

## Optimization of Halal Product Innovation to Support the Growth of the Halal Industry in Brunei Darussalam

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### Abstract

The halal industry in Brunei Darussalam has excellent potential to grow and develop. Brunei has also established a well-established halal certification system supervised by the Department of Shariah Affairs. However, Brunei faces several challenges in developing the halal industry, such as international recognition of the halal logo. This research is qualitative research with a document research method investigating, categorising and analysing sources from written documents. The results of this study state that Brunei has shown readiness to develop the halal industry and take advantage of growing global market opportunities. However, on the other hand, Brunei experiences several challenges in developing its halal industry, such as limited, accurate market research data, limited technical expertise, less than optimal distribution networks and high operational costs, supply chain management, consumer awareness, global competition, strict export requirements, halal branding and marketing, and development of production scale. To face several existing challenges, Brunei can maximise the halal industry's potential, including market research, human resource development, infrastructure, halal certification, supply chain, and branding.

**Keywords:** Brunei Darussalam, Halal Industry, Innovation.

### Introduction

With its Muslim majority, Brunei Darussalam (herein called Brunei) is a country with enormous potential to develop the halal industry. The significant Muslim population in Brunei creates a high demand for halal products in the food, beverage, cosmetics, and tourism sectors. The growth of the halal industry is not just a possibility; it is a necessity for Brunei's economic growth to achieve one of the Brunei Vision 2035 – one of the top 10 countries in terms of per capita income (Sulaiman, 2020). The Brunei government has identified the global halal industry as a lucrative sector to reinvigorate and sustain the economy (Talib & Zulfakar, 2023). With the great need for quality halal products, Brunei has the opportunity to

become one of the leading players in the halal industry, not only at the national level but also internationally. However, realising this potential is not without its challenges. Brunei must address various hurdles, particularly in enhancing the quality and quantity of halal products and meeting increasingly stringent international standards. Overcoming these challenges is not just important; it is crucial for Brunei to establish itself as a significant player in the halal industry.

The halal industry in Brunei has excellent potential to grow and develop (Rosalina & M, 2020). However, as the industry grows, maintaining the integrity and authenticity of halal products becomes increasingly challenging. Halal integrity may be overlooked, as it also addresses the halal



status of food products from their essential components until consumed by the consumer (Soon, Chandia, & Regenstein, 2017). Brunei has also faced these challenges, as a few cases of restaurants operating without a valid halal certification and displaying expired ones (Rahim & Sulaiman, 2023). The misuse of the halal logo or label can reduce consumer confidence in the halalness of products and damage the halal industry's reputation in Brunei. Hence, it is crucial to strengthen the mechanism of halal compliance (Rahim & Sulaiman, 2023). Even Supian (2016) stressed that failure to adhere to the halal requirement has caused distrust from Muslim consumers. Thus, the regulations governing halal food are also necessary to regulate consumers and ensure that sellers meet moral obligations in maintaining the religious needs of Muslim consumers (Verbeke et al., 2013). Ibrahim (2022) also asserts that controlling and monitoring Halal-related matters in Brunei, mainly if they entail public interest, is a high necessity for which the government must take responsibility.

Apart from the government, related institutions are crucial to overcoming these challenges. One tangible example of an institution is the Halalan Thayyiban Research Centre (HTRC), established at the Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA). HTRC is pivotal in advancing the halal industry, particularly in Brunei. Its primary focus is providing teaching and learning programs (Halalan Thayyiban Research Centre, 2024) aimed at producing halal talent, which enables them to gain a thorough understanding of the worldwide halal sector (Azmar et al., 2024); thus can contribute to the global halal industry (Ahmad et al., 2011), HTRC is also actively engaged with various stakeholders, to promote the importance of halal and giving awareness, for instance, the Halal Awareness Games (Yahya S., 2022), Halal Lifestyle: Minan Nisa Ilan Nisa (Yahya S., 2023), Halal Lifestyle for All (Lim, 2024a), and Halalan Thayyiban Nutrition (Lim, 2024b). HTRC also conducts extensive research to share knowledge and best

practices, enhancing its influence on the global halal market (Azmar et al., 2024). HTRC also inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen and empower the halal field (Mohamad L., 2023). In summary, the HTRC serves as a cornerstone for promoting a comprehensive understanding of halal lifestyles through research, education, and community engagement, ultimately contributing to the growth and integrity of the halal industry in Brunei and beyond. Hence, the collaboration between academic institutions, government, and the private sector is critical to improving the quality and quantity of halal products produced.

Besides, the Brunei halal standards, logo and food certification are widely recognised and trusted, serving as an economic development tool to establish their global halal market position (Miskam et al., 2018; Kifli, 2023). However, several drawbacks are faced in leveraging the halal economy (Talib & Zulfakar, 2023). Firstly, Brunei imports most halal food products from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Talib, 2021a). The heavy reliance on importing halal food is attributed to geographical limitations, which are unsuitable for cattle farming (Khalid et al., 2018; Talib, 2021a). Second, the Brunei halal food industry generates food and municipal waste (Malik, 2011; Shams et al., 2014). Hence, utilising food waste in value-added products (Sulaiman & Talib, 2024) promotes halal product innovation, which plays a vital role in supporting the growth of the halal industry in Brunei and reducing reliance on imported products and food wastage.

To realise all of this, adaptation of technological advancements is crucial (Hashim & Sulaiman, 2022) to developing halal product innovation. The use of technology in the production process, as well as the supervision and testing of halal products, can ensure that the products produced meet the standards expected by consumers. In addition, the application of technology can also increase transparency and build consumer trust in halal products.



Therefore, research on "Optimizing Halal Product Innovation to Support the Growth of the Halal Industry in Brunei Darussalam" is vital. This research can provide in-depth insight into effective strategies to overcome various challenges and maximise the potential of the halal industry in Brunei. Thus, Brunei can establish itself as a leading halal industry centre in the ASEAN region and the world.

This research is qualitative and includes a documentation study. Documentation studies explore information from various sources, such as annual reports, government publications, and scientific articles. The data obtained were analysed using thematic analysis to identify the emerging main themes and data triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. The research results are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that support and hinder innovation in the halal industry in Brunei and practical recommendations for stakeholders.

### **Countries Playing an Active Role in the Growth of the Halal Industry**

Countries worldwide are now actively promoting and investing in the halal product industry. They are capitalising on the growing global demand for halal products, spanning food to tourism, finance, and more sectors. Here is a more detailed explanation of the initiatives taken by some key countries in developing the halal industry:

#### **1. Malaysia**

Malaysia has positioned itself as a global leader in the halal industry, with various initiatives supporting the growth and expansion of the halal market. Malaysia is focused on the domestic market and has a solid strategy to export halal products to the international market, exporting approximately USD 10.9 billion worth of halal-certified products in 2017 (Neo, 2018). The country has established a comprehensive halal ecosystem supported by government agencies like the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC), which helps create a business-friendly environment (Mansoor,

2023). Malaysia's Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 aims to enhance the halal sector by increasing exports and creating a larger talent pool. The goal is to propel halal exports significantly by 2025 and 2030 (Mansoor, 2023; Hidayat, 2020). Moreover, Malaysia is introducing new initiatives to accredit Halal certifiers worldwide, issuing the first Islamic fintech crowdfunding license and launching a new certification scheme for Muslim-friendly hospitality (Hidayat, 2020).

#### **2. United Arab Emirates (UAE)**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is also a significant player in the global halal industry, especially in Islamic finance. In 2018, the UAE announced a new banking law requiring every Islamic financial institution to establish an internal Shariah supervisory committee and conduct a rigorous Shariah audit process (Hidayat, 2020). This initiative aims to increase transparency and compliance with Shariah principles in Islamic banking operations. In addition, the UAE has also introduced new regulations governing the issuance of *Takaful* (Islamic insurance) and *Sukuk* (Islamic bonds) both domestically and internationally (Hidayat, 2020). Furthermore, the UAE has engaged in trade agreements with Malaysia to boost halal exports and facilitate mutual recognition of halal certifications (Mansoor, 2023)

#### **3. Bahrain**

Bahrain is focused on developing the Islamic finance sector through digitalisation. The country has launched Bahrain Fintech Bay, which supports the development of digital banking solutions aligned with halal principles (Hidayat, 2020). In addition, Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB) became the first digital bank in Bahrain to operate entirely digitally, offering financial solutions compliant with Shariah principles. These initiatives demonstrate Bahrain's commitment to



integrating technology and innovation into the Islamic finance sector, which increases efficiency and expands the accessibility of Islamic financial services to a broader audience.

#### 4. Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, particularly in its efforts to open up to international tourism. As part of this initiative, Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in tourism infrastructure and developing Muslim-friendly services. The country has also introduced an e-visa system that allows tourists from 49 countries to visit Saudi Arabia more easily (Hidayat, 2020). Saudi Arabia plans to promote itself as a tourism destination to attract more Muslim tourists, with facilities and services designed according to Shariah principles (COMCEC, 2016).

#### 5. Indonesia

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has great potential in the halal industry (Adamsah & Subakti, 2022). To tap into this potential, Indonesia has launched the Halal Economy Masterplan 2019-2024, which aims to integrate the Sharia economy into the national economic growth (Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). The master plan includes various initiatives to encourage halal tourism, develop the halal food sector, Muslim fashion, and Islamic finance. The National Committee for Islamic Finance has also been established to ensure the effective implementation of this master plan (Adamsah & Subakti, 2022). Indonesia is also the world's largest spender in the halal food industry, which shows the country's significant potential for the halal market (Adinugraha, et al., 2022).

#### 6. Japan

Japan has taken significant steps to attract Muslim tourists; Japan was ranked as the

top 3 destination country for Muslim tourists (Srifauzi & Surwandono, 2023). The country offers free visas to Muslim tourists, especially from Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam (Kodir et al., 2019; Mera et al., 2013). Japan is also known for its efforts to provide halal food in various public facilities such as university cafeterias, international airports, and restaurants (Japan Guide, 2024; Sulong, et al., 2020; Yustica & Widiandari, 2022). Although Japan is not a Muslim-majority country, demand for halal products in Japan is relatively high, especially from non-Muslim consumers who associate halal products with ethical consumerism and better quality (Lubis, R.G.P., & Yuandita, 2022).

#### 7. Thailand

The Thai government actively supports the development of halal food products and has led Thailand to be one of the world's largest halal food exporters. The Thai government has encouraged local producers to comply with international halal standards, allowing them to export high-quality agricultural products and certified seafood to the global market. Thailand's strategic location in Southeast Asia also serves as a hub for halal exports to Muslim-majority countries. In addition, Thailand is also focusing on attracting more Muslim tourists by promoting halal tourism, which includes developing Muslim-friendly facilities and services (Lubis, R.G.P., & Yuandita, 2022).

#### 8. Australia

Australia is recognised as a world leader in halal meat production, with a strong reputation as a major exporter of halal meat to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries. Australia's halal meat exports were valued at AUD1, 420 million in 2013-14 (Nurrachmi, 2017). Australia is promoting its halal



meat products globally, leveraging its competitive advantages in quality and compliance with international standards. These countries are actively promoting and investing in the halal industry, recognising the growing demand and potential of the global halal market. Each country's approach to halal industry development reflects its national strengths and priorities. With various initiatives underway, these countries strive to meet domestic market demand and become significant players in the increasingly competitive global halal market.

### **Brunei Islamic Religious Council and Brunei's Transformation in Meeting the Highest Halal Compliance Standards**

Brunei has become one of the prominent countries in the development and management of halal certification, primarily through the role played by the Brunei Islamic Religious Council / *Majlis Ugama Islam Brunei* (MUIB). MUIB is the ruling body established per Section 5 of the Islamic Religious Council and Kadhi Courts Act, Chapter 77 (Ibrahim N., 2022). As the primary authority responsible for supervising and regulating halal matters in the country, MUIB has the mandate to ensure that all food produced and served in Brunei is halal, in line with His Majesty the Sultan's vision of adherence to Shariah imposition of Halal (Ibrahim, 2022). MUIB has the most authority to advise and guide His Majesty the Sultan in making and formulating Shariah law in the country (Ibrahim, 2022; Chowdhury et al., 2023). It is also said that Brunei is known for its rigorous halal certification requirement (Oh, Hamir, & Shah, 2018; Ibrahim & Aghwan, 2022) before allowing manufacturers to sell their products to the general public (Rahim & Sulaiman, 2023). This further enhances the confidence that Brunei is entirely determined to set its goal as a halal industry hub regionally and internationally (Chowdhury et al., 2023).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) also significantly implements halal certification in Brunei through the

Department of Shariah Affairs. The said department oversees the halal certification process and its administration to assist MUIB in its decision to approve. Hence, several appointments have been made to the Director of the Department of Shariah Affairs as a chairman of several halal committees established under governing halal laws (Ibrahim N., 2022). While several government agencies such as the State Judiciary, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (currently known as the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism), Ministry of Health (MoH), and the Islamic Judicial (Asa, 2019), have been designated as auditors under Chapter of the Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order (HCHLO) (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021) to examine and scrutinise all halal certification applications for consideration to obtain MUIB approval (Ibrahim N., 2022). Every application for halal certification must undergo a thorough inspection and audit process by this department. This stringent process ensures that the proposed product or service aligns with the established standards, assuring Muslim consumers that the product or service is halal (Ibrahim N., 2022).

The halal certification system in Brunei is regulated through two important legislations to govern all the halal matters in the country (Ismail et al., 2024) to ensure integrity and compliance with halal standards. One of the primary laws governing this is the Halal Meat Act, Chapter 183, which regulates the import, slaughter, distribution, and sale of halal meat. In addition, the Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order, 2005, is also the legal basis governing halal labelling and related certification. To ensure that these standards are strictly adhered to, MUIB has established several Halal Certificate and Halal Label Inspection Committees, which inspect and ensure that the company complies with the standards desired by Brunei.

In terms of enforcement and monitoring to help MUIB, a particular agency established known as the Halal Food Control Division or *Babagian Kawalan Makanan Halal* (BKMH) under the Department of Shariah Affairs in



the MoRA (Ibrahim N., 2022). BKMh appointed as secretariat (Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2023) which is tasked with auditing, inspecting, monitoring, and enforcing halal regulations (Rosalina & M, 2020). In terms of auditing, BKMