



Halal in Harmony: Indigenous Perspectives on Faith and Commerce in Zamboanga City

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Halal Industry, Indigenous Community, Halal Certification

ABSTRACT

The global halal industry has become a key player in the Muslim economy, grounded in Islamic business ethics. Halal extends beyond dietary laws to include various products and services such as food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and financial services. Consequently, halal-certified goods are increasingly popular among both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers, driven by a demand for ethical and high-quality products. This growth underscores the halal industry's potential to shape global consumer behaviors and ethical standards across multiple sectors. Despite this, some indigenous communities express skepticism regarding halal products. This skepticism is primarily rooted in concerns over halal goods produced by non-Muslim manufacturers and the lack of recognized halal certification labels. Such doubts can obstruct the acceptance and growth of halal products within these communities, highlighting the need for transparent certification processes and improved education about halal practices. To investigate these dynamics, this study employs a mixedmethods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. In-depth interviews with 100 halal industry stakeholders across four Barangays of Dita, Calabasa, Muti, and Tictapul within the outskirt of Zamboanga City reveal diverse perspectives on halal practices, as well as associated challenges and opportunities. Additionally, focus group discussions involve participants from both Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds to explore their attitudes towards halal products, purchasing motivations, and perceptions of quality and ethics. Surveys further gather data on consumer behavior and preferences regarding halal goods. Addressing transparency in halal certification, enhancing education on halal practices, and fostering cultural sensitivity among businesses are vital for building trust within skeptical communities. Collaborative partnerships among halal producers, indigenous communities, and market players can create shared knowledge and innovations, ultimately expanding the halal industry's reach and positively impacting the global economy.

Kata Kunci: Industri Halal, Komunitas Adat, Sertifikasi Halal

ABSTRAK

Halal dalam Harmoni: Perspektif Adat tentang Keimanan dan Perdagangan di Kota Zamboanga. Industri halal global telah menjadi kunci dalam ekonomi Muslim, yang berlandaskan pada etika bisnis Islam. Halal tidak hanya terbatas pada hukum diet Islam, tetapi juga mencakup berbagai produk dan layanan seperti makanan, kosmetik, farmasi, dan jasa keuangan. Akibatnya, produk bersertifikat halal semakin populer di kalangan konsumen Muslim maupun non-Muslim, didorong oleh permintaan akan produk yang etis dan berkualitas tinggi. Pertumbuhan ini menegaskan potensi industri halal untuk membentuk perilaku konsumen global dan standar etika di berbagai sektor. Meskipun demikian, beberapa komunitas adat menyampaikan keraguan terhadap produk halal. Keraguan ini terutama berakar pada kekhawatiran tentang produk halal yang diproduksi oleh produsen non-Muslim dan kurangnya label

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sertifikasi halal yang diakui. Keraguan semacam ini dapat menghambat penerimaan dan pertumbuhan produk halal di dalam komunitas tersebut, menyoroti perlunya proses sertifikasi yang transparan dan peningkatan pendidikan tentang praktik halal. Untuk menyelidiki dinamika ini, studi ini menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, yang menggabungkan metode penelitian kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Wawancara mendalam dengan 100 pemangku kepentingan industri halal di empat Barangay: Dita, Calabasa, Muti, dan Tictapul, di pinggiran Kota Zamboanga, mengungkapkan berbagai perspektif tentang praktik halal serta tantangan dan peluang yang terkait. Selain itu, diskusi kelompok fokus melibatkan peserta dari latar belakang Muslim dan non-Muslim untuk mengeksplorasi sikap mereka terhadap produk halal, motivasi pembelian, serta persepsi mereka tentang kualitas dan etika. Survei juaa menaumpulkan data tentana perilaku dan preferensi konsumen terkait produk halal. Menangani transparansi dalam sertifikasi halal, meningkatkan pendidikan tentang praktik halal, dan mendorong sensitivitas budaya di kalangan bisnis adalah langkah-langkah penting untuk membangun kepercayaan di dalam komunitas yang skeptis. Kemitraan kolaboratif antara produsen halal, komunitas adat, dan pelaku pasar dapat menciptakan pengetahuan bersama dan inovasi, yang pada akhirnya memperluas jangkauan industri halal dan memberikan dampak positif pada ekonomi global.

