



# Interior Design and Commercial Signage Analysis of Muslim-Friendly Restaurants in the Capital Town and the Only City of Sultan Kudarat, Philippines

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 17 January 2025

Received in revised form 10 February 2025

Accepted 2 May 2025

Available online 23 May 2025

### Keywords:

Interior design; commercial signages;  
research positioning; qualitative content  
analysis; halal; Muslim friendly Isulan;  
Tacurong City; Philippines

## ABSTRACT

Architectural structure and interior designs of commercial establishments are significant factors in considering a Muslim -friendly tourism destination. The practice of Halal food is centred on Mindanao Island to address the community's needs, like looking for safer food and temporary shelter. The strict observance of Halal practices is expected. However, there are misconceptions about Halal in the community. This study determined the common interior designs of establishments with the Halal logo on their signages. Another focus is the floor plan, furniture and fixtures and their arrangement. It also analyses the commercial signs on the establishments as to the common colours, font styles and other special features and the implication of the Halal logo printed on the signage to customers' eyes. Descriptive quantitative and qualitative content analysis elicited information from the owners, customers and crews. The small and medium-scale food service providers with Halal logos posted in the signages are covered in this study. There are limited locations that offer Muslim-friendly food. It is usually cooked indoors or at home and displayed on the stalls. The eating and handwashing areas are also in limited space. Hence, the public market food stalls with Halal logos used temporary commercial signages like tarpaulin posted on the façade. The Halal logo is printed on the right side of the monotone or the green and white colour with simple font styles. Muslim customers are confident about eating food offered at Muslim -friendly establishments; however, non-Muslim passers-by searching for food disregard logo and their relevance to food safety practices. Thus, there is a need to massively disseminate information about the importance of Halal practices in the area.

## 1. Introduction

Halal advocacies have rapidly grown in recent years, with Halal restaurants and stalls becoming increasingly popular among consumers. This trend is particularly evident in Asia's only Christian-inhabited country, the Philippines. In the southern part of the country lies the Sultan Kudarat province of the island of Mindanao. Isulan is the province's capital town and tourist destination, in

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<https://doi.org/10.37934/ard.132.1.2840>

addition to Tacurong City, where many Halal establishments have emerged to cater to the diverse needs of the local population and tourists. Understanding the visual aspects as stated by DesignEvo [15] “as you eat with your eyes”.

Halal establishments, particularly their interior design and commercial signage, are crucial for both consumers [40] and businesses [9]. Some establishments are placing Halal logos to convey sensory perception on food [49], while working on the requirements to be certified by the Halal certifying council [35] such as the Islamic Da’wa Council of the Philippines, Halal International Chamber of Commerce and Industries of the Philippines and Mindanao Halal Authority [1].

This study comprehensively analysed the interior design and commercial signage of Halal restaurants and stalls in Isulan and Tacurong City as the capital town and lone city of Sultan Kudarat respectively. The study focused on the common interior designs, including the floorplan and, furniture [4], likewise special features of Halal advocacies particularly the comfort of clientele [6] of Halal establishments. Identifying common features of small-scale restaurants, the study shed light on the unique visual elements that influence consumers, Connolly [10] and distinguish Halal establishments from other restaurants and stalls, Ahmad [4] also mentioned. In the Philippines, the attempt is taking off, yet there are some identified obstacles to establishing Halal-certified institutions [47]. Hence, this study was conducted.

Furthermore, the study analysed the commercial signs of Halal establishments in terms of colour, font style and other unique characteristics. The analysis considered the implication of these visual elements on the perception of clientele and their ability to identify Halal establishments [20]. In addition, the study examined the implications of the Halal logo printed on signage for passersby who seek safe and delicious food [31]. The Halal logo is a crucial visual cue that indicates the Halal status of a restaurant or stall and its impact on consumer behaviour is significant [7,41]. The study investigated the interior design and commercial signage of halal restaurants and stalls in Isulan Sultan Kudarat and Tacurong City, Philippines. It aimed to determine the common interior designs of Halal establishments from the following [1]: floor plan; furniture and fixtures; and other special features, Accad *et al.*, [2] analyse the commercial signs on the Halal establishments as to colour; font style; and, other special character and [3] examine the implication of Halal logo printed on the signage to the eyes of customers.

