institutionalized within market structures: only products that conform to officially sanctioned halal knowledge can be marketed as halal. In Foucault's terms, this demonstrates how power operates alongside the production of knowledge—those who have the authority to declare a product “halal” also wield the power to circulate what is accepted as halal, based on religious representation and public consumption.

From the viewpoint of Foucault's theory of discipline, Sainsbury's and Tesco can be seen as actors that contribute to creating disciplinary mechanisms among Muslim consumers. Through classification, labeling, and the curation of halal products, consumers are guided to regulate or discipline themselves according to norms that have been formalized by the market and particular certification systems. Discipline in this context is not enforced through direct coercion, but through systems of information and the arrangement of retail space that encourage consumers to willingly adhere to dietary rules as defined by authorities such as HFA or HMC. Discipline also applies to producers and suppliers, who must undergo strict audits and training processes. These supermarkets also influence consumer behavior: Muslim consumers buy products with the confidence that they comply with Islamic law, while non-Muslim consumers choose halal chicken due to perceptions of quality and ethical slaughtering practices.

When viewed through the lens of normalization theory, the placement of halal products on special shelves and within distinct digital categories shows how Sainsbury's and Tesco contribute to what Foucault terms a “regime of normalization.” In this context, what is considered normal is not all meat, but specifically meat that has undergone a certain slaughtering process and has received a halal label. This creates a distinction between what is “normal” (halal-certified meat) and what is “other” (non-certified meat products). This process reinforces religious identity and reveals how the market plays a role in establishing new moral standards based on what is deemed customary by Muslim consumers. As a result, halal chicken is no longer limited to Muslim community stores but has become part of the mainstream food trade in the UK.

Despite resistance from certain groups toward halal certification, the presence of halal-labeled products on the shelves of major supermarkets like Sainsbury's and Tesco indicates that normalization has occurred: halal products are no longer exclusive to Muslim consumers but are part of general consumer choices associated with quality, hygiene, and ethical production. This suggests that halal labeling has been institutionalized as a new norm of consumption in a multicultural society [32].

Interview-Based Data Analysis

Interviews with Five Respondents in the UK Regarding Their Selection of Halal-Labeled Chicken

The availability of halal-labeled chicken in major UK supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's has attracted not only Muslim consumers but also non-Muslim consumers who hold diverse reasons for choosing such products. In this study, the author conducted interviews with five individuals from various religious and cultural backgrounds to gain deeper insight into their motivations for purchasing halal chicken at supermarkets. Their stories and considerations reveal that the halal label is not merely a religious symbol, but also intersects with personal identity, values, and everyday habits.

The first respondent is a Muslim man from Indonesia who follows Islamic teachings in a textual and strict manner, despite not having formal education in religious institutions such as pesantren or madrasa. For him, the halal label on packaging is a non-negotiable requirement when selecting food, including chicken. He believes that in the absence of a halal label, the halal status of the food becomes doubtful, and therefore, he completely avoids uncertified products. Adhering strictly to religious guidelines is, in his view, a form of absolute obedience, even in routine supermarket purchases.

In contrast, the second respondent is a Muslim woman from Indonesia with a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) background. Although she understands Islamic teachings well, she takes a more moderate approach in daily religious practice. She still prefers to buy halal-certified chicken but is not as rigid as the first respondent in insisting on the halal logo. As long as she believes the chicken is halal or comes from a trusted source, she deems it acceptable. This flexible interpretation demonstrates her contextual and adaptive religious practice.

The third respondent is another Indonesian Muslim woman who does not deeply engage with religious teachings. She continues to perform obligatory religious practices such as prayer, fasting, and wearing the hijab, but is relatively relaxed regarding food. She does not prioritize whether the product has a halal

label or not. Her guiding principle is simple: as long as she recites “bismillah” before eating, the food is considered permissible. Her attitude reflects the reality of many urban Muslims who practice their faith in a more practical and individualized manner.

The fourth respondent is a woman from China who identifies as an atheist and is currently studying at Oxford University. In her daily life, she does not pay attention to halal labeling when purchasing chicken for personal consumption. However, when cooking for her Muslim friends during social gatherings, she consistently chooses halal-labeled chicken. She does so out of respect for the beliefs of others. Interestingly, she is also willing to eat halal meat with her Muslim friends, noting that there is no significant difference in taste or quality. Her behavior illustrates that halal product choices can also be informed by social sensitivity and interfaith respect, rather than personal belief.

The fifth respondent is a devout Christian man from England who is also a student at Oxford. He frequently buys halal chicken at Tesco or Sainsbury’s, not because of religious obligations but due to habits shaped by his experience living with his wife, who was formerly a Muslim. His knowledge about halal slaughter—which he considers to be cleaner and more ethical—reinforces his preference for halal-labeled meat. Although his wife has since converted to Christianity, their practice of choosing halal chicken remains. In this case, the preference for halal products stems from historical experience, personal habit, and positive perceptions of product quality.

From these five accounts, it becomes evident that the choice to buy halal-labeled chicken in UK supermarkets is shaped by individual understandings of religion, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences. For some Muslims who adopt a textualist approach to religious teachings, such as the first respondent, the halal label is essential. In contrast, other Muslims—despite having religious knowledge, apply more moderate or contextual interpretations of halal, as seen in the second and third respondents. These differences reflect the spectrum of religious observance among the Muslim diaspora, where religious practices are often adapted to one’s social and personal context.

