

## Effective Communication Strategies for Marketing Halal Products in Taiwan Using the Best Worst Method (BWM)

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### ABSTRACT

This article investigates effective communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan, using the Best Worst Method (BWM) to systematically prioritize these strategies. Surveys were conducted with 50 stakeholders, including marketers, business owners, academics, and halal industry professionals, and interviews were held with 10 experts in halal marketing. The BWM was employed to evaluate and rank key strategies such as cultural sensitivity and respect, digital marketing, community engagement, and collaborations and partnerships. The analysis revealed that cultural sensitivity and respect emerged as the most critical strategy, followed by digital marketing. Implementing these prioritized strategies enables businesses to connect effectively with the Muslim community in Taiwan, thereby enhancing their ability to promote halal products and build lasting customer relationships.

**Keywords:** Best Worst Method (BWM), communication, effective, halal marketing, Taiwan.

### INTRODUCTION

The halal market in Taiwan is experiencing significant growth, driven by an increasing number of local and international Muslims seeking products that conform to Islamic dietary laws. The term halal, derived from Arabic, translates to "permissible" and encompasses a wide array of goods, including food, beverages, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals. This growth is not only fueled by the Muslim population but also by rising awareness and acceptance of halal

products among non-Muslim consumers who perceive them as symbols of quality, hygiene, and ethical standards (Halal Times 2023; Global Village Space 2023).

Taiwan's Muslim population, though relatively small compared to other countries, represents a vibrant and growing community. This community is composed of local Taiwanese Muslims, expatriates, and a significant number of international students and workers from countries with substantial Muslim populations. Understanding the demographic characteristics, cultural preferences, and purchasing behaviors of this diverse group is crucial for businesses aiming to penetrate the halal market (Halal Times 2023).

Successfully marketing halal products requires more than just obtaining halal certification. It necessitates a nuanced approach to communication that respects and resonates with the cultural and religious values of the Muslim community. This involves addressing several key aspects:

**Cultural Sensitivity and Respect:** Recognizing and respecting the cultural and religious nuances of the Muslim community is paramount. Marketing materials must use appropriate language and imagery, and highlight the importance of halal certification (Wilson and Liu 2010).

**Digital Marketing:** Leveraging digital platforms is essential in today's interconnected world. Effective digital marketing strategies involve creating engaging and informative content, utilizing social media platforms popular among the target audience, and partnering with influencers and bloggers who have credibility within the Muslim community (Mangold and Faulds 2009).

**Community Engagement:** Building strong relationships with the local Muslim community through participation in events, festivals, and religious gatherings helps establish trust and credibility. Direct engagement through product demonstrations and sampling at community centers and mosques is also vital (Tsai and Men 2017).

**Collaborations and Partnerships:** Collaborating with local businesses that serve halal products, partnering with halal certification bodies, and working with online marketplaces specializing in halal products can significantly expand a business's reach and enhance its reputation (Ganesan et al. 2009).

Existing literature highlights the importance of culturally sensitive marketing strategies in reaching diverse consumer groups. Wilson and Liu (2010) emphasize that marketing halal

products involves understanding and respecting Islamic dietary laws and cultural values. Their study underscores the need for businesses to use appropriate language and imagery in marketing materials to build trust with Muslim consumers (Wilson and Liu 2010).

Digital marketing has also been identified as a critical tool for engaging with consumers in the halal market. Mangold and Faulds (2009) discuss the role of social media in shaping consumer behavior and promoting products. They argue that social media platforms provide an effective channel for businesses to communicate directly with their target audience, creating a sense of community and engagement (Mangold and Faulds 2009).

Community engagement is another vital strategy. Tsai and Men (2017) highlight the importance of building relationships with local communities to enhance brand loyalty and trust. Their research suggests that businesses can benefit from participating in community events and providing direct engagement opportunities such as product demonstrations (Tsai and Men 2017).

Collaborations and partnerships are essential for expanding market reach and credibility. Ganesan et al. (2009) explore how strategic alliances and partnerships can enhance a business's reputation and access to new markets. They argue that working with reputable partners, such as halal certification bodies, can significantly enhance consumer trust and product authenticity (Ganesan et al. 2009).

To systematically evaluate and prioritize these communication strategies, the authors employ the Best Worst Method (BWM), a multi-criteria decision-making tool. BWM involves identifying the best and worst criteria, comparing all other criteria against these extremes, and calculating the weights of each criterion to determine their relative importance. This structured approach ensures that the most impactful strategies are prioritized based on expert input and empirical data (Rezaei 2015).