## 2. Literature Review

Muslim - friendly advocacies are worldwide [28]. The demand for Halal food is globally increasing, driven by the growing Muslim population and the need for food that adheres to Islamic dietary laws. The demand for Halal food in the Philippines is particularly high, with many Muslim Filipinos seeking Halal options for their daily meals [35]. Halal Restaurants are vital [9], in Sultan Kudarat province, Isulan and Tacurong City are sanctuaries of several Halal restaurants catering to the local Muslim [11]. These restaurants face unique challenges in interior design and commercial signage, as they need to balance the need for a welcoming atmosphere with the requirement for Halal compliance, added [40]. Halal certification is a rigorous process that ensures that a restaurant adheres to Islamic dietary laws. The Department of Tourism (DOT) encourages restaurants to become “Halal-certified” as it expects more Muslim tourists to visit the Philippines.

Muslim-friendly practices are essential in Halal restaurants emphasizing Islamic culture, [20]. Restaurants must not serve pork; if they do, it must not be served with the rest of the food offering. This differs from Halal-certified restaurants that get certification from a third-party certifier after passing a rigorous inspection and verification process to ensure they adhere to Islamic dietary laws [1].

### 3. Methodology

Descriptive quantitative and qualitative content analysis by Wa-Mbaleka [48] were employed in this study. The commercial signages with printed Halal logo were purposively included in the study based on [2]. The floor plans of Top 5 most visited Muslim-friendly restaurants under study were plotted in a Computer Aided Designing (CAD) software version 2017 [32]. The commercial signages are captured in photo-elicitation methods using a common cellular phone and analysed in terms of visual observations. During the study, clientele inside the restaurant were requested to answer questions through a structured questionnaire about the implication of the Halal logo on their choice to eat in the establishment. The complete enumeration of all small and medium establishments in the areas are considered subjects. In terms of the consumer respondents, convenience sampling was used to identify them. There are limited published (946) articles as of January 2020 [5] which are the scientific bases in the data analysis. Hence, the methodology needs further exploration. The following are the data gathering techniques: The insider observer physically observed each selected Halal establishment to document the interior design and commercial signage details, Photography - captured photographs of floor plans, furniture, fixtures and signages are described and analysed. Documentation - noted specific features like colour schemes, furniture styles, signage content and Halal logo are studied. The data was analysed using image case analysis like frequency counts for colours and symbols while the responses of respondents were analysed using mean and verbal descriptions. The responses are based on Five - point scale wherein five (5) is the most agreeable and one (1) and the least, [48]. Triangulation of information was conducted by consulting published references [14] key informants' responses and the member checking way of triangulation. The colours are interpreted using colour psychology [2]. Other Halal certification requirements are beyond the coverage of the study.

#### 3.1 Locale and Respondents

The study was conducted at Isulan Sultan Kudarat, where several Halal establishments are present and extended in Tacurong City. A total of 240 respondent customers gave their point of view on the implication of the Halal logo printed on the signage. This is the best place and source of information since Isulan is the centre of capitalism and commercialism. At the same time, Tacurong is the only City and the respondents were inside the establishment during the conduct of the survey, hence, [35] added that it is the actual and recent experience.

#### 3.2 Data Gathering Instrument

The validated researcher-made survey questionnaire was utilized considering the rare opportunities of conducting Halal-related studies. To gather data from the selected respondents, professional artists evaluated the printed Halal logo. The observation sheet was also used to qualify the colour, font style and other features of the commercial signages and interpreted using colour psychology based on the idea [2]. The evaluation was based on a five-point scale where five (5) is strongly observed and 1 is rarely observed.

#### 3.3 Data Gathering Procedure and Statistical Analysis

The instrument used was the rating scale and assessment of the Halal logo in the eyes of passersby. Data were gathered on May 2024, which is usually no festival in the area and the setting

is ordinary time [17]. The data were coded and analysed using simple descriptive statistics, specifically mean. Font styles were based on the Microsoft font styles and the colour harmony and its message are interpreted qualitatively guided by the method shared by Wa-Mbaleka [48].

