

Marketing strategy of Saruhan packaged sambal MSME in Bandung, Indonesia: Some notes from Islamic perspective

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ABSTRAK

Introduction

Packaged sambal has evolved from a traditional Indonesian condiment into a commercially viable product, driven by increasing demand for convenience, authenticity, and cultural identity. Micro, small, and medium enterprises in this sector face intense competition from established brands, resource constraints, and shifting consumer behaviors, particularly among Generation Z. Halal certification and Islamic marketing principles are increasingly recognized as strategic tools for building trust and competitive advantage.

Objectives

This study examines the marketing strategies of a Bandung-based packaged sambal enterprise, integrating market size analysis, segmentation–targeting–positioning, the marketing mix, and Islamic marketing principles. It aims to assess how these combined strategies influence sales growth, market penetration, customer loyalty, and competitive positioning.

Method

A qualitative, single-case study design was applied, using purposive sampling to select internal stakeholders and customers as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic coding in NVivo 12 Plus. The analysis focused on market potential estimation through TAM–SAM–SOM, STP implementation, the 4Ps, and the integration of Islamic marketing practices.

Results

Findings indicate that precise market sizing, a Generation Z-focused STP strategy, a coherent marketing mix, and strong digital-first promotion significantly increased monthly sales over six months. Halal certification reinforced consumer trust, strengthened brand

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loyalty, and enhanced differentiation. Digital platforms, influencer collaborations, and culturally authentic storytelling proved effective in aligning with consumer values and preferences.

Implications

The study provides theoretical support for integrating cultural authenticity, ethical branding, and digital-first strategies in MSME marketing. Practically, it offers a replicable model for small enterprises seeking competitive advantage in culturally rooted food sectors. Policy implications include the need for supportive certification processes and digital literacy programs to empower MSMEs.

Originality/Novelty

This study contributes to the literature by presenting an integrated framework that combines market analysis, consumer behavior alignment, and Islamic marketing principles, demonstrating their synergistic impact on MSME performance in the halal and culturally authentic packaged food market.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian cuisine is renowned for its rich variety of flavors, spices, and regional specialties, among which sambal—a chili-based condiment—holds a particularly important cultural and culinary position. Found in all 34 provinces with numerous local variations, sambal is more than a condiment; it is an integral part of the national culinary identity (Septiana et al., 2023). In recent years, sambal has transitioned from a traditional homemade preparation to a commercially packaged product with strong market potential, driven by changing lifestyles, urbanization, and increasing consumer demand for convenience (Fatimah et al., 2024). The packaged sambal industry has thus emerged as a dynamic segment within Indonesia's food sector, responding to consumer needs for authenticity, practicality, and variety. Marketing innovations—particularly those leveraging digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram—have significantly enhanced brand reach and influenced purchase intentions among younger consumers (Sunjaya et al., 2024), indicating that traditional food products can successfully compete in modern retail environments when effectively promoted.

One of the most prominent consumer segments influencing this shift is Generation Z (Gen Z), individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. As digital natives with strong purchasing power and a preference for convenience, Gen Z has a dual affinity for modern consumption and cultural heritage (Apriyanto, 2025; Margaret & Sidharta, 2023). They frequently use food delivery apps and engage with online food content, making them highly responsive to digital marketing. At the same time, Gen Z demonstrates emotional connections to traditional foods, associating them with family

traditions and cultural pride (Prayogo et al., 2024). This convergence of convenience and cultural authenticity presents a unique opportunity for ready-to-eat traditional products, such as packaged sambal, to align with Gen Z's values while meeting their practical needs.

Despite the opportunities, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) operating in Indonesia's culinary sector face significant marketing challenges. These include limited financial resources for promotional activities, low digital marketing literacy, and difficulties in differentiating themselves from established brands (Adawiyah & Adhitya, 2021; Yanto et al., 2022). MSMEs often struggle to maintain product quality consistency, secure distribution channels, and build strong brand identities in a market characterized by intense competition and rapidly evolving consumer preferences (Wulandari et al., 2023). Moreover, compliance with regulatory requirements—such as food safety standards and halal certification—can be costly and complex, diverting resources from core marketing functions (Hidayat et al., 2025). Without strategic interventions, these constraints limit the ability of MSMEs to capitalize on the growing demand for ready-to-eat traditional foods.

A general solution to these challenges lies in adopting integrated marketing strategies that combine traditional brand-building with modern digital tools. Studies in Southeast Asia demonstrate that MSMEs competing with established food brands benefit significantly from leveraging social media analytics to refine targeting, adopting market-driven innovation to align with consumer needs, and forming strategic partnerships to extend market reach (Mamun et al., 2022; Nugroho & Angela, 2024). Digital platforms not only enable cost-effective advertising but also provide opportunities for storytelling that connects products to cultural heritage, thereby enhancing differentiation and consumer engagement (Alshurideh et al., 2023). Furthermore, incorporating sustainability and ethical sourcing into marketing narratives can strengthen appeal among both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers who value responsible consumption (Sugandini et al., 2020).

Within this broader strategic framework, Islamic marketing principles offer a culturally resonant and ethically grounded approach for MSMEs in Indonesia's food sector. Rooted in Islamic teachings, these principles emphasize halal compliance, transparency, social responsibility, fair pricing, quality assurance, and ethical stakeholder relations (Agustian et al., 2023; Pujiyanto & Muzdalifah, 2022). For food producers, adherence to halal standards goes beyond legal compliance; it assures consumers of product integrity and aligns with religious values, thereby building trust and influencing purchase intentions (Mohamad Rasdi et al., 2023). The inclusion of halal certification also enhances brand image and loyalty, with studies showing that it can differentiate products in crowded markets and broaden appeal to health-conscious non-Muslim consumers (Ibeabuchi et al., 2024; Kusuma, 2023).

The application of Islamic marketing principles to segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) strategies enables MSMEs to refine their market focus. Segmentation can incorporate religiosity, lifestyle, and demographic factors, allowing for targeted messaging that resonates with specific consumer needs (Fitri et al., 2023). Targeting

strategies that prioritize halal-conscious consumers can be expanded to include ethically minded non-Muslims, while positioning can emphasize cultural authenticity, product quality, and compliance with halal standards as unique selling points (Rafiuddin et al., 2024). By integrating these principles into STP, MSMEs can align their offerings with consumer values while enhancing competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

Empirical evidence from the halal food sector underscores the economic and social benefits of applying Islamic marketing principles. Economically, MSMEs adopting halal-focused strategies often experience increased market access, improved competitiveness, and stronger brand differentiation (Fajri et al., 2023). Socially, these principles promote ethical business practices, empower local communities through fair trade and local sourcing, and preserve culinary traditions by emphasizing culturally authentic products (Adinugraha et al., 2023; Azwar et al., 2022). This dual impact supports sustainable business growth while contributing to community welfare and cultural preservation—outcomes that are particularly important in Indonesia's diverse and predominantly Muslim society.

Previous scholarly work on traditional food marketing provides relevant insights into practical applications of these principles. For example, studies on the Malaysian halal food industry demonstrate that integrating halal certification into branding strategies increases consumer trust and market share for traditional food products (Azmi et al., 2018). Similarly, research in Indonesia has highlighted the importance of communicating cultural heritage alongside halal compliance to strengthen consumer engagement and loyalty (Alimusa et al., 2023). These findings suggest that MSMEs producing packaged sambal can enhance their market performance by coupling cultural narratives with transparent halal certification processes, thereby appealing to both domestic and international consumers.

Nevertheless, a research gap remains regarding the systematic application of Islamic marketing principles to the marketing mix of ready-to-eat traditional products within the MSME context. While individual elements—such as halal certification or cultural storytelling—have been studied, fewer works have examined their combined impact when integrated into comprehensive marketing strategies targeting contemporary consumer segments like Gen Z. Moreover, the intersection between digital marketing tactics and Islamic marketing ethics presents an underexplored area with significant potential for innovation and competitive advantage in the food sector.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to examine the marketing strategy of Saruhan, a Bandung-based MSME producing packaged sambal, with a focus on integrating market size analysis, STP, and the marketing mix through the lens of Islamic marketing principles. By quantifying market potential via TAM–SAM–SOM, aligning segmentation and targeting with Gen Z preferences, and incorporating halal compliance into product positioning, this study seeks to demonstrate how ethically grounded, data-driven strategies can address the specific challenges faced by MSMEs in Indonesia's culinary sector. The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach—merging cultural authenticity, halal assurance, and modern marketing tools—to

propose a replicable model for MSME competitiveness in the evolving food marketplace. The scope includes analyzing Saruhan's current strategies, evaluating their alignment with both consumer behavior and Islamic marketing ethics, and identifying actionable improvements to enhance market reach and sustainable growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Market Size Analysis Frameworks: TAM, SAM, and SOM in Food-Related MSMEs

Recent literature underscores the importance of using market size analysis tools such as Total Addressable Market (TAM), Serviceable Available Market (SAM), and Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM) to refine marketing strategies for food-related MSMEs. Triwahyono et al. (2023) highlight that these frameworks help enterprises assess potential revenue, narrow down relevant segments, and identify realistic market shares based on existing resources. The integration of TAM, SAM, and SOM into strategic planning enables MSMEs to align product offerings with consumer needs and operational capabilities. This is particularly effective when coupled with market orientation, as shown by Kurniawan & Nuringsih (2023), who demonstrate that segment-specific strategies derived from these analyses can enhance competitive positioning in post-pandemic culinary markets.