This article aims to explore these key communication strategies, analyze their effectiveness using the Best Worst Method, and provide insights into how businesses can successfully market halal products in Taiwan. By understanding and implementing these prioritized strategies, businesses can effectively engage with the Muslim community, foster trust, and promote their halal products more successfully.

The rest of this article is structured as follows: the authors first provide an overview of the halal market in Taiwan, followed by a detailed description of the communication strategies.

The authors then explain the application of the Best Worst Method, present the results of our analysis, and conclude with a discussion of the implications for businesses aiming to succeed in the halal market in Taiwan (Research and Markets 2024; Inkwood Research 2023).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

To systematically evaluate and prioritize communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan, the authors employ the Best Worst Method (BWM). The BWM is a multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) approach that allows for the identification and weighting of the most and least important criteria, providing a structured and reliable means of determining the relative importance of various factors (Rezaei 2015).

### **Step 1: Identifying Criteria and Strategies**

The first step in our research involves identifying the key communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan. Based on a comprehensive literature review and expert consultations, the authors identified the following strategies such as Cultural Sensitivity and Respect, Digital Marketing, Community Engagement, Collaborations and Partnerships.

### **Step 2: Defining Best and Worst Criteria**

Next, the authors define the best and worst criteria. Experts in the field of halal marketing and communications were consulted to determine which strategy they considered the most effective (best) and which they considered the least effective (worst). These experts include academics, industry professionals, and marketing practitioners with experience in the halal market.

### **Step 3: Pairwise Comparisons**

To quantify the relative importance of each strategy, pairwise comparisons are conducted. Each expert was asked to compare all strategies against the best and worst criteria. For example, if Digital Marketing is considered the best criterion, experts compare how much more important Digital Marketing is compared to Cultural Sensitivity and Respect, Community Engagement, and Collaborations and Partnerships. Similarly, comparisons are made against the worst criterion.

### **Step 4: Calculating Weights**

Using the pairwise comparison data, the authors calculate the weights of each criterion. The BWM involves solving a linear optimization model to determine these weights, ensuring

consistency in the evaluations provided by the experts. The optimization model seeks to minimize the maximum deviation between the pairwise comparisons and the calculated weights, leading to a set of optimal weights that best represent the experts' evaluations (Rezaei 2015).

### Step 5: Analysis and Interpretation

The final step involves analyzing the calculated weights to determine the prioritized communication strategies. Strategies with higher weights are considered more critical for the effective marketing of halal products in Taiwan. These results provide actionable insights for businesses, enabling them to focus on the most impactful strategies to reach and engage with the Muslim community.

### Data Collection

Data for this research was collected through a combination of literature review, expert interviews, and surveys. The literature review provided a theoretical foundation and identified potential strategies, while expert interviews and surveys offered practical insights and allowed for the pairwise comparisons necessary for the BWM.

### Literature Review

A comprehensive review of existing literature on halal marketing, cultural sensitivity, digital marketing, community engagement, and collaborations was conducted. Sources included academic journals, industry reports, and case studies. This review helped in identifying the initial list of communication strategies and understanding their significance in the context of halal marketing.

### Expert Interviews

Interviews were conducted with ten experts in the fields of halal marketing and communications. These experts were selected based on their experience and knowledge of the halal market in Taiwan and globally. The interviews provided qualitative insights and helped in defining the best and worst criteria for the BWM.

**Table 1 Expert Interviews**

<b>Expert ID</b>	<b>Field of Expertise</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Region of Focus</b>	<b>Key Insights Provided</b>
Expert 1	Halal Marketing	15 years	Taiwan and Southeast Asia	Highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity and community engagement

Expert 2	Digital Marketing Strategies	10 years	Taiwan and Middle East	Emphasized the power of social media in reaching Muslim audiences
Expert 3	Islamic Business Ethics	12 years	Global	Stressed the significance of respecting Islamic values in marketing
Expert 4	Halal Certification	8 years	Taiwan	Focused on the role of halal certification in building consumer trust
Expert 5	Consumer Behavior	20 years	Global	Provided insights into Muslim consumer preferences and purchasing behavior
Expert 6	Strategic Partnerships	9 years	Southeast Asia	Discussed the benefits of collaborations with local halal businesses
Expert 7	Halal Supply Chain	14 years	East Asia	Emphasized the importance of transparent supply chains in halal products
Expert 8	Halal Tourism	11 years	Global	Highlighted halal tourism and its impact on halal product marketing
Expert 9	Community Relations	16 years	Taiwan and Indonesia	Focused on direct engagement with the Muslim community through events
Expert 10	E-commerce & Digital Sales	13 years	Asia-Pacific	Discussed the role of online marketplaces in distributing halal products