INTRODUCTION

The halal industry has emerged as a vital component of the global economy, particularly within the Muslim community, where it aligns with Islamic business ethics and cultural values. Halal, derived from the Arabic term "permissible," traditionally pertains to dietary laws governing what Muslims consume. However, its application extends beyond food products to encompass a diverse range of goods and services, including cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and financial services. As consumer awareness of ethical and sustainable practices grows, halal-certified products have gained adhesion among both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers, creating a burgeoning market characterized by increased demand for quality and ethical consumption (Amid, 2024)

Despite the industry's significant growth and the opportunities it presents, there exists a degree of skepticism among certain indigenous communities regarding the acceptance of halal products. This skepticism is primarily driven by concerns over the authenticity of halal goods produced by non-Muslim manufacturers and the lack of universally recognized halal certification labels. Such doubts can pose challenges to the industry's expansion, necessitating a more transparent and informed dialogue around halal practices and certification processes (Qadri, The Global Halal Industry: A Research Companion, 2024)

Understanding the complexities surrounding the halal industry, especially within indigenous contexts, is crucial for its sustainable development. This study aims to explore the perceptions, challenges, and opportunities associated with halal products from the perspectives of both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research seeks to uncover diverse attitudes toward halal practices, enhance awareness of ethical consumption, and foster collaborative efforts between halal producers and indigenous communities. Ultimately, this investigation aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the halal industry while promoting inclusivity and understanding across cultural and religious divides.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The halal industry, rooted in Islamic law, has seen a remarkable expansion across the globe, making it a key player in the global Muslim economy. Halal is not only a marker of religious compliance but also an embodiment of ethical business practices, offering consumers assurance of purity, quality, and sustainability in various sectors, including food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and finance (Mukherjee, 2014). With growing awareness and demand, halal-certified goods have garnered increasing appeal among both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers, driven by a collective shift toward ethical consumption.

This ethical framework, grounded in Islamic jurisprudence, extends beyond the confines of religious adherence and appeals to broader consumer values such as health, safety, and environmental consciousness. A significant body of literature emphasizes that halal certification provides a benchmark for quality and ethical standards, which has allowed the industry to flourish globally. In this context, halal certification serves not only as a religious guarantee but also as a commercial advantage, signaling a commitment to ethical practices (Calder, 2020).

However, the growth of the halal industry is not without its challenges, particularly in indigenous and non-Muslim contexts. Indigenous communities, such as those in Zamboanga City, often harbor skepticism toward halal products. This skepticism arises primarily from concerns about the authenticity and transparency of halal certification processes, particularly when goods are produced by non-Muslim manufacturers. In a study by Van Waarden & Van Dalen (2011) doubts surrounding the credibility of halal products were found to inhibit their acceptance, particularly in communities that value local traditions and are wary of externally imposed standard (Van Waarden & Van Dalen, 2011). E. Rios, et. al. (2014) similarly highlight the importance of transparent halal certification as a means of building trust among consumers who are unfamiliar with Islamic practices (E. Rios, E. Riquelme, & Abdelaziz, 2014).

A notable gap in the literature pertains to the intersection of halal practices with indigenous values and worldviews. Indigenous communities often prioritize local production, sustainability, and traditional knowledge, which may conflict with the perceived foreign nature of halal standards. Bridging this gap requires not only the dissemination of knowledge about halal but also the adaptation of halal practices to local contexts. Educating indigenous populations on the ethical principles that underpin halal, such as sustainability and animal welfare, may facilitate a more positive reception of halal products (Suryawan, Hisano, & Jongerden, 2022).

Another critical issue highlighted in the literature is the role of cultural sensitivity in the expansion of the halal industry. As halal products become more prevalent in diverse cultural settings, businesses must engage with indigenous perspectives to avoid potential clashes between religious and cultural values. Wilkins, et.al. (2019) stresses the importance of cultural sensitivity in marketing halal products to non-Muslim consumers, emphasizing that a lack of cultural understanding can lead to resistance or rejection of halal goods, even if they meet high ethical standards (Wilkins, Butt, Shams, & Perez, 2019).

In Zamboanga City, where Muslim and indigenous non-Muslim communities coexist, understanding local perspectives on halal is crucial. The literature suggests that indigenous skepticism can be mitigated through collaborative partnerships that respect local customs and incorporate indigenous knowledge into halal practices. Such partnerships can foster mutual trust and create opportunities for innovation in the halal industry, particularly in areas such as sustainable agriculture and traditional food production (Dashti, Jackson, West, & Jackson, 2024).

