

Commodifying Faith: Symbolic Economies in Media Constructions of the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone

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Abstract:

This study investigates how government media construct the Halal Industrial Estate of Cikande (KIHC) as a religious-economic space through the commodification of sacred values. Drawing on key concepts such as religious commodification, Bourdieu's symbolic capital, and the global halal economy, this research employs a qualitative design using Critical Discourse Analysis integrated with symbolic economy theory. The dataset consists of official press releases, social media posts and promotional materials issued by the Banten Provincial Government between 2019 and 2024. The findings reveal three major mechanisms: the resignification of religious symbols into commercial branding tools, the conversion of religious symbolic capital into economic capital, and the production of futuristic narratives that position KIHC as a center of moral-economic authority. The main methodological challenge arises from the exclusive reliance on government-produced discourse, which limits the study's ability to capture public reception or contestation. In practice, the study recommends developing ethical standards for public communication to prevent reducing religion to mere commercial branding. This research contributes to the study of religion and media by elucidating how the state deploys religious values as symbolic commodities within Indonesia's halal industrial development. This article extends theoretical discussions on symbolic economy within the halal industry and offers a conceptual framework for understanding the interplay between religion, state authority, and capitalism in media discourse.

Keywords: Bourdieu; commodification; government media; halal economy; halal industry; religion; symbolic capital

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary era is marked by an increasingly blurred boundary between the sacred and the profane, particularly as religious values interact with global economic dynamics. This transformation reflects not only structural changes in religion-state relations but also an epistemic shift in how society interprets religion within the logic of the capitalist market. Several scholars assert that religion is no longer external to capitalism but is actively negotiated, reproduced, and even marketed through various modern economic mechanisms (Gauthier, 2020b). Thus, religion is no longer viewed merely as a system of beliefs and rituals, but also as a source of value that can be capitalized upon through the process of commodification. The concept of religious commodification, as proposed by Einstein (2008), refers to the process by which religious symbols, practices, and identities are transformed into products that can be produced, marketed, and consumed (Einstein, 2008). Commodification does not simply simplify religion into a marketable object, but rather more deeply reconstructs the meaning and function of religion in social life. In various global contexts—from spiritual tourism and the cultural industry to the consumption of identity—the commodification of religion has become a widespread and often unavoidable phenomenon (Samarathunga et al., 2025). Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, is not immune to this phenomenon. The dynamics of the sharia economy, the Islamic finance industry, and the rapid growth of the halal industry demonstrate how Islamic values are positioned as strategic social and economic resources (Arafah, 2021).

At the national level, the development of the halal industry is one of the most visible manifestations of the integration of religion and the economy (Adham et al., 2024). One major project that exemplifies this dynamic is the development of the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHC) in Banten Province. KIHC is not only an economic infrastructure aimed at increasing the competitiveness of Indonesia's halal industry, but also a symbolic arena where religious values are negotiated by various actors: local government, media, investors, and the community. Through public communication channels, the Banten Provincial Government actively produces a narrative that positions KIHC as an economic space that simultaneously represents religious commitment, modernity, and regional progress. This narrative builds the image that KIHC is not simply an industrial zone, but a symbol of harmony between economic development and Islamic values.

The media construction of KIHC did not emerge naturally, but rather resulted from a process of meaning production involving the operation of symbolic capital. The media utilized religious symbols such as "halal," "sharia," and "blessing" to provide moral legitimacy to the industrial project. Thus, the media acted as agents converting religious values into symbolic capital that could strengthen the economic and political legitimacy of KIHC development. This process aligns with Bourdieu's (1986) view, which states that symbolic capital is a form of socially legitimated power that can be converted into economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986b). In the context of KIHC, religion functions as a source of symbolic capital used to negotiate economic interests and strengthen the image of local governments and industrial actors.

Several previous studies have explored the halal industry from various perspectives. Rudnycky (2019) examines how Islamic capitalism has become part of an ethical experiment in the global economy, highlighting how religious values are leveraged to provide moral legitimacy to modern economic practices (Rudnycky, 2019). Arafah (2021) highlights the political and economic dynamics underlying halal certification in Indonesia, particularly how the certification process has become an arena for a struggle for authority between the state, religious institutions, and industry players (Arafah, 2021). Other studies emphasize issues concerning Muslim consumers, identity, and the halal lifestyle as part of evolving socio-cultural dynamics (O'Guinn & Belk, 2021). While these studies contribute significantly, most focus on regulatory aspects, consumption, or the broader dynamics of the halal industry without adequately addressing how the media constructs religious values as symbolic commodities within the context of halal industrial development.