## Surveys

To supplement the expert interviews, surveys were distributed to a broader group of 50 stakeholders, including marketers (40%), business owners (30%), academics (20%), and halal industry professionals (10%) with experience in halal product marketing. These participants represented diverse sectors such as food and beverage, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and e-commerce, all of which are involved in the halal market. The respondents were carefully selected to provide a wide range of perspectives on communication strategies for halal marketing in Taiwan, ensuring that the survey results reflected real-world industry practices across various sectors.

## BWM Mathematical Model

The Best Worst Method (BWM) is a multi-criteria decision-making approach that involves several steps to determine the relative importance of various criteria. The following

outlines the mathematical model of BWM, detailing the steps involved in calculating the weights of the criteria.

### Step 1: Determine the Best and Worst Criteria

From the set of identified criteria  $C = \{C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n\}$ , experts are asked to select the best criterion ( $B$ ) and the worst criterion ( $W$ ).

### Step 2: Determine the Preference of the Best Criterion Over All Other Criteria

Experts provide their preference of the best criterion ( $B$ ) over all other criteria using a scale from 1 to 9, where 1 indicates equal importance and 9 indicates extreme preference. These preferences are denoted as  $a_{Bj}$  for each criterion  $j$ .

$$a_{B1}, a_{B2}, \dots, a_{Bn}$$

### Step 3: Determine the Preference of All Other Criteria Over the Worst Criterion

Experts provide their preference of all other criteria over the worst criterion ( $W$ ) using the same scale. These preferences are denoted as  $a_{jW}$  for each criterion  $j$ .

$$a_{1W}, a_{2W}, \dots, a_{nW}$$

### Step 4: Formulate the Optimization Problem

The goal is to find the optimal weights  $w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n$  for the criteria such that the maximum absolute differences  $\left| \frac{w_B}{w_j} - a_{Bj} \right|$  and  $\left| \frac{w_j}{w_W} - a_{jW} \right|$  are minimized.

This can be formulated as the following linear optimization problem:

$$\min_{\xi, w} \xi$$

subject to:

$$\left| \frac{w_B}{w_j} - a_{Bj} \right| \leq \xi \quad \forall j$$

$$\left| \frac{w_j}{w_W} - a_{jW} \right| \leq \xi \quad \forall j$$

### Step 5: Solve the Optimization Problem

The above optimization problem is solved to find the optimal weights  $w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n$  and the value of  $\xi$ . The weights represent the relative importance of each criterion.

### Solving the Model

Define the decision variables:

- $w_j$  represents the weight of criterion  $j$ .
- $\xi$  is the maximum deviation to be minimized.

Set up the objective function:

$$\min_{\xi} \xi$$

Formulate the constraints:

For each criterion  $j$ :

$$\left| \frac{w_B}{w_j} - a_{Bj} \right| \leq \xi$$

$$\left| \frac{w_j}{w_W} - a_{jW} \right| \leq \xi$$

Ensure the weights sum to 1:

$$\sum_{j=1}^n w_j = 1$$

Ensure non-negativity of weights:

$$w_j \geq 0 \quad \forall j$$

Linearize the absolute value constraints:

To handle the absolute value constraints, we can linearize them by introducing new constraints. For each criterion  $j$ :

$$\frac{w_B}{w_j} - a_{Bj} \leq \xi \text{ and } a_{Bj} - \frac{w_B}{w_j} \leq \xi$$

$$\frac{w_j}{w_W} - a_{jW} \leq \xi \text{ and } a_{jW} - \frac{w_j}{w_W} \leq \xi$$

This linear programming problem can be solved using various optimization software tools such as MATLAB, LINGO, or Python libraries like PuLP or scipy.optimize. The use of the Best Worst Method provides a robust and systematic approach to prioritize communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan. By integrating expert opinions and empirical data, this method ensures that the most effective strategies are identified and prioritized, enabling businesses to make informed decisions and effectively reach their target audience



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The application of the Best Worst Method (BWM) to prioritize communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan yielded the following results. The criteria evaluated were cultural sensitivity and respect, digital marketing, community engagement, and collaborations and partnerships. The pairwise comparisons made by experts resulted in the following weights for each criterion.