This study aims to build on existing literature by exploring the indigenous perspective on halal in the specific context of Zamboanga City. By employing a mixed-methods approach,

the research will investigate how indigenous communities perceive halal practices, particularly concerning faith and commerce. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the study seeks to uncover the challenges and opportunities that arise from the intersection of halal and indigenous worldviews. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how halal can harmonize with indigenous values and practices, offering insights into the global expansion of the halal industry.

METHODOLOGY

The research methods should elaborate on the method utilized in addressing the issues including the method of analysis. In both quantitative and qualitative research, the use of appropriate methods of participant sampling, study design, measures, and statistical analysis critically influences the study's methodological soundness. A good methodology should be clean and clear. Clean means the use of appropriate, valid, and unflawed methods of sampling and the use of instruments, procedures, and analyses. Clear means the ideal method is written in such a way that another researcher could duplicate the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The rapid expansion of the global halal industry illustrates its significance in the Muslim economy, rooted deeply in Islamic business ethics. As halal transcends mere dietary laws to encompass a wide array of products—from food and cosmetics to pharmaceuticals and financial services—it resonates with a growing consumer base. This appeal stems not only from adherence to religious guidelines but also from an increasing demand for ethical and high-quality products. The rising popularity of halal-certified goods among Muslim and non-Muslim consumers reflects broader trends towards ethical consumption, positioning the halal industry as a transformative force capable of shaping consumer behaviors and setting ethical standards across diverse sectors (Kim, 2022).

However, the skepticism expressed by some indigenous communities toward halal products presents a significant barrier to the industry's acceptance and growth. Concerns about the integrity of halal goods produced by non-Muslim manufacturers and the ambiguity surrounding halal certification labels contribute to this mistrust. The lack of transparent and universally recognized certification processes may hinder the potential for halal products to gain traction in these communities. This skepticism highlights an urgent need for improved education regarding halal practices and transparent certification mechanisms to build trust and acceptancs (Latino, Corallo, Menegoli, & Nuzzo, 2022).

To thoroughly explore these dynamics, the mixed-methods approach employed in this study is particularly valuable. By conducting in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the halal industry, researchers can uncover a wide range of perspectives on the practices, challenges, and opportunities within the sector. The inclusion of focus group discussions with participants from diverse backgrounds—Muslim and non-Muslim—offers insights into attitudes towards halal products, motivations for purchasing, and perceptions of quality and ethics. In addition, surveys designed to capture consumer behavior and preferences provide quantitative data that can complement qualitative findings, painting a more comprehensive picture of the landscape surrounding halal products.

Addressing the issues of transparency in halal certification, enhancing educational initiatives surrounding halal practices, and fostering cultural sensitivity among businesses are crucial steps toward building trust within skeptical indigenous communities. The establishment of collaborative partnerships among halal producers, indigenous communities, and market

players can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and innovations, thereby expanding the reach of the halal industry. Such collaborations not only promote inclusivity but also have the potential to positively impact the global economy, allowing for the integration of diverse perspectives and practices within the halal framework. Ultimately, fostering a more transparent and culturally sensitive halal industry can help bridge the gap between diverse consumer groups and contribute to the sustainable growth of this burgeoning market.

Situation in Barangay Dita, Zamboanga City

Among the 20 participants interviewed in this locality, there was a unanimous consensus regarding their belief that only products produced by Muslims are deemed permissible for consumption. This perspective highlights a prevalent sentiment within the community, where there is a significant focus on adhering to Islamic principles in consumer choices. Participants expressed that products manufactured by non-Muslims were likely unsuitable for consumption, reflecting a conservative approach that prioritizes compliance with Shariah guidelines. This inclination indicates that many consumers within this community are not only conservative but also highly conscientious about their purchasing decisions, often using religious teachings as their primary reference point in the marketplace (Gauthier, 2016).

This adherence to Shariah principles demonstrates the importance of trust and authenticity in halal products. It also underscores the need for halal certification systems to address the concerns of such conservative consumers. The requirement for halal certification from recognized Muslim authorities can help alleviate apprehensions about non-Muslim-produced goods and foster greater acceptance of halal products across diverse communities. Moreover, as the halal market continues to expand, understanding the beliefs and practices of these conscientious consumers will be crucial for producers aiming to tap into this segment of the market effectively (Elasrag, 2016).