Other studies emphasize the synergy between TAM–SAM–SOM analysis and digital marketing transformation. Maulana (2024) illustrates how culinary MSMEs can integrate these frameworks into online strategies to improve market entry and engagement. Titisari (2024) further notes that in e-commerce contexts, such analysis aids in discovering niche opportunities, while Purwoko et al. (2023) link the approach to sustainability marketing, showing its role in aligning consumer expectations with ethical offerings. Moreover, Kamarulzaman et al. (2021) and Sunyoto et al. (2023) indicate that when combined with innovative marketing and financial planning, TAM–SAM–SOM analysis can optimize resource allocation and profitability in competitive environments.

Effectiveness of the STP Model in Culinary MSMEs

The segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) framework remains a cornerstone of effective marketing in Southeast Asia's food sector. Empirical research by Srikasem et al. (2024) reveals that tailoring products for specific cultural and religious events—such as Ramadan—can significantly boost consumer engagement and sales performance. By segmenting markets around seasonal demand and targeting Muslim consumers with culturally resonant offerings, MSMEs can strategically position their products as essential to festive consumption.

Na and Kang's findings, although rooted in manufacturing, parallel these insights by affirming the necessity of identifying clear target segments to optimize positioning. Such approaches enable differentiation in crowded markets. Collectively, these studies confirm that well-executed STP strategies not only improve brand relevance but also drive measurable improvements in market share and sales outcomes for culinary MSMEs.



Marketing Mix (4Ps) and Sales Growth in Food and Beverage MSMEs

Evidence from emerging markets shows that a well-integrated marketing mix significantly affects sales growth in food and beverage MSMEs. Anggraini et al. (2024) demonstrate the critical role of promotion strategies, with social media, advertising, and sales promotions proving especially effective for engaging younger demographics. Hasan (2020) emphasizes product differentiation, noting that authenticity, unique features, and high quality foster consumer preference and loyalty.

Pricing and distribution strategies also exert considerable influence. Kurniawan & Nuringsih (2023) advocate for adaptive pricing models responsive to market conditions, while Nainggolan et al. (2023) stress the importance of combining online platforms with offline channels to maximize accessibility. Integrated marketing communications, as shown by Pitaloka & Vanel (2023), enhance brand consistency, and sustainability-oriented marketing (Naim, 2024) taps into growing consumer demand for eco-friendly products. Finally, Arista & Fitriyah (2024) link customer satisfaction—driven by the alignment of all four Ps—to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth, underscoring the cyclical benefits of a customer-centric marketing mix.

Digital Marketing and Influencer Strategies for Traditional Food Promotion

Digital marketing and influencer collaborations have become essential for promoting culturally specific food products. Chaniago et al. (2022) and Hasanah et al. (2021) show how MSMEs can leverage digital content to increase visibility and convey cultural authenticity. Elliott & Truman (2024) highlight that social media platforms are especially effective for targeting younger audiences, who respond positively to relatable influencer-led content.

Further, Vuttichat & Patchara (2023) demonstrate that integrating digital technologies into marketing innovation enhances competitiveness, while Fareed et al. (2023) and Mohammad (2020) find that influencers help build trust and emotional connections with consumers. Syehabuddin et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of storytelling that ties products to heritage, reinforcing brand identity. Together, these studies show that effective digital marketing for traditional foods combines platform diversity, influencer credibility, and culturally rich narratives to create sustained consumer engagement.

Challenges and Best Practices for MSMEs Competing with Established Brands

Competing against established brands presents both structural and strategic challenges for MSMEs in the packaged food industry. Financial and resource constraints limit marketing budgets and the ability to match economies of scale (Mas'ud & Tenriyola, 2023), while entrenched brand loyalty favors incumbents (Yogatama et al., 2024). Packaging and branding deficits further weaken competitive positioning (Dewi & Wahdiniwati, 2022).

Best practices emerging from the literature include leveraging digital marketing to cost-effectively reach target markets (Aryani & Tuti, 2023), emphasizing unique selling

propositions such as local sourcing or authentic recipes (Linda et al., 2023), and securing quality certifications—especially halal—to build consumer trust (Disemadi & Putri, 2024). Product innovation, community engagement, supply chain optimization, and responsive adaptation to customer feedback are also cited as critical strategies for sustaining competitiveness against larger, well-resourced rivals.