### *3.4 Ethical Consideration*

Respecting the privacy stipulated in the Data Privacy Act of 2012, (Republic Act 10173) of the proprietor and clientele was observed. Permission of the establishments and their patrons during data collection and photography was secured. It was emphasized to maintain confidentiality that the collected data is intended for research purposes only and there is a possibility for information dissemination. After conducting the study, the preliminary findings were presented to the owners for member checking. The owners' signatures signified that they voluntarily agreed that the name and image of the establishments be reflected in the report of the study.

### *3.5 Research Positioning*

The study was authentic and there was limited literature. The junior researcher is a Maguindanaon whose father is an Ustadz or religious leader of the Islamic faith, who dwells in one of the communities of the place. He is conducting research related to architecture and arts as a requirement for the Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology major in Architectural Drafting. The Senior researcher is a professor in Drafting Technology, arts, education, culture and tradition for the last 25 years, a Christian and raised in a Christian-dominated province in Davao. Hence, she is the outsider observer in the study.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The study presents the interior design of the self-declared Halal establishment. It is self-declared, considering that the owner of the food service establishment utilized the Halal logo in the commercial signage [44]. As to the certification being a Halal restaurant, the status is ongoing. Analysis of Halal restaurants and stalls in Isulan and Tacurong City intends to determine the interior design through its floor plan.

The researcher determined the common interior designs of Halal establishments from the floor plan, furniture and fixtures and other special features and analysed the commercial signs on the Halal establishments, like colour, font style and other special characteristics, using graphic content analysis. Also, the researcher evaluated the implication of the Halal logo printed on the signage as perceived by the consumers. The five most visited Muslim-Friendly establishments were examined and the digital floorplans were developed as shown in the series of presentations.

Figure 1 restaurant chain with roots in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao, has expanded its reach to Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, with its branch located near the roundabout adjacent to several hotels. The restaurant's design philosophy embraced indigenous materials, creating a warm, inviting atmosphere that celebrates local culture [26]. One of the most striking features of Figure 1 is the interior that incorporates bamboo furniture design.



**Fig. 1.** Halal Pastilan

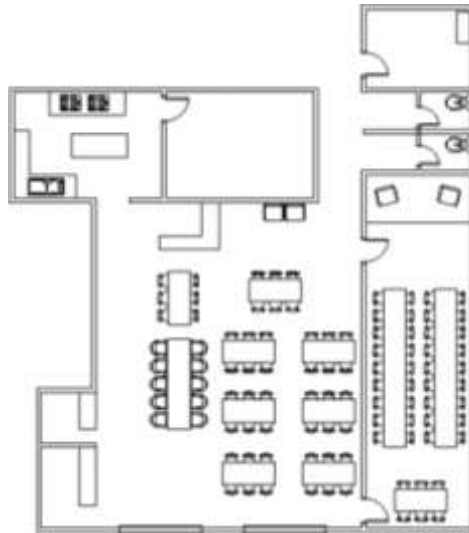
#### 4.1 Floorplan of Top 5 Most Visited Establishments

Pieces of bamboo were strategically placed on the tables, adding a natural and organic touch to the dining experience. The use of bamboo not only enhances the visual appeal of the space [42] but also pays homage to the region's rich cultural heritage, where bamboo has long been a versatile and essential material in various aspects of life.

The entrance is perpendicular to the wall, directly ending to partitions, giving enough space for everyone. The restaurant's commitment is incorporating indigenous materials available in the locality extends beyond bamboo. This vernacular architecture reflects local customs and environmental adaptation, by UNESCO [45]. It showcased how bamboo has been utilized [12], historically for its availability, physical traits and resilience against natural disasters [6]. The overall design of the furniture, including the tables and chairs, showcases a blend of traditional and contemporary elements. Using natural wood, Putera *et al.*, [38] said that intricate carving and subtle patterns create a harmonious and visually appealing environment. It resonates with the local community [13] and attracts visitors seeking an authentic dining experience. The Department of Tourism is set to issue a memorandum circular [1] to recognize Filipino food businesses that are classified either as "Muslim-friendly" or "Halal-certified", [39].