Situation in Barangay Calabasa, Zamboanga City

In Barangay Calabasa, the majority of residents identify as Muslims, and many voiced their concerns regarding products lacking halal certification or an authentic halal logo. During the focus group discussion (FGD), two women prominently expressed their apprehensions, emphasizing that products without proper halal certification are not considered consumable by Muslims. They highlighted the issue of counterfeit halal logos, noting that they have learned about instances where manufacturers have falsified these certifications. This concern became a central topic of discussion among participants, reflecting a collective anxiety about the integrity of halal products available in the market.

Along with the rest, an elderly man contributed to the conversation by stressing the necessity of ensuring that products marketed to Muslim communities are genuinely halal. His remarks underscored the importance of transparency and authenticity in halal labeling, as misleading claims can significantly undermine consumer trust and acceptance within the community (MacFarlane, Hurlstone, & Ecker, 2020). The apprehensions voiced during the FGD reveal a pressing need for robust halal certification processes that can effectively address such concerns, ultimately fostering a safer and more trustworthy marketplace for Muslim consumers.

Situation in Barangay Muti, Zamboanga City

In contrast to Barangay Calabasa, the residents of Barangay Muti did not express skepticism regarding the authenticity of halal products. Instead, their primary concern focused on whether these products were sourced from Muslim manufacturers. Participants emphasized that while the halal logo is significant, the origin of the product is of greater importance. They questioned the integrity of the production process, expressing a need for assurance that products have not been contaminated at any stage of manufacturing. This perspective indicates a deeper understanding among residents regarding the broader implications of halal certification, which encompasses not only the end product but also the ethical and hygienic practices of the manufacturers involved (Gupta, Kumar, & Wasan, 2021).

Such sentiments underscore the importance of transparency in the halal supply chain. Consumers in Barangay Muti advocate for greater awareness about the sources of halal products, indicating that their purchasing decisions are influenced by a combination of both certification and the ethical practices of producers. This approach reflects a growing awareness among Muslim consumers regarding the significance of quality assurance in halal products, which can enhance trust and promote informed consumption (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). By the same token, ensuring that manufacturers adhere to stringent halal standards not only satisfies consumer demand for authenticity but also fosters a sense of community and shared values among Muslim consumers (Qadri, The Global Halal Industry: A Research Companion, 2024).

In Barangay Tictapul, residents were initially reluctant to voice their concerns regarding halal food issues. However, one prominent comment emerged during the discussion: a desire for the government to actively encourage the establishment of more Islamic companies to address the pressing need for halal products. A participant named Jaafar expressed frustration, asking,

"Maitah in parenta dih magpataud company amu in mag hinang pagkaunun sin mga kamusliman?"

(Why does the government fail to encourage more companies to manufacture foods for Muslims?).

His viewpoint resonated with others in the group, including an elder named Bapah Usman, who made a vehement statement:

"Bang awn magdagang haram mari pa lungan namuh atasan ko siya puhingaun"

(If someone attempts to sell haram products in our community, I will volunteer to execute him).

This strong assertion underscored the gravity of their concerns and reverberated throughout the focus group discussion, creating an atmosphere of fear and urgency.

The sentiments expressed in Barangay Tictapul highlight a critical gap in the market for halal products and the perceived negligence of authorities in supporting the halal industry. Such frustrations can lead to a decline in consumer trust and a lack of adherence to halal principles if residents feel unsupported in their quest for compliant products (Arbiter, 2024). The fear of haram products infiltrating their community reflects a broader concern regarding food safety and religious compliance, further emphasizing the need for government intervention and collaboration with local Islamic entrepreneurs to foster a more robust halal market (Utomo, Sekaryuni, Widarjono, Tohirin, & Sudarsono, 2021).

Table 1: Summary of Opinion towards Halal Products

Tuble 1. Summary of Spinion to war as fluid 11 outets		
Barangay	Way of looking	Suggestion
Dita	Halal products should not be patronized.	More Hahal Certifier to monitor
	Considering the fake product issues.	products in the market.
Calabasa	Online halal product should be carefully screened. Either food for consumption or material goods like cosmetics of unknown source.	Products are considered consumable unless dully certified. More certifiers established.
Muti	Necessarily for Muslims to be more conscious and avoid products that are manufactured with fake Halal Logo	Government Monitoring team has to be created in order to monitor, safeguard, and protect Muslim consumers.
Tictapul	Stop all products that are not dully certified Halal by the Islamic certifier.	No more government interventions. No more outside products. No more online selling allowed.