Integration of Islamic Marketing Principles into the Marketing Mix

Studies increasingly highlight that integrating Islamic marketing principles into the 4Ps framework enhances halal product appeal. Hassan et al. (2021) identify alignment with Islamic values in product design, pricing fairness, ethical promotion, and distribution integrity as key to fostering trust and loyalty. Azwar et al. (2022) emphasize cultural authenticity in product positioning, while Syafril & Hadziq (2021) stress honesty and respect in promotional content.

Research by Waqas et al. (2021) links Islamic-aligned promotions and personal selling to higher purchase intentions, and Syed Hamzah et al. (2024) note that halal certification and quality assurance increase consumer acceptance. Kamaruding et al. (2023) and Arif & Rahmawati (2018) further underscore that ethical practices embedded within the marketing mix not only comply with religious requirements but also create competitive differentiation in saturated halal food markets.

Halal Certification as a Branding Strategy in Muslim-Majority Markets

Halal certification functions as both a compliance marker and a powerful branding tool in Muslim-majority markets. Hasan et al. (2020) and Madun et al. (2022) show that certification strengthens consumer trust by guaranteeing adherence to Islamic dietary laws, thus enhancing perceptions of safety and quality. Ruangkanjanases et al. (2019) confirm that it is often the primary purchase criterion for Muslim consumers.

Certification also fosters loyalty by reinforcing positive brand associations (Ibeabuchi et al., 2024) and broadening appeal to non-Muslim consumers who perceive halal as a proxy for quality (Yener, 2022). Karimah & Darwanto (2021) emphasize that awareness campaigns can amplify these effects by educating consumers on the value of halal standards. The cumulative evidence suggests that halal certification, when integrated into branding, enhances market reach, purchase intentions, and repeat patronage.

Islamic Marketing for Competitiveness and Cultural Authenticity in Traditional Food MSMEs

Literature on Islamic marketing in traditional food MSMEs highlights its dual role in ensuring compliance and preserving heritage. Rusydiana & Purwoko (2021) and Alimusa et al. (2023) note that adherence to halal principles enhances perceptions of quality and trust, while also aligning with consumer values. Xiong & Chia (2024) extend this to tourism contexts, showing that culturally authentic halal offerings appeal to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

Pauzi et al. (2024) and Handani & Kim (2023) demonstrate that halal branding fosters loyalty through trust, and Triansyah (2023) points to social media's role in

building community engagement around halal values. Latif & Rahman (2020) and Bashir et al. (2018) stress that embedding cultural narratives into halal marketing differentiates MSMEs from competitors, especially in global markets. These findings collectively affirm that Islamic marketing, when combined with cultural authenticity, strengthens both competitiveness and brand resilience in the traditional food sector.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the marketing strategies implemented by Saruhan, an MSME operating in the packaged sambal industry. The qualitative method was selected because it allows for an exploration of meanings, perspectives, and contextual factors surrounding marketing practices, rather than merely measuring outcomes numerically. The qualitative inquiry is shaped by the nature of the observed object and the research target, making it suitable for uncovering nuanced, real-world phenomena.

The study adopted a single-case study design to focus intensively on Saruhan's unique business environment, marketing activities, and performance outcomes. According to Saunders et al. (2023), case studies facilitate a comprehensive exploration of a phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly delineated. This design was guided by the interpretivist research philosophy, which emphasizes understanding subjective meanings from the perspectives of various stakeholders, including business owners, managers, and customers.

Research Philosophy and Approach

The interpretivist philosophy underpinning this research assumes that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the lived experiences of individuals directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation. This orientation is particularly relevant in business and management studies, where decisions, strategies, and market behaviors are shaped by human perceptions and interactions. In line with this philosophical stance, the study prioritized qualitative data derived from participant narratives, enabling the identification of recurring themes and patterns in Saruhan's marketing approach.

An inductive reasoning process was employed, whereby empirical observations informed the development of conceptual insights into effective marketing strategies for MSMEs. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the research sought to build theoretical understanding grounded in the specific context of Saruhan's operations.

Population and Sampling Strategy

The study's population consisted of two categories: (1) internal stakeholders directly responsible for Saruhan's strategic and operational decisions, including the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Operating Officer (COO); and (2) external stakeholders in the form of Saruhan's customer base. The customer population was

defined as individuals who had purchased Saruhan's packaged sambal products during the study period.

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select information-rich participants capable of providing detailed insights into Saruhan's marketing strategies and market performance. In total, ten key informants were selected: two from the internal stakeholder group (CEO and COO) and eight customers representing varied demographic and behavioral profiles. This sample size was deemed sufficient for achieving data saturation in a qualitative case study, where depth of understanding is prioritized over breadth (Saunders et al., 2023).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through three complementary methods—observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis—to ensure triangulation and enhance the credibility of findings.