The research gap arises from the limited number of studies integrating Bourdieu's symbolic economy perspective with an analysis of the commodification of religion in media discourse. Research on KIHC has so far focused more on the technical aspects of development, economic potential, or regulation of the halal industry, while the symbolic and discursive dimensions of media construction remain relatively neglected. Yet, media narratives play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of the relationship between religion and economic development, particularly through the use of religious symbols that confer moral legitimacy (Gessese, 2024). To date, few studies have examined how local and national media create, reinforce, or modify religious meanings associated with KIHC as an economic space. In other words, there has been no comprehensive study examining

the mechanisms by which religious symbolic capital is converted into economic capital in media constructions of halal industrial zones.

Furthermore, studies on the commodification of religion in the context of Indonesian media generally focus on the phenomena of popular culture, religious tourism, or Muslim consumer products (Fairclough, 1995a). Meanwhile, the commodification of religious values as a strategy for legitimizing economic development—as in the KIHC project—has rarely been explored in depth. This research gap is becoming increasingly important given the growing tendency of the government and industry players to utilize religious values as a basis for social legitimacy in various development projects. Therefore, an analysis of KIHC as a locus of commodification of religious values provides an important contribution to understanding the dynamics of religion, media, and capitalism in the contemporary Indonesian context (Raya, 2025).

To explain this phenomenon, this study uses Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework of symbolic capital, understood as a form of capital that gains its power through social recognition (Bourdieu, 1986b). Symbolic capital does not stand alone, but operates through power relations and social structures that enable its conversion into other forms of capital (Swartz, 1997). At KIHC, Islamic values such as halal, sharia, and blessings are understood not only as religious concepts but also as symbolic assets that have economic value when attached to industrial projects. The media plays a key role in this process, as through its discursive representation, it can transform religious values into valuable commodities for economic and political interests.

Using a symbolic economy perspective, this study seeks to understand how the media constructs narratives about KIHC and how these constructs impact society's understanding of religion and development. This approach allows for a more in-depth analysis of the symbolic mechanisms at work in the commodification of religious values, including how certain actors profit from their control over religious symbols. Furthermore, this approach also opens up the opportunity to examine the social consequences of religious commodification, such as changes in religious meaning, the narrowing of spirituality into market logic, and the potential instrumentalization of religion by the state or industry.

Based on the description above, the objectives of this study are as follows: (1) Identifying various forms of commodification of religious values in media construction regarding the Cikande Halal Industrial Area; (2) Analyzing the mechanism of converting religious symbolic capital into economic capital in media narratives; and (3) Revealing the implications of religious commodification on changes in meaning, religious practices, and power relations in contemporary society. These objectives are expected to provide conceptual and empirical contributions to the development of studies on religion and media, as well as offer new perspectives on how religious values are negotiated in the context of modern capitalism. Furthermore, this research is expected to enrich the discourse on the role of media in structuring the relationship between religion and the economy, particularly in the context of the development of the halal industry in Indonesia. Thus, this research not only fills a theoretical gap in the study of the commodification of religion but also provides a deeper understanding of the transformation of religious values in the contemporary public sphere.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, placing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the main methodological framework, integrated with Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic economy perspective. This approach was chosen because of its ability to reveal power relations, symbolic practices, and structures of domination hidden behind media texts, thus enabling researchers to explore how religious values are attached, produced, and commodified in the construction of discourse regarding the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (Fairclough, 1995a). CDA not only analyzes the content of the text, but also examines the social, institutional, and political contexts that underlie it. Integration with Bourdieu's symbolic capital theory provides a stronger analytical framework for understanding how religious symbols are mobilized as capital that has both social and economic value in the arena of discourse production (Bourdieu, 1986b).

The research data consists of primary media texts officially produced by the Banten Provincial Government during the 2019–2024 period. This data source was chosen because the government is the dominant actor in shaping the construction of public discourse regarding KIHC and has the authority to articulate religious values as legitimacy for development. The data corpus includes: (1) press releases published through the official news portal bantenprov.go.id, (2) social media posts on the official government account @bantenprov on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter/X, and (3) visual and printed promotional materials in the form of brochures, pamphlets, and KIHC company profile videos. All data were collected using a purposive sampling technique so that only texts that explicitly or implicitly represent narratives about KIHC were analyzed. The data collection process used the

keywords “Cikande Halal Industrial Area”, “KIHC”, “Banten halal industry”, and “The Future of Halal Industry”, in accordance with systematic standards in discourse research (Krippendorff, 2019).

Data analysis was conducted in three integrative stages. The first stage was textual analysis, which focused on identifying representations of religious values in media texts. This analysis included an examination of the lexicon, metaphorical use, rhetorical patterns, and narrative structures used by the government in constructing the image of KIHC. This approach highlighted how specific word choices served to reinforce religious meanings and legitimize political development, in line with the AWK framework, which emphasizes the relationship between language and power (Fairclough, 1995b). The second stage was symbolic economy analysis, which explored how religious values were converted into symbolic capital and then into economic capital through discourse construction. In this stage, Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic capital, cultural capital, and their conversion mechanisms were systematically applied to examine how religious narratives serve as framing strategies that benefit certain actors in the halal industry development arena (Swartz, 1997).