Figure 2 is Maguindanao Halal Restaurant, located along the national highway. It stands out as one of the largest Halal restaurants in the area. The restaurant's design showcases a unique blend of indigenous materials and sculptural elements, creating a visually striking and culturally-inspiring atmosphere [14]. The pride of the locals can resemble one's culture and tradition [3]. Floor planning is crucial [29] in urban development since the area per dinner in a restaurant must be considered.

One of the most notable aspects of Figure 2, Maguindanao Halal Restaurant, is its dedication to accommodating the spiritual needs of its patrons. This is the only restaurant in Isulan that offers a dedicated prayer room. It caters to the diverse religious preferences of its customers, ensuring that they can comfortably fulfil their religious obligations while enjoying a delicious Halal meal [41]. The restaurant's commitment to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment is further exemplified by its use of local materials in its design incorporating local craftsmanship and traditional motifs [30]. The Maguindanao Halal Restaurant expresses the cultural identity and the surrounding region. This approach not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the establishment but also serves as a celebration of the area's rich cultural heritage [17].



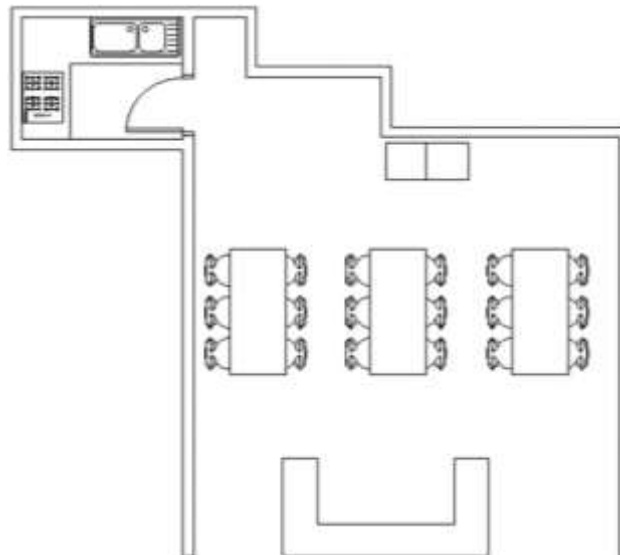
**Fig. 2.** Maguindanao restaurant

In Figure 3, Chicken Hauz combines metal and glass tables with plastic chairs [13]. The kitchen is positioned at the rear of the establishment. This fusion of materials creates a modern and functional dining space, blending durability with aesthetics [50]. The strategic placement of the kitchen, Liu *et al.*, [26], enhances workflow efficiency, ensuring a seamless dining experience for patrons [11]. Figure 3 Chicken Hauz's choice of materials reflects a contemporary approach to restaurant design, prioritizing both style and practicality. It has a wide opening and the comfort room has a divider to prevent it from directly exposing toilet users when getting out the door [42], that culture and safety are essential in designing a building.



**Fig. 3.** Chicken Hauz

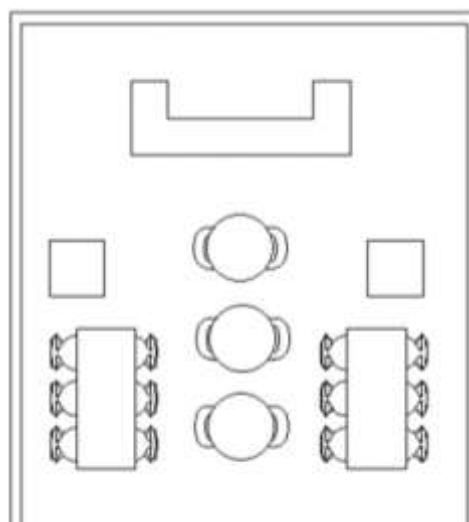
Figure 4, Muslim Eatery, features a dining area with plastic tables and chairs designed with an Islamic cultural theme. The kitchen is at the rear of the eatery, safe from contamination [12]. This fusion of materials creates a modern and functional dining space [27].