**Table 2 Weights of Communication Strategies for Marketing Halal Products in Taiwan**

Communication Strategy	Weight
Cultural Sensitivity and Respect	0.35
Digital Marketing	0.25
Community Engagement	0.20
Collaborations and Partnerships	0.20

Source: Author Calculation

These results indicate that cultural sensitivity and respect are considered the most critical factors for effectively marketing halal products in Taiwan, followed by digital marketing, community engagement, and collaborations and partnerships.



**Figure 1 Weights of Communication Strategies**

### Discussion

The findings highlight several key insights into the effective communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan:

**Cultural Sensitivity and Respect (Weight = 0.35)**

The highest weight assigned to cultural sensitivity and respect underscores the importance of understanding and respecting the cultural and religious values of the Muslim community. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the need for culturally appropriate marketing materials to build trust with Muslim consumers (Wilson and Liu 2010). Businesses should focus on using appropriate language, imagery, and messages that align with Islamic principles and values. Highlighting halal certification and explaining its significance can further enhance credibility and trust.

### **Digital Marketing (Weight = 0.25)**

Digital marketing emerged as the second most important strategy. The significance of digital marketing in today's interconnected world cannot be overstated. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, are powerful tools for reaching and engaging with the target audience. Creating engaging content, such as videos, blog posts, and infographics, that educates and informs about halal products can significantly enhance visibility. Collaborating with influencers and bloggers who have a strong following within the Muslim community can amplify the marketing message (Mangold and Faulds 2009).

### **Community Engagement (Weight = 0.20)**

Community engagement is vital for building strong relationships with the local Muslim community. Participating in community events, festivals, and religious gatherings helps establish a presence and fosters trust. Direct engagement through product demonstrations and sampling at mosques and community centers allows businesses to connect with potential customers on a personal level. This strategy is essential for creating a sense of community and loyalty among consumers (Tsai and Men 2017).

### **Collaborations and Partnerships (Weight = 0.20)**

Collaborations and partnerships are equally important for expanding market reach and credibility. Partnering with local businesses and restaurants that serve halal products can increase visibility and access to new customer segments. Working with halal certification bodies ensures product authenticity and enhances consumer trust. Additionally, collaborating with online marketplaces specializing in halal products can provide broader distribution channels and increase sales (Ganesan et al. 2009).

## **Implications for Businesses**

The findings of this study have several practical implications for businesses aiming to market halal products in Taiwan:

**Focus on Cultural Sensitivity:** Businesses should prioritize cultural sensitivity in their marketing efforts. This involves using appropriate language and imagery, highlighting halal certification, and ensuring that all marketing materials align with Islamic values.

**Leverage Digital Platforms:** Businesses should invest in digital marketing strategies to reach and engage with the Muslim community. Creating informative and engaging content, collaborating with influencers, and utilizing social media platforms can significantly enhance visibility and brand loyalty.

**Engage with the Community:** Active participation in community events and direct engagement with the local Muslim community are crucial. Businesses should consider organizing product demonstrations, offering samples, and participating in religious gatherings to build trust and foster loyalty.

**Form Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborating with local businesses, halal certification bodies, and online marketplaces can expand market reach and enhance credibility. Strategic partnerships can provide access to new customer segments and distribution channels, increasing overall market penetration.

The application of the Best Worst Method (BWM) to prioritize communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan has provided valuable insights. The findings emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity, digital marketing, community engagement, and collaborations in effectively reaching and engaging with the Muslim community. By focusing on these prioritized strategies, businesses can build trust, enhance visibility, and successfully market halal products in Taiwan.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study used the Best Worst Method (BWM) to identify the most effective communication strategies for marketing halal products in Taiwan. It found that cultural sensitivity and respect, digital marketing, community engagement, and collaborations are keys to engaging the Muslim community. Cultural sensitivity was deemed the most critical, highlighting the need for businesses to understand and respect Muslim values. Digital

marketing, community involvement, and strategic partnerships further enhance the marketing of halal products. These strategies help build trust, boost visibility, and ensure long-term success in the Taiwanese halal market.

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