The third stage is critical analysis, which interprets the micro-level findings (textual level) in relation to broader socio-economic structures. This analysis aims to uncover the political, ideological, and cultural implications of the commodification of religious values in media construction. This approach allows researchers to see how religious narratives are used to construct legitimacy, create public consensus, or even conceal the power relations operating in the development of KIHC. Thus, this research not only unravels the structure of discourse but also reveals the hegemonic practices at work in the production of meaning.

To maintain data validity, this study employed triangulation of sources and methods, combining various text types, comparing content across media platforms, and examining the consistency of emerging narratives. Furthermore, regular peer debriefing was conducted to ensure data interpretation remained objective, measurable, and free from researcher bias, as recommended in qualitative research methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With this methodological design, the study is expected to capture the complexity of the process of holistically commodifying religious values, while simultaneously explaining how symbolic capital operates in media constructions of KIHC.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Transformation of Sacred Values into Trademarks: The First Commodification Mechanism

The transformation of sacred values into economic commodities is one of the most striking phenomena in the development of the halal industry in Indonesia, and the Cikande Halal Industrial Estate (KIHC) serves as a case study that most clearly demonstrates this process. In the contemporary economic context, religion no longer stands as an autonomous space immune to market logic; instead, it has become a symbolic resource that can be processed, packaged, and resold to the public as part of the structure of global capitalism (Goodchild, 2003). It is at this point that KIHC, through the media construction of the Banten Provincial Government, demonstrates how Islamic religious values such as halal, sharia, and blessings have undergone a fundamental transformation from transcendental meanings to commercial labels with high exchange value (Yamamah, 2022).

This commodification phenomenon is evident in various press releases and official promotional materials that position KIHC not merely as an industrial area, but as a “religious-economic space” sold to the public and investors. The press release, titled “KIHC Creates a Blessed Economy in Banten,” is early evidence of the government’s reframing of the concept of “blessing.” In Islamic theology, “blessing” refers to the continuity of divine grace that cannot always be measured materially—it is transcendent, intangible, and not tied to economic calculations (Einstein, 2008). However, government media constructions redefine it as an economic entity measurable through macro indicators such as investment growth, increased employment, and accelerated industrialization. In other words, spiritual meaning is reduced to a rhetorical device for mobilizing capital (Mendelski & Menechelli, 2024).

This process aligns with Bourdieu's (1986) analysis of symbolic capital as a form of power that operates through social recognition (Bourdieu, 1986a). The government, through its official media apparatus, acts as the dominant agent in what Bourdieu calls the production of belief—the process of producing beliefs that render a symbol legitimate, natural, and valuable (Weber, 2023). When the government declares that KIHC is a “source of economic blessings,” the declaration is not merely a description, but a symbolic act that instills a collective belief that blessings can and should be measured economically (Mo et al., 2023). Thus, state media functions to normalize the transformation of sacred meanings into commercial assets.

This transformation is further strengthened by the strategic use of religious metaphors. KIHC is repeatedly promoted as the “new mecca for the global halal industry.” The metaphor of “qibla” is not a neutral choice of

words. In Islam, the qibla is a spiritual and ritual point of orientation; it carries sacred, not market, value. By shifting "qibla" to a geographical-economic marker, the government is not only borrowing religious language for economic purposes but also resignifying it, placing the industrial project within the realm of sacred meaning. In line with Bourdieu's (1991) view, this metaphor functions as an instrument of symbolic power because it transfers the spiritual dimension to the economic realm without being seen as an act of manipulation (Bourdieu, 1991). The public accepts this metaphor because its inherent sacred value has been socially recognized.

Furthermore, the use of sacred metaphors plays a role in increasing KIHC's market desirability. In symbolic economic theory, symbolic capital can be converted into economic capital through a process of collective recognition (Holmqvist, 2022). When KIHC is referred to as a "halal industry mecca," Muslim investors not only see an industrial area but also perceive they are investing in a project with spiritual value and religious identity (El Melki & Ben Salah Saidi, 2023). Thus, this metaphor serves as a strategic tool to instill the perception that participating in KIHC investments is not simply an economic choice, but rather a moral and religious act.

This transformation of sacred values is also evident in the official slogan, "Banten: The Future of Halal Industry." This slogan is not merely a promotional tagline, but rather a grand narrative that sells the future as a commodity. In economic anthropology, selling the future means selling a horizon of possibilities that combines the imagination of modernity, identity, and spirituality (Sippel & Dolinga, 2023). In this context, the government sells the idea that Banten is not simply an industrial area, but "the future of global halal"—a construct that positions the province as both a center of religious legitimacy and a hub of economic growth. Religious identity is being reconfigured to meet the logic of an increasingly competitive global market (Yin & Jia, 2024).