**Fig. 4.** Muslim eatery

Moreover, Krehl *et al.*, [23] state that blends of durability with aesthetics is the best option. The strategic placement of the kitchen enhances workflow efficiency, ensuring a seamless dining experience for patrons [34]. Figure 4 Muslim Eatery's choice of materials reflects a contemporary approach to restaurant design [16]. The design is spacious, as mentioned by [27], that space is a matter. It emphasizes the displayed food at the centre while setting aside from the toilet, which is set away from the plane's main body. It conforms with the idea of Olivares [34] that occupants' comfort is the best consideration.

Figure 5 Food Hauz is a small stall that proudly displays Halal signage. As Hummel [21] expresses, signages are important. The design of the tables used in this establishment features pre-fabricated chairs and tables, offering a simple yet functional setup for diners, Matthew [1] mentioned to enjoy their meals.



**Fig. 5.** Food Hauz

#### 4.2 Brand and Logos of the Muslim Friendly Restaurants

This choice of furniture not only provides a practical dining experience [16], but contributes to the overall ambiance of the stall, creating a welcoming and comfortable environment for patrons to savour their Halal dishes [39]. Filipinos enjoy eating, which is why several restaurants are scattered



around cities and municipalities. Filipinos also consider eating out as a means of family bonding, socializing with friends and relaxation after a long work day.

In recent years, the Halal sector has sharply increased [18] as customers prefer Halal eateries and food carts. Logo can fit perfectly with all current and future branding, Keller [22] said that it is always considered in establishing a business. In Isulan and Tacurong City, this tendency is especially noticeable. Among the restaurants and stalls that have adopted Halal logo and signages there are top five establishments identified. The study does not consider the official claim as Halal certified since the only focus of the study is the design and colour. Thus, it is not bound to exclude those unauthorized. Only those with a Halal sign logo are included in the study, as reflected in Figure 6. The logo does not mean a favourite design; it bears significant meaning. Both food establishments utilize the same sort of Halal emblem as indicated in the legal issuances [19], generally at the right end of the commercial signages and only one hanging on the wall. The green colour in the "Green Party" in the United States means environmental care; in Japanese culture, green means eternal life.



**Fig. 6.** Brand name and logo

The colour of the logo next in green is red among Muslim-friendly establishments. In some Muslim-majority regions, red is sometimes associated with nationalism in Islamic countries, appearing on national flags. In Christianity, red is frequently associated with sin and the blood of Christ (Beach, 1769 A.D). It represents the belief that Jesus' blood was shed to redeem humanity's sins. This duality is evident in various biblical references, such as Isaiah 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:18-19, which states, "thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Red fonts of signage symbolize power and authority.

Regarding visibility, red has the longest wavelength of light (620 to 740 nanometres). It is the second most popular favourite colour among humans (the first is blue) and is found on more than 75% of all the world's national flags. Red is the first pigment ever used for art [10]. In restaurants and food chains under study and in Islamic point of view, red represents joy, celebration, appetite, spirituality or dominion. Red is sometimes used in Islamic art and architecture, though not as prominently as other colours like blue or green in Hadith Interpretations (2024). Some hadiths forbid wearing plain red clothing, which means extravagant. Likewise, the colour and odour can influence children's choice of food [24].

Using "Maguindanao" to denote the Maguindanaon recipes gives a restaurant its distinctive brand name and the only Halal stall indicates a certified Halal restaurant. The restaurants utilized varied colours of fonts like green as an Islamic colour, yellow as medically related and white with a



blue background. Blue is a Christian colour which usually depends on the owner's decision to choose [2].

Halal mark refers to any symbol, sign or logo that indicates authentic compliance to the Halal requirements by certifying bodies like the Islamic Da'wa Council of the Philippines, Halal International Chamber of Commerce and Industries of the Philippines and Mindanao Halal Authority, [39]. It can be noted that logos communicate brands' value and influence customers' choices [46].