1. Observation involved directly examining Saruhan's marketing activities, both online and offline. This included monitoring promotional content on social media platforms, attending in-person sales events, and observing product placement in partner retail outlets.
2. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all ten informants to gather their perspectives on market segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP), marketing mix strategies, and perceived impacts on sales volume. Interview guides were developed to balance structure and flexibility, enabling the exploration of specific topics while allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences.
3. Documentation analysis included reviewing internal company records, sales data, promotional materials, and visual assets. These documents provided contextual background and allowed for the verification of claims made during interviews.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Field notes were taken during observations to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details.

Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data were processed using NVivo 12 Plus software (QSR International, 2017), which supports systematic coding and thematic analysis. The analysis followed a six-stage procedure:

1. Data Importation – Transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were imported into NVivo for centralized management.
2. Initial Coding – Segments of data were coded according to key themes such as market size analysis, STP, marketing mix, product differentiation, pricing strategies, distribution channels, and promotional tactics.



3. Thematic Categorization – Codes were grouped into higher-order categories representing strategic domains and operational practices.
4. Visualization – Hierarchy charts, bar graphs, and comparison diagrams were generated to illustrate relationships among themes.
5. Pattern Identification – Cross-case comparisons were made between internal and external stakeholder perspectives to identify consistencies and discrepancies.
6. Interpretation – Themes were interpreted in light of the research questions, relevant marketing theory, and prior empirical studies.

The use of NVivo enhanced analytical rigor by enabling traceability from raw data to thematic conclusions, reducing the risk of researcher bias.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

To ensure methodological rigor, the study applied the four trustworthiness criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

- Credibility was achieved through data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as member checking, where participants reviewed the accuracy of their interview transcripts and key interpretations.
- Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of the research context, allowing readers to determine the applicability of findings to other MSME settings.
- Dependability was supported by maintaining an audit trail of data collection procedures, coding decisions, and analytical steps.
- Confirmability was reinforced by documenting all methodological choices and ensuring that interpretations were grounded in participant accounts rather than researcher assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical guidelines for human subjects research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were briefed on the study's objectives, methods, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participant names and removing any identifying information from transcripts and publications. Digital data were stored on password-protected devices, and physical documents were kept in secure storage accessible only to the research team.

Limitations of the Methodology

While the qualitative case study design provided rich insights into Saruhan's marketing strategies, its single-case scope limits the generalizability of findings to other MSMEs.

Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of respondent bias, particularly in the portrayal of strategic successes. However, the triangulation of data sources mitigated this risk to some extent, enhancing the robustness of the conclusions.

RESULTS

Overview of Findings

The findings of this study are organized according to the key analytical dimensions underpinning Saruhan's marketing strategy: (1) market size analysis using the TAM–SAM–SOM framework, (2) segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) strategy, (3) the marketing mix (4Ps), and (4) sales performance trends. Data were drawn from interviews with internal stakeholders (CEO and COO), customer interviews, direct observations, and company documentation. NVivo 12 Plus software was employed to code and analyze the data, enabling systematic theme identification and the visualization of interrelationships among findings.

Market Size Analysis: TAM, SAM, and SOM

The application of the TAM–SAM–SOM framework provided a quantitative foundation for Saruhan's strategic marketing decisions. Based on secondary demographic and market data, the Total Addressable Market (TAM) was estimated at approximately 15.7 million potential Generation Z consumers in Indonesia who consume spicy food products, representing a potential revenue of IDR 550.7 billion annually.

From this national potential, the Serviceable Available Market (SAM) was calculated by narrowing the focus to Bandung, where Saruhan primarily operates. The SAM was estimated at around 85,861 consumers, with a corresponding revenue potential of IDR 3 billion per year.

Finally, the Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM), representing the realistic short-term market share Saruhan could capture given current resources and distribution capacity, was estimated at 3,435 consumers. This equates to a revenue potential of approximately IDR 120.2 million annually.

The CEO emphasized that this analysis provided critical input for resource allocation, particularly in determining marketing budgets and prioritizing promotional channels. The COO added that the SOM figure serves as a benchmark for sales targets, ensuring that growth expectations are both ambitious and achievable.

Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) Strategy

Saruhan's STP strategy is explicitly aligned with the preferences and behavioral patterns of Generation Z consumers.

Segmentation was carried out based on demographic (age, location), psychographic (lifestyle, values), and behavioral (purchasing habits, social media engagement) variables. Generation Z consumers, aged 18–27, living in urban Bandung, and active on digital platforms emerged as the most promising segment.



Targeting focused on individuals with fast-paced lifestyles who prioritize convenience without sacrificing authenticity in flavor. This segment is characterized by frequent online purchases, openness to trying new food products, and responsiveness to social media marketing campaigns.