Furthermore, state media plays a crucial role in normalizing the commodification of religious values. Every press release, social media post, and promotional video is structured around a consistent narrative: that halal industrialization is the path to "blessings" and "sharia progress." This normalization operates through what Bourdieu (1991) calls *doxa*—a set of assumptions that are taken for granted without question (Bourdieu, 1991). When the narrative of "economic blessings" is repeated repeatedly, the public begins to internalize that blessings can and should be measured economically. In other words, the public is introduced to a new structure of meaning in which religion functions as a generator of exchange value, rather than a source of spiritual use value (Cojocararu et al., 2025).

This form of commodification is also evident in the KIHC's visualization. Many promotional photos and videos feature large mosques and other religious icons as integral parts of the industrial area. Visually, the government aims to convey that industry and worship can coexist. However, from a symbolic economic perspective, these visualizations represent a branding strategy that uses religious symbols to add commercial value (Agarwala et al., 2021). These symbols no longer represent spiritual experiences but instead become aesthetic markers that enhance the industrial area's marketability (Rocha, 2021).

Furthermore, the use of religious vocabulary in economic narratives—such as "blessed investment," "sharia factory," "worship economy"—demonstrates that religious language has been recontextualized as an instrument of economic persuasion. Language no longer functions as a medium for expressing faith, but as a rhetorical tool to attract investment and promote industrial zones (Wolf & Theunissen, 2026). In line with the theory of commodified religiosity (Juliansyahzen, 2023), religious values are transformed into lifestyles and identities that can be bought, sold, and advertised.

This practice of commodification can also be understood as a form of symbolic reduction, where the complex meaning of religious concepts is reduced to instrumental values that serve economic interests. For example, the concept of halal in Islamic jurisprudence encompasses ethical, spiritual, ecological, and social aspects (Elmahjub, 2021). However, in the hands of state media, halal is reduced to a technical standard used to increase industrial competitiveness. Halal is reconstituted as a guarantee of quality control for the global market (Wang et al., 2021). This aligns with findings from global research on the halal industry, which shows that halal certification often emphasizes technocratic processes over underlying ethical values (Arafah, 2021).

The transformation of sacred values into trademarks, as occurred at KIHC, creates an ambivalent new moral economy (Dobson & Parker, 2025). On the one hand, the halal industry opens up space for the integration of religious values into economic development. However, on the other hand, this integration is carried out through capitalist mechanisms that abstract religious values from their spiritual context. Bourdieu (1998) calls this phenomenon symbolic violence, which occurs when new meanings are subtly imposed, leaving the public unaware that they are being led to accept market logic as the legitimate logic in interpreting religion (Bourdieu, 1998).

In state media constructions, "Sharia" values no longer refer to a complex ethical-legal system, but to specific types of industries that meet the standards of the global Muslim market. Similarly, the term "blessing" no longer refers to spiritual abundance, but to the expectation of economic gain. This transformation not only alters the meaning of religious symbols but also restructures public perceptions of religion itself (Fisher, 2024).

Thus, the commodification of religious values in the KIHC narrative is not merely a linguistic or aesthetic phenomenon, but a social process that produces a new religious orientation: one based on consumption, investment, and profitability (Junaidi, 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that the transformation of sacred values into trademarks in the KIHC context is a manifestation of the logic of symbolic capitalism that operates through language, visuals, and narratives legitimized by state authority.

Converting Religious Belief into Economic Capital: The Circulation of Symbolic Capital

The commodification of religious values in the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHC) project did not stop at transforming sacred symbols into trademarks. In the next stage, state media developed a deeper and more complex mechanism: the conversion of public religious beliefs into economic capital. This process operates through a series of representational strategies that systematically transform religious symbolic capital into economic capital, which then generates legitimacy, participation, and large-scale investment (Smith, 2024). Using Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic capital theory framework, this section examines how this conversion occurs, who the main actors are, and its implications for the structure of power relations in society.

According to Bourdieu (1986), symbolic capital is a form of power derived from social recognition, not material or financial capital (Bourdieu, 1986b). Symbolic capital can only become "capital" when it is recognized as legitimate by society (Philip et al., 2022). In the context of the KIHC, state media played a strategic role as producers of legitimacy, embedding religious values in the industrial project to ensure its acceptance as part of the religious identity of the Indonesian Muslim community. This is where the conversion process began: the government created a collective narrative that participating in the KIHC project was a commitment to Islamic values, not merely an economic choice. Once this narrative was accepted by the public, religious symbolic capital could be converted into economic resources (Fedorchenko et al., 2021).