Meanwhile, the two non-Muslim respondents demonstrate that the preference for halal products is not necessarily tied to spiritual beliefs. The Chinese respondent showed concern for the religious preferences of her friends, while the Christian respondent's preference was shaped by historical and relational factors, as well as a perception of superior product quality. These cases reveal that the availability of halal products at mainstream supermarkets like Tesco and Sainsbury’s serves not only religious needs but also reflects the

dynamics of multiculturalism in British society, where tolerance, lived experience, and perceptions of quality are influential factors.

Another notable finding is that the halal label has expanded beyond its religious function to signify values such as cleanliness, ethical animal slaughter, and social solidarity. In the context of major Western supermarket chains, the presence of halal products becomes a point of convergence between personal belief, cultural diversity, and modern consumer preference. Tesco and Sainsbury's, as dominant retail players, seem aware of this dynamic and thus provide a wide selection of halal products that cater not only to Muslims but also to a diverse range of consumers.

Accordingly, these interviews with five respondents reveal the multifaceted motivations behind the purchase of halal chicken in the UK. Whether driven by religious adherence, cultural identity, ethical concerns, or social solidarity, the choice to purchase halal-labeled meat reflects not only individual identity but also responses to life in a multicultural environment that demands tolerance, adaptability, and mutual respect.

Analysis of Interviews with Five Respondents Using Foucault's Theory

When the phenomenon of halal chicken consumption at supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's is examined through the lens of Michel Foucault's theory—particularly his concepts of *power/knowledge*, *discipline*, and *normalization*—it becomes clear that these consumption practices cannot be separated from power mechanisms operating through religious, ethical, and social constructions of knowledge. In this context, knowledge about halal is not merely a collection of religious facts, but rather the product of a power system that shapes how individuals understand what is "permissible" or "acceptable" to consume. The halal label becomes a tangible manifestation of institutionalized knowledge that regulates and structures individual behavior.

Foucault emphasizes that power is not only repressive but also productive—it creates disciplined subjects. In this case, observant Muslim consumers who strictly adhere to halal labeling have become subjects who consciously monitor and regulate their consumption practices. They are not necessarily under direct surveillance by religious authorities or the state, but are instead guided by internalized knowledge that has become a normative framework. Even among less observant Muslims, certain practices—such as reciting *bismillah* before eating or choosing brands perceived as "Islamic"—illustrate the presence of subtle yet effective disciplinary mechanisms.

Foucault's concept of *discipline* is evident in how halal-labeled products influence consumer behavior. The very presence of certification logos, packaging

claims, and branding strategies cultivates consumer self-regulation. Muslim consumers discipline their purchases under religious standards that have been codified and commercialized. Meanwhile, non-Muslim consumers also engage with this disciplinary system – some out of respect for their Muslim peers, others due to positive perceptions of halal practices such as ethical slaughter and hygiene. In this way, both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers are drawn into a shared system of norms and conduct facilitated by labeling practices.

The concept of *normalization* also helps explain why even non-Muslim consumers choose halal products. In a multicultural society like the UK, particularly in public spaces such as supermarkets, consumption norms are gradually shifting. The halal label is no longer exclusively associated with Muslim religiosity but is increasingly integrated into mainstream consumer preferences, especially in urban centers. This shift reflects how power operates most effectively when a particular practice becomes “taken for granted,” carried out not because of coercion but because it is embedded in the collective social routine.

For instance, a non-Muslim respondent who chooses halal chicken when cooking for Muslim friends is participating in a broader regime of normalization. Here, the internalized norm is not about religiosity per se, but about social sensitivity, inclusiveness, and ethical responsibility – values that have been attached to halal consumption by market discourse and public narratives. In such cases, the halal label is not simply a religious symbol, but part of a normalized standard of ethical and respectful consumer behavior.

Thus, the practice of purchasing halal chicken at supermarkets should not be viewed merely as a personal decision or expression of faith. Rather, it represents the manifestation of a *power/knowledge* regime that influences how individuals think, choose, and act. Through the halal label, religious knowledge is institutionalized, disciplinary power is internalized, and new consumption norms are normalized. Foucault’s theoretical framework helps us see that what appears to be a private or voluntary choice is shaped by broader and more complex networks of subtle and productive power.

Conclusion

Overall, this study demonstrates that the halal label on chicken in the United Kingdom is not merely a marker of religious adherence, but rather the result of complex power relations within modern society. Through Michel Foucault’s theoretical framework, it becomes clear that power-knowledge is exercised by halal certification bodies that produce and control the authoritative definitions of what constitutes “halal.” Discipline is manifested through

surveillance, regulation, and the internalization of norms by both producers and consumers. Normalization occurs when halal products are no longer exclusive to Muslim consumers but are widely accepted by the general public as part of mainstream food quality and consumption standards. Hence, the halal label functions as a product of modern mechanisms of power that simultaneously govern social, economic, and religious life. These findings open new avenues for interpreting consumption practices as forms of power in action.

Although this study is supported by a literature review, the use of primary data through direct interviews still requires further development. Future research should incorporate more empirical experiences through in-depth interviews with halal industry actors, consumers, and certification institutions. Additionally, the author's own lived experience during two years of residence in Oxford, UK, could enrich the analysis and offer a more contextual and reflective understanding of halal labeling practices in the field.

It is important to note that this research does not claim to be conclusive. Future studies could employ ethnographic methods or comparative approaches between Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries to expand the perspective and enhance the validity of findings. Moreover, an interdisciplinary approach that integrates Islamic studies, political economy, and the sociology of consumption holds significant potential for deepening our understanding of halal phenomena in the global context. Foucault's framework helps to explain how religion, industry, and the state interact in shaping consumption practices.

Author Contributions

Dini Astriani: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration.

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