Positioning efforts center on branding Saruhan as an authentic, ready-to-eat sambal that combines traditional Indonesian flavors with modern packaging and convenience. The CEO stressed that the positioning statement—"Authentic taste, ready anytime"—encapsulates both the product's cultural roots and its alignment with modern consumption habits. This dual appeal has been instrumental in differentiating Saruhan from both artisanal competitors and mass-market brands.

Marketing Mix (4Ps) Implementation

Product

Saruhan currently offers two main sambal variants—Sambal Buruak and Sambal Bawang—both emphasizing freshness, authenticity, and adherence to halal standards. Customers interviewed consistently highlighted taste authenticity as the primary reason for repeat purchases. Packaging design incorporates modern aesthetics while including clear halal certification labeling, which, according to the COO, has strengthened trust among Muslim consumers.

Price

The standard retail price is set at IDR 35,000 per bottle, with a discounted bundle price of IDR 105,000 for three bottles. This pricing strategy reflects a balance between perceived value and competitive positioning. Both internal stakeholders indicated that price sensitivity is moderate in the target segment; consumers are willing to pay a premium for products that combine quality, authenticity, and convenience.

Place (Distribution)

Saruhan uses a hybrid distribution model combining online and offline channels. Online sales are conducted via Shopee and Tokopedia, supported by direct-to-consumer transactions through social media. Offline distribution is concentrated in Bandung via cash-on-delivery (COD) arrangements and partnerships with select local retailers. The COO reported that the integration of online platforms has expanded reach significantly, with online transactions now accounting for over 65% of total sales.

Promotion

Promotional activities leverage social media marketing, influencer collaborations, giveaways, and food vlogger reviews. TikTok and Instagram are the primary platforms, chosen for their high penetration among Generation Z consumers. Campaigns emphasize visually appealing content, behind-the-scenes production stories, and user-generated content to encourage community engagement. The CEO noted that influencer endorsements have been particularly effective in driving first-time purchases, while giveaways and bundle promotions help stimulate repeat sales.

Sales Performance Trends

Sales data from November 2024 to May 2025 reveal a sustained upward trajectory. In November 2024, Saruhan sold 46 units; by May 2025, monthly sales had reached 764 units—representing a 60% growth in just six months.

Interviews with internal stakeholders attribute this growth to three key factors:

1. Strategic targeting of Generation Z consumers through digital channels.
2. Leveraging influencer marketing to enhance product visibility.
3. Maintaining consistent product quality to encourage repeat purchases.

Customers corroborated these views, frequently citing Instagram and TikTok promotions as their first point of contact with the brand. Many also reported that the combination of taste authenticity, halal certification, and convenient packaging influenced their decision to purchase.

Integration of Islamic Marketing Principles

A distinctive feature of Saruhan's marketing strategy is the incorporation of Islamic marketing principles across the product lifecycle and promotional activities. Halal certification is prominently displayed on packaging and in marketing materials, serving as a trust-building mechanism among Muslim consumers. This aligns with literature showing that halal certification significantly enhances purchase intention and loyalty in Muslim-majority markets.

Transparency in product descriptions, including ingredient lists and production processes, reflects the Islamic marketing principle of honesty (*sidq*). Pricing policies are designed to be fair and consistent, avoiding exploitative mark-ups during periods of high demand. Moreover, sourcing practices prioritize local suppliers, supporting community welfare—another value consistent with Islamic ethical principles.

The COO indicated that these practices not only strengthen brand credibility but also resonate with the ethical consumption values increasingly embraced by younger Muslim consumers.

Customer Perspectives

Analysis of customer interview data revealed three dominant themes in consumer perceptions of Saruhan:

1. **Authenticity and Quality** – Customers consistently praised the taste profile for its alignment with traditional sambal flavors while noting the absence of artificial preservatives.
2. **Trust and Ethical Assurance** – Halal certification and transparent communication about ingredients were frequently cited as key trust factors.
3. **Convenience and Accessibility** – Packaging that supports storage and portability, combined with online ordering options, was viewed as highly compatible with fast-paced lifestyles.

These themes reinforce the strategic alignment between Saruhan's brand positioning and its target market's values and preferences.



DISCUSSION

Digital-First Marketing Strategies Versus Traditional Approaches

The findings of this study indicate that Saruhan's adoption of a digital-first marketing approach—centered on social media promotion, influencer engagement, and e-commerce distribution—has been instrumental in driving sustained sales growth. The rapid sales increase between November 2024 and May 2025 is strongly correlated with its online presence, particularly on platforms favored by Generation Z. The integration of visual storytelling, halal certification visibility, and interactive campaigns aligns closely with the media consumption habits of the target demographic, enabling the brand to establish a distinctive and authentic presence in a crowded market.

These results are consistent with the work of Arif (2024) and Kussujaniatun et al. (2022), who found that digital marketing not only boosts competitiveness but also enhances market reach compared to traditional methods. Studies by Purnama et al. (2022) and Rochimah et al. (2023) further confirm that MSMEs embracing digital branding strategies gain stronger consumer engagement and brand awareness. The literature clearly demonstrates that transitioning from traditional to digital marketing models is particularly advantageous for food MSMEs seeking agility and responsiveness in rapidly changing markets.

Theoretically, this alignment supports the premise that digital-first strategies provide adaptive advantages in markets characterized by dynamic consumer preferences. Practically, it suggests that MSMEs can leverage low-cost, high-impact digital channels to overcome resource limitations, while at a policy level, it reinforces the need for government and industry bodies to provide digital literacy training to small enterprises. Such initiatives would not only improve competitiveness but also contribute to broader economic resilience in the MSME sector.

Halal Certification as a Source of Competitive Advantage

This research shows that integrating halal certification into Saruhan's brand proposition has significantly enhanced consumer trust and purchase intentions. Prominently displayed certification, supported by transparent communication about production processes, signals product integrity and ethical compliance. For a predominantly Muslim market like Indonesia, this trust factor translates into stronger brand loyalty and higher repeat purchase rates.

Comparable findings are reported by Hasan et al. (2020) and Karimah & Darwanto (2021), who demonstrate that halal certification serves as both a quality assurance marker and a differentiator in competitive food markets. Widiarty (2024) and Rafiuddin et al. (2024) highlight the dual legal and strategic benefits of certification under Indonesia's Law No. 33 of 2014, noting that it not only satisfies regulatory requirements but also shapes competitive positioning. Hidayat et al. (2025) extend this argument by showing that halal branding appeals to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers seeking ethical food sources.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings align with Islamic marketing principles, confirming that halal certification can be both a compliance mechanism and a strategic asset. Practically, the results underscore that MSMEs should integrate halal branding into product design and promotional strategies. Policy-wise, they suggest that state support in simplifying certification processes could enhance MSME competitiveness, particularly in export markets where halal is a significant purchasing criterion.

Alignment with Generation Z Consumer Preferences

Saruhan's strategy to target Generation Z—emphasizing convenience, authenticity, and digital engagement—has proven highly effective. The integration of influencer marketing, culturally relevant storytelling, and mobile-friendly e-commerce platforms resonates with this demographic's consumption habits. The result is not only increased brand visibility but also a growing base of loyal customers who identify with the brand's values.

These outcomes parallel the work of Hastiningsih & Sari (2023) and Chen & Lin (2024), who found that digital campaigns reflecting cultural identity and nostalgia positively influence Generation Z's purchase intentions. Research by Poyoi et al. (2024) and Raza et al. (2023) supports the efficacy of influencer-driven strategies, while Pramezwarly et al. (2023) and Liyanasooriya et al. (2023) highlight the role of online delivery integration in meeting Gen Z's preference for convenience.

Theoretically, this affirms that generational segmentation, when grounded in behavioral and psychographic data, enhances targeting precision. For practitioners, it indicates the importance of tailoring both product and message to fit the lifestyle and digital engagement patterns of the target cohort. Policymakers can draw from these insights to design youth-focused MSME support programs, especially those aimed at fostering entrepreneurship in culturally rooted food industries.

Combined Impact of STP and Marketing Mix on Market Penetration and Loyalty

The study's results demonstrate that Saruhan's coordinated use of STP and marketing mix elements—product authenticity, competitive pricing, omnichannel distribution, and culturally resonant promotion—has successfully increased market penetration while cultivating customer loyalty. This integration ensures consistency between brand promise and customer experience, thereby strengthening long-term relationships.

This is in line with Sinha et al. (2018) and Mardatillah et al. (2019), who argue that authenticity within the marketing mix significantly boosts consumer attachment to culturally specific food brands. Connolly et al. (2022) and Zhang & Lee (2021) further emphasize that positioning grounded in cultural identity can enhance market share by fostering deep emotional connections. Savitri et al. (2020) and Septianto et al. (2022) add that adapting STP strategies to local cultural contexts increases the effectiveness of marketing efforts.



Theoretically, the findings reinforce the argument that a cohesive alignment between market segmentation, targeting, positioning, and the 4Ps drives both penetration and loyalty in niche food markets. Practically, MSMEs can adopt this integrated approach to compete with larger brands despite resource limitations. From a policy perspective, supporting MSMEs in developing culturally anchored brand identities could stimulate both domestic market diversity and tourism-linked economic growth.