This conversion strategy is particularly evident in the government's official social media communications, particularly the Instagram account @bantenprov, which heavily features religious visuals, narratives, and symbols. Each post about KIHC is not merely informative but actively builds a "trust ecosystem" that links religious identity with economic participation. For example, a post depicting a modern mosque within an industrial area carries the caption: "At KIHC, worship and industry go hand in hand. Proof that the sharia economy does not abandon spirituality." This narrative not only constructs the image of KIHC as a religious space but also instills the belief that involvement in the halal industry constitutes compliance with sharia. From Bourdieu's (1991) perspective, the media is producing an illusion—a collective illusion that renders certain practices normal, legitimate, and in accordance with religious norms (Akram, 2023).

This illusion serves as the foundation for the conversion of symbolic capital. The public is convinced that halal industry projects are not merely economic activities, but part of religious practices with moral and spiritual value (Kader, 2021). At this point, symbolic capital, in the form of religious belief, begins to accumulate (Cavusoglu & Atik, 2021). The government accumulates this capital by constructing a narrative about its commitment to Islamic values: a commitment to halal, a commitment to sharia, and a commitment to the economic empowerment of the community. Bourdieu (1986) referred to this process as "representational accumulation," where institutions use their representational capacity to construct a moral image that can be capitalized on (Bourdieu, 1986b).

The next stage is religious legitimacy, which is achieved through the involvement of authoritative figures within the religion. State media frequently feature religious figures, clerics, or leaders of Islamic organizations at various inauguration ceremonies, public discussions, and promotional activities for the KIHC (An-Na'im, 2021). Their presence serves as a "stamp of authority" that reinforces the religious narrative that the KIHC is a project in accordance with Islamic values. In Bourdieu's analysis, this action is not neutral: religious authorities function as agents in the religious field, helping the state transfer symbolic capital to industrial projects (Calmettes & Pfister, 2025). Once religious figures provide legitimacy, symbolic capital becomes more stable and ready to be converted into economic capital.

The conversion itself occurs through what Swartz (1997) calls the alchemy of conversion, namely the ability to "transform the religious into the economic" subtly and imperceptibly (Swartz, 1997). In the context of KIHC, this conversion occurs through three main mechanisms. First, through investment. Once the project is

deemed religiously legitimate, domestic and international Muslim investors feel that their investment is not only financially profitable but also has religious value. They no longer invest in industrial areas, but in the "sharia economy." Thus, the symbolic capital of "trust" is transformed into economic capital in the form of financial capital (James et al., 2022).

Second, conversion occurs at the consumption level. Consumers perceive purchasing halal products produced by KIHIC as a form of religious identity and commitment. Consumption is no longer neutral but becomes an expression of morality. Global research findings indicate that Muslim consumers increasingly view halal consumption as part of identity performativity (Isakjee & Carroll, 2021). This means that halal consumption is not just about what they buy, but about who they are as individuals and members of a community.

Third, conversion occurs through social participation. Communities are involved in public activities promoted as a "Sharia economic movement," creating a sense of ownership in the project. Participation in these activities transforms trust capital into social capital, ultimately supporting the sustainability of the economic project (Zhang et al., 2023).

However, this conversion process is not only economic but also political. The government benefits from the "moral authority" established through the religious narrative of KIHIC. This authority can then be used to expand political legitimacy and strengthen the government's position as a pioneer of Islamic economics. In Bourdieu's (1998) terms, the government is using religious symbolic capital to strengthen its "political capital." Thus, the KIHIC project is not only an economic arena, but also an arena of symbolic competition between actors seeking to control the meaning of "sharia" in the context of national development (Bourdieu, 1998).

Furthermore, this process of converting symbolic capital creates what can be called a "regime of belief," a system of representations that leads people to believe that certain economic projects are part of their religiosity. This regime of belief operates through repetition, visualization, and the legitimization of authority. State media produces a consistent representation: that KIHIC is a space where "industry and worship merge." This repetition of representations leads people to internalize the assumption that participation in the halal industry is a moral act that aligns with their faith. At this point, the conversion of symbolic capital into economic capital is complete: people not only accept the economic logic but also consider it an extension of religious practice (Verwiebe & Hagemann, 2025).

However, this conversion process has ambivalent implications. On the one hand, it strengthens social solidarity and increases community participation in economic development. But on the other, it has the potential to create an imbalance in meaning between religiosity as a spiritual experience and religiosity as a commodity. When religious beliefs are systematically capitalized, spiritual values can be reduced to a legitimizing tool for economic projects that do not always reflect the substantive values of Islamic economics, such as justice, welfare, and equity (Riaz et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the use of religious symbolic capital as an instrument of conversion opens up space for what Bourdieu (1998) calls symbolic domination. The government, as the holder of representational authority, has the power to define what constitutes "Islamic economics" and what does not (Bourdieu, 1998). This definition is then disseminated to the public through the media, leading to public acceptance of it as "truth." Thus, the conversion of symbolic capital also creates an unequal power relationship between the state and society (Chiang et al., 2021).

By constructing a narrative that KIHIC is a symbol of the "revival of the Islamic economy," the government is shaping public perception to view the halal industry as part of their religious identity. However, materially, the halal industry is part of an economic strategy aimed at attracting global investment and increasing regional competitiveness—goals that fall entirely within the logic of neoliberal capitalism (Raimi et al., 2023). This is where a fundamental contradiction arises between religious values and economic interests. The conversion of symbolic capital obscures this contradiction by wrapping it in a religious narrative that appeals to the public (Al-Qahtani, 2025).

This analysis concludes that the process of converting religious belief into economic capital in the context of KIHIC is a multi-layered process involving the production of representations, authoritative legitimacy, symbolic accumulation, and social investment. This process demonstrates that halal industry projects operate not only in the economic realm but also in a religious context fraught with contests over meaning, symbols, and power (Yakin et al., 2021).

Symbolic Economic Analysis

The symbolic economic analysis in this study attempts to describe how religious values are constructed, capitalized, and converted into symbolic capital that subsequently functions as an instrument of political, economic, and cultural legitimacy in the discourse of the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) development.

Pierre Bourdieu's framework serves as the main theoretical foundation because it allows researchers to trace how religious symbols, representations, and narratives are produced as commodities with exchange value in the local political-economic arena (Bourdieu, 1986b). In the context of KIHC, the halal narrative is not only treated as a set of normative religious values, but also transformed into a "strategic symbolic asset" that is formed, maintained, and circulated through official government media communication devices.

In this analysis, the concept of symbolic capital is central because it explains that power derives not only from material things, but also from social recognition, moral legitimacy, and perceived value generated through representational practices (Bourdieu et al., 1991). The Banten Provincial Government utilizes the discourse of "halal" as symbolic capital that can be converted into economic capital—namely, attracting investment, expanding industrial networks, and garnering public support. Narratives appearing in official government media consistently demonstrate that halal is positioned as both Banten's cultural identity and a global economic opportunity. This assertion positions the government as the dominant actor with the authority to define what is considered valuable, legitimate, and collectively beneficial (Fairclough, 1995a).

Within the framework of symbolic economy, capital conversion is carried out through a series of representational acts: the use of religious language, Islamic visual symbols, and a communication style that emphasizes the values of piety and blessings. This representation is not neutral, as each choice of lexicon, metaphor, and visual is designed to generate emotional resonance that strengthens the government's image as a manager of morally based development (Yu et al., 2025). For example, the use of terms such as "the blessing of the halal industry," "the future of Indonesian Islamic industry," or "Sharia-compliant economic transformation" are forms of symbolic praxis that attach religious values to macroeconomic projects. Such metaphorical choices shift public attention from industrial capitalism to broader, more socially acceptable moral legitimacy (Erkama & Angouri, 2024).

The process of symbolic capital conversion is also evident through the construction of temporalities and narratives of the future. The government frequently portrays KIHC as representing the future of Indonesia's halal economy, thereby constructing a collective imagination that participation in this project constitutes participation in a modernity that remains religious. In Bourdieu's theory, control over the production of future imaginations is one mechanism of symbolic domination, as it can determine the direction of society's social and economic actions (Bourdieu, 1998). When the government consistently narrates that KIHC is "the future of the global halal industry," they are not simply describing objective conditions but creating a horizon of possibility that demands socio-political support.

Furthermore, symbolic economy analysis found that media representations of KIHC become a battleground between cultural capital, economic capital, and symbolic capital. The government, as the dominant actor, presents itself as the owner of cultural capital in the form of technocratic knowledge about the halal industry, economic capital in the form of control over investment policies, and symbolic capital in the form of moral claims to religious values (Hewege & Perera, 2020). All three accumulate and strengthen the government's position within the social structure. Media narratives function as symbolic reproduction devices that ensure that the distribution of capital remains in favor of actors with institutional authority (Swartz, 1997).

In this case, the halal discourse is not a construct that flows naturally from Islamic values as a religion, but rather the result of systematic institutional work. Every government social media post, press release, promotional brochure, and company profile video is a "symbolic act" aimed at generating public recognition of the government's claim to be a leader in halal development. This aligns with Bourdieu's view that symbolic capital is only effective when publicly recognized; it is this social recognition that transforms symbols into real power (Bourdieu, 1991).

This representational process also involves a strategy of aestheticization. KIHC's visual representation consistently uses imagery that emphasizes modernity—tall buildings, automated machines, global maps, and professional workers—combined with Islamic symbols such as calligraphy, the dominant color green, and global halal icons. This aestheticization serves to strengthen the project's moral and commercial appeal. According to Lash and Lury (2007), aestheticization in contemporary capitalism is a crucial mechanism for creating symbolic value that can be effectively commodified (Gunster, 2008). In the context of KIHC, halal aestheticization transforms religious values into a visual commodity that can be marketed globally.

The symbolic economy analysis also reveals how KIHC is positioned as a "product" to be promoted. Official government media portrays the area as a company would showcase its flagship product: with descriptions of its advantages, branding, storytelling, and competitive narratives. This strategy demonstrates the government's application of market logic in its public communications. Here, religious values are not only integrated into the

narrative but also constructed as added value that maximizes the industrial area's marketability. Within the symbolic economy framework, this suggests that religiosity is being capitalized not as a doctrine, but as a branding asset (Kavolis, 2000).

However, it's important to note that this process is not free from political implications. When the government positions itself as the sole actor authorized to define "halal as the future of Banten," the discourse that emerges tends to be homogenous and ignores the possibility of other perspectives. This action can be read as a form of symbolic domination—that is, domination that occurs through language, imagery, and representation that appears natural and unquestioned (Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, the religious claims in the KIHC narrative are not simply the conveyance of information, but a structured effort to build consensus and control the public imagination regarding the direction of regional economic development.

This analysis also uncovered a power relationship at work through a complex mechanism between symbolic and economic capital. The government presented KIHC as both a "religious project" and a "major investment project," thus merging moral and economic interests within a single discursive framework. This strategy resulted in dual legitimacy: religiously considered correct, while economically profitable. From a symbolic economic perspective, dual legitimacy is a form of advanced commodification, where moral values are produced as assets that reinforce economic value, and vice versa (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). Halal, in the context of KIHC, is no longer simply a religious principle; it has become a mechanism for simultaneously creating market value and political legitimacy.

On the other hand, state media narratives also suggest that KIHC is constructed as a center of "halal capitalism"—a form of economics that combines global market logic with local religious identities. The government cites investment data, global export potential, halal supply chain connections, and job opportunities, all framed in religious language. According to Bourdieu, the convergence of economic and symbolic capital within a single narrative is an ideological strategy to make certain economic interests appear as inviolable moral policies (Bourdieu, 2018). Thus, KIHC is not only an industrial space, but also a space for the politicization of religious values.

This finding is reinforced by the language style of government media, which often conveys a triumphalist tone—that is, a tone of victory and moral superiority. Phrases such as "Banten as an international halal center," "towards the glory of the halal industry," or "religious commitment to building the people's economy" demonstrate a motive to create a superior image. In Bourdieu's theory, this style of language is a strategy to increase the government's symbolic capital through claims of moral and spiritual achievement (Bourdieu, 1991). Every moral claim successfully accepted by the public enhances the government's symbolic authority.

Thus, symbolic economy analysis reveals that the representation of KIHC in official government media not only conveys information but also produces a reality that benefits certain actors within the power structure. Through language, aesthetics, and futuristic narratives, religious values are engineered into commodities that can be traded politically and economically (Ertürk et al., 2022). This process demonstrates that in the context of contemporary regional development, religiosity is not merely a spiritual aspect but has become strategic capital in contestations over power, legitimacy, and global capitalism.

The phenomenon of symbolic capital conversion occurring in KIHC cannot be separated from broader global dynamics, where religious values—particularly Islamic values—are becoming strategic resources in global economic competition. In the past two decades, the "global halal economy" has grown to a market worth over US\$3 trillion, making it one of the most dynamic economic sectors, transcending geographic boundaries and religious identities (Thompson, 2020). States, corporations, and certification bodies worldwide now view religion not simply as a belief system, but as a source of symbolic capital that can be converted into economic gain, political legitimacy, and international reputation. Therefore, the dynamics seen in KIHC are actually part of a larger international trend: the globalization of religious commodification.

Malaysia is the most prominent example of a country's success in transforming the halal symbol into an instrument of national power. Since the early 2000s, the Malaysian government has aggressively branded halal as "Malaysia's Third Engine of Growth" and positioned JAKIM as the global authority on halal certification (Fischer, 2016). Malaysia's halal label has become an internationally recognized symbolic capital because it is perceived as the most stringent and credible. Thus, Malaysia has not only converted a religious symbol into economic capital but also into geopolitical capital: it has become a node of global authority in the international halal architecture. From Bourdieu's (1998) perspective, Malaysia has successfully mastered the field of power by making halal a source of symbolic capital recognized by global actors (Bourdieu, 1998).

The United Arab Emirates has developed a different strategy. Through the Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre, the UAE is not only developing a halal industry but also creating a futuristic narrative that

blends Islamic identity with modernity. Dubai's "Islamic economy of tomorrow" concept serves to create global desire for UAE-style halal products and services—an example of converting symbolic capital into aspirational capital (Thompson, 2020). This kind of branding demonstrates that religious values are no longer capitalized solely through traditional legitimacy, but also through strategically constructed future imaginations through media and economic diplomacy.

On the other side of the world, Brazil—a country with a very small Muslim population—has become the largest exporter of halal products to the Middle East. Brazil has engaged in what Bonne and Verbeke (2008) call "pragmatic halalization": a process by which halal values are standardized for production to enter the global Muslim market, despite the lack of a domestic religious base (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008). Interestingly, Brazil's halal authority operates not through theological legitimacy, but through technocratic legitimacy based on science, efficiency, and industrialization. In other words, Brazil demonstrates that religious symbolic capital can be produced and converted by non-Muslim actors through media and regulatory strategies. This dismantles the assumption that only Muslim societies can control the meaning of halal at the global level.

Another transnational example comes from Japan and South Korea, which are developing the halal industry as a geopolitical strategy to attract Muslim tourists and expand food exports to Southeast Asia (Bashir et al., 2019). Japan has constructed a media narrative of "Omotenashi for Muslims" that combines Japanese hospitality values with global halal standards, resulting in a new form of symbolic capital: hybrid cultural capital that combines local values and Muslim religious values (Aminah & Bhakti, 2023). This strategy demonstrates that religious symbols can be recombined and renegotiated according to the logic of the global market.

When applied to the KIHC context, these global patterns emphasize that the commodification of religious values is part of the architecture of global capitalism, operating through branding, certification regimes, and symbolic power. The Banten Provincial Government, through media construction, is positioning KIHC within this global circuit (Starobin, 2021). Statements such as "Banten: The Future of Halal Industry" or "Indonesia's World Halal Center" replicate narrative patterns used by Malaysia, Dubai, and Japan: combining religious symbols with visions of the future to produce symbolic capital that can be converted into investment (Philip et al., 2022).

In this global arena, KIHC competes not only economically but also symbolically. The real battle is over who has the authority to define halal and who can convince the global market that they have the legitimacy to become the world's halal production center. As Bourdieu (1998) explains, symbolic recognition is a prerequisite for converting symbolic capital into economic capital. Without recognition, religious symbols have no value in the global marketplace (Bourdieu, 1998).

One important implication of this global context is the emergence of tensions between international standards and local values. Malaysia emphasizes strict Islamic jurisprudence-based standards, Dubai emphasizes innovation, Japan emphasizes hygiene and tourism facilities, and Brazil emphasizes industrial efficiency. KIHC, by combining national industrial structures with Indonesian Islamic religious values, must negotiate all these standards to achieve global acceptance. This is where the role of state media is key: it serves to frame KIHC not simply as a local project, but as a global entity compatible with international standards. This demonstrates that the media is not only a producer of meaning but also a mediator between local religious values and the demands of global capital (Gauthier, 2020b).

Thus, the commodification process that occurs in KIHC actually shows a two-way movement: (1) Local→Global: local religious values are used to build identity, legitimacy, and investment attractiveness. (2) Global→Local: global standards, discourse, and competition determine how local religious symbols should be packaged and presented.

This dialectic is what makes the commodification of religious values in KIHC not merely a domestic phenomenon, but rather part of symbolic geopolitics in the global halal market. The state is not only selling halal goods but also attempting to promote Indonesia's Islamic identity as modern, progressive, and globally competitive. This suggests that the commodification of religious symbols is not only related to economics, but also to diplomacy, reputation, and the struggle for position within the global hierarchy of the halal economy (Mukherjee, 2014).

Ultimately, this international context makes it clear that KIHC is in a global competitive landscape that competes not only for economic capital but also for symbolic capital. Indonesia, through KIHC, seeks to assert itself as a key player in the global halal economy, but its success depends heavily on the country's ability to produce credible, marketable, and globally accepted religious meanings (Gauthier, 2020a). In other words, KIHC is not simply an industrial project but also part of a global struggle over the meaning, authority, and future of the halal economy.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the media construction of the Cikande Halal Industrial Zone (KIHIC) is a complex process of commodifying religious values through symbolic economic mechanisms. Three key findings are: First, sacred Islamic values are transformed into trademarks through a process of resignification and metaphorization. Religious concepts such as "halal" and "blessing" are reduced to mere marketing attributes that enhance economic value. Second, a mechanism for converting religious symbolic capital into economic capital occurs through symbolic circulation legitimized by state authority. People's religious beliefs are transformed into productive economic resources through the systematic construction of media narratives. Third, the commodification process produces alienated religious meanings, where the substantive values of Islamic economics are subordinated to the logic of capital. This has resulted in the transformation of religious practices, which are increasingly concentrated in the domain of individual consumption.

The theoretical implication of this research is the strengthening of the symbolic economy perspective in the study of religious commodification, particularly in contemporary Muslim societies. Meanwhile, its practical implications underscore the importance of developing an ethical framework that can distinguish between the authentic use of religious values and exploitative commodification. For future research, examining civil society's resistance and negotiation of meaning within this commodification process is crucial for understanding the more complex dynamics of the relationship between religion, media, and the economy in Indonesia.

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