Source: Data analysis 2024

The varied opinions expressed by residents across four localities in Zamboanga City underscore a tangible variance influenced by their strong attachment to faith. This highlights the fact that Muslims are highly conscious when it comes to food consumption, carefully considering both the type of food they consume and its source. Their concerns reflect a broader understanding of halal principles, which encompass not only dietary restrictions but also the ethical implications of food production (Dahlan-Taylor, 2015)

Conversely, the absence of proactive government initiatives to promote more halal certifiers remains a significant barrier to the growth of the halal market in Zamboanga City. The lack of credible certification can lead to consumer mistrust and hesitation, as residents may be uncertain about the authenticity of products available in the market (Soon & Liu, 2020). Establishing more halal certifiers could foster a more transparent and reliable supply chain, encouraging local producers to adhere to halal standards and boosting consumer confidence in halal products (Dashti, West, & Jackson, Enhancing halal food traceability: a model for rebuilding trust and integrity in Muslim countries, 2024). By addressing these challenges, the government can play a crucial role in supporting the halal industry's expansion, ultimately benefiting both the local economy and the community's adherence to halal principles.

Findings

The study revealed significant insights into the perceptions of halal products in four localities within Zamboanga City, highlighting the role of religious faith in shaping consumer attitudes toward halal consumption. Across all Barangays, the shared focus on the ethical and religious integrity of halal products was evident, though the intensity of concerns and specific focal points varied between communities:

Barangay Dita

The participants unanimously emphasized the importance of ensuring that halal products are produced by Muslims, reflecting deep-rooted conservatism and religious adherence. This focus demonstrates that Shariah principles, particularly in food production, serve as a key decision-making framework for consumers. The skepticism toward products manufactured by non-Muslims signals the need for trusted halal certifiers to alleviate concerns.

Barangay Calabasa

Residents expressed apprehension regarding the lack of halal certification, particularly focusing on counterfeit halal logos. The fear of fraudulent certifications was prevalent, with participants underscoring the necessity of transparent and authentic halal labeling. This community's concerns underscore a pressing need for more stringent regulatory oversight and the establishment of additional halal certifiers to ensure consumer trust.

Barangay Muti

Unlike their counterparts in Calabasa, residents of Barangay Muti were more concerned about the origins of halal products, particularly whether they were produced by Muslim manufacturers. This group displayed a heightened awareness of not only the final product but the entire production process, emphasizing the need for ethical practices throughout the supply chain. Their perspective reflects an intricate understanding of halal principles beyond certification alone, placing importance on the integrity of the manufacturing process.

Barangay Tictapul

The residents voiced frustration over the perceived lack of government support for the halal industry, particularly in terms of encouraging more Islamic companies to cater to Muslim communities. Their strong stance against haram products revealed a sense of urgency and fear of non-compliant goods entering the market. The overwhelming demand for local halal producers reflects a desire for greater community control over halal consumption, rather than reliance on external suppliers.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study illuminate the diverse yet interconnected concerns of Muslim consumers in Zamboanga City regarding halal products. Across four Barangays, the adherence to Shariah principles plays a central role in consumer decision-making. Whether it is skepticism about non-Muslim-produced goods in Barangay Dita, concerns over counterfeit halal certifications in Calabasa, or a focus on ethical sourcing in Muti, the underlying theme remains the same: trust and authenticity are paramount to the acceptance and consumption of halal products.

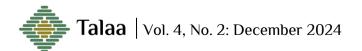
One of the major barriers to the growth of the halal industry in Zamboanga City is the lack of credible, transparent, and widely recognized halal certification processes. This issue not only limits consumer confidence but also constrains the broader market potential for halal products. Government intervention is needed to support the establishment of more halal certifiers and to encourage the development of Islamic companies that can produce halal goods in association with the community's religious expectations.

Additionally, fostering a more transparent and ethically sound halal supply chain is crucial to addressing consumer concerns. Ensuring that halal products are genuinely compliant with Islamic guidelines throughout the production process will enhance consumer trust and encourage market growth. Collaborative partnerships between halal producers, certifying bodies, and government agencies will be instrumental in achieving these goals.

Ultimately, the development of a robust halal industry in Zamboanga City requires addressing both consumer concerns and systemic gaps in certification and production. By prioritizing the religious and ethical needs of Muslim consumers, the halal market can expand in alignment with both faith-based principles and market demands, contributing to the sustainable growth of the Halal industry.

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