Integration of Islamic Marketing Principles and Business Performance

This study found that embedding Islamic marketing principles—halal compliance, honesty in communication, fair pricing, and community-oriented sourcing—has contributed not only to consumer trust but also to measurable business performance improvements for Saruhan. These values resonate strongly with ethical consumption trends and have proven to be a differentiating factor in a competitive market.

Such results align with the research of Widyakto et al. (2024) and Rachmawati et al. (2023), which indicate that MSMEs applying Islamic principles experience improved sustainability and market engagement. Hidayat et al. (2025) and Habriyanto et al. (2022) show that integrating halal considerations into digital marketing strategies strengthens both competitiveness and financial performance. Studies by Putri & Akbary (2021) and Tisyani & Sushandoyo (2023) further demonstrate that these principles, when operationalized in marketing and finance, lead to higher resilience and growth.

Theoretically, these findings expand the scope of Islamic marketing literature by illustrating its dual role as an ethical framework and a performance driver. Practically, they suggest that MSMEs should institutionalize Islamic principles into their operational and marketing practices. At a policy level, initiatives that incentivize such integration could strengthen the halal economy, support ethical business ecosystems, and enhance Indonesia's positioning in the global halal market.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the marketing strategies of Saruhan, a Bandung-based MSME producing packaged sambal, through the lens of market size analysis, STP, the marketing mix, and Islamic marketing principles. The results reveal that the integration of TAM–SAM–SOM analysis, targeted Generation Z engagement, and a coherent marketing mix significantly boosted sales growth over a six-month period. Halal certification and ethical practices were shown to enhance consumer trust, strengthen brand loyalty, and differentiate Saruhan from competitors. Digital-first promotion, combined with culturally authentic products and fair pricing, proved particularly effective in aligning with consumer expectations.

The discussion highlights that these findings are consistent with broader research on digital-first strategies, halal branding, and culturally resonant marketing. The coordinated application of STP and the 4Ps was found to drive both market penetration and customer loyalty. Additionally, the integration of Islamic marketing principles contributed to measurable performance improvements, reinforcing the idea that

ethical and cultural alignment is a competitive asset. This synergy between strategic marketing and ethical positioning offers a replicable model for other MSMEs in similar markets.

In terms of significance, the study advances the literature on MSME marketing in emerging economies by demonstrating how data-driven strategy, cultural authenticity, and religious compliance can be effectively combined. It also underscores the role of digital platforms in leveling the playing field for small enterprises competing with established brands. The contribution lies in providing an integrated framework that links market analysis, consumer behavior, and ethical branding, offering practical insights for both practitioners and policymakers. Future research should explore how this model performs across different regions, product categories, and consumer segments to assess its scalability and adaptability.

Limitation of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its single-case design, focusing exclusively on Saruhan. This scope restricts the generalizability of findings to other MSMEs with differing resources, market conditions, or product types. The study's reliance on qualitative methods, although effective for in-depth understanding, means that the statistical relationships between variables were not empirically tested. Furthermore, the research was geographically confined to Bandung, potentially limiting its applicability to rural or international contexts.

Another limitation lies in the temporal scope, as the sales data analyzed covered only a six-month period. This short timeframe may not capture seasonal variations, long-term consumer behavior changes, or the sustainability of observed growth trends. The self-reported nature of some data, particularly from internal stakeholders, introduces the possibility of response bias. Although triangulation and member checking were employed, the interpretation of findings may still reflect subjective perspectives, which could influence the conclusions drawn.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should extend the scope to include multiple MSMEs across various regions and product categories to assess the applicability of the integrated marketing framework in diverse contexts. Comparative research between rural and urban MSMEs could reveal how infrastructure, consumer behavior, and access to digital tools influence the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Incorporating quantitative methods, such as structural equation modeling, would allow for empirical testing of the relationships between marketing variables and business performance.

Longitudinal research is also recommended to track the long-term impact of digital-first strategies, halal branding, and cultural authenticity on sales growth and brand loyalty. Exploring consumer perspectives through mixed methods could provide a more nuanced understanding of purchasing motivations and trust-building mechanisms. Additionally, future studies could investigate the role of government support programs, industry associations, and digital literacy initiatives in scaling the

competitive advantages observed in this study. Such research would deepen the theoretical foundations and offer more robust policy and practical guidance for MSMEs in the halal and culturally authentic food sectors.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.	Resources	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.
Data curation	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.	Software	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.
Formal analysis	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.	Supervision	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.
Funding acquisition	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.	Validation	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.
Investigation	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.	Visualization	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.
Methodology	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.	Writing – original draft	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.
Project administration	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.	Writing – review & editing	A.O.R., I.H., & H.G.P.S.

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained before respondents answered the interview for this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT, DeepL, Grammarly, and PaperPal to translate from Bahasa Indonesia into American English and improve the clarity of the language and readability of the article. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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