The placement of the Halal emblem can vary, with the emblem being outlined in white or black or having its edges sharply cut, resembling the abstract sun. There are also variations in the green colour or the lettering can be written in green on a white background. Green is associated with calmness and relaxation since it is pale green for horizons [25]. The influence of physical state and colour can introduce sweetness. Whatever the version, the green and white combination, as depicted in the choices in the study, the Halal emblem is one of the most recognizable insignias of the modern world by DesignEvo [15]. Commercial signages are presented in Figure 7.



**Fig. 7.** Halal logo

The green colour is better than it comes with life and paradise [12] and [16] makes logo design simple and straightforward and provides the most convenient experience. The logo and Halal emblem utilize the simplest font style, which is clear, readable and powerful, like Arial and Times New Roman. Absolute green is the most restful colour, lacking any undertone of joy, grief or passion [2].

#### *4.3 Significance of Halal Logo*

Table 1 presents the detailed results of the Halal logo reflected on the commercial signages [23] of identified establishments as perceived by the respondents from Isulan and Tacurong City, province of Sultan Kudarat, Island of Mindanao, Philippines.

The perception of the consumers reveals that they have trust in the establishments serving food. Results showed that the passersby and consumers agree that the Halal logo on the signage is highly noticeable (Mean=4.12). It means they are visually attracted to the Halal logo on the commercial signage. The presence of the Halal logo influenced the perception that the restaurant/stall had met the standards and customers believed it, which influenced their choice to get inside without any doubt of its veracity [22].

**Table 1**

Result of the evaluation on the implication of the Halal logo printed on the signage to the eyes of customers

Item	Mean	Interpretation
Establishments had noticeable Halal logo on the signage	4.12	Agree
Halal logo effectively conveys the restaurant/stall's adherence to Halal standards	4.56	Strongly Agree
The Halal logo influences the restaurant/stall and its reputation	4.49	Strongly Agree
I enter the restaurant/stall once there is a presence of the Halal logo	4.61	Strongly Agree
I am confident in the authenticity of the Halal certification displayed on the signage	4.42	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	4.44	Strongly Agree

Respondents' overall perception reflects a strong level of confidence (mean,4.44), which can be explained by Krehl *et al.*, [23] that trademarks can contribute to brand knowledge. Inclusive education and Muslim-friendly practices are essential to Halal architecture, industry and food services operations management systems [43]. Research has highlighted the importance of understanding Muslim consumers' needs and preferences, particularly regarding food and product authenticity [20]. In the hierarchy of colours, green represents Islamic colour [8] the social middle class, self-satisfied, immovable or narrow [10]. This implies that the commercial signage with green colour, including the green and white Halal logo, has greatly influenced the trust of consumers and passersby [26]. It can be associated with the findings of Piqueras-Fiszman *et al.*, [36] about the colour and pleasantness of food. Respondents have strong trust that the food is best similar to the findings of Okajima *et al.*, [33] with establishments having a Halal logo [41].

It can be associated with the spiritual significance that blue represents spirituality, tranquillity and trust in Islam (Bible study.org) [2]. Colour influences consumers not only on the conscious but also on the subconscious level. Colour and food pairings [12] can be especially powerful by leveraging the emotional connection to taste. Colours can be used as advantages in food retail packaging. Halal certification protects consumers from misconceptions [37]. As such, Halal certification in food products: science mapping of present and future research is necessary in the Asian region too.

## 5. Conclusion

The shape of the Muslim-friendly food establishments under study is rectangular, where the main entries face the highway and the furniture sets are arranged with other utilities. There is a need to assist the owners in arranging furniture and fixtures in some models, including placing basic utilities like wash areas. The commercial signage conforms with the font styles for labels and titles and the owners choose other colours besides the Islamic colour, green. The location of the Halal logo is generally on the right end of the signage. This symbol greatly impacted the choice of the customers in getting inside to eat. Hence, there is a need for the market authorities to regularly maintain the stability of commercial signage. Proper education on Halal advocacies is needed to inform the public what Halal certification and Muslim-friendly advocacies mean.

## Acknowledgement

The research was not funded by any grant; however, appreciation goes to the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for producing this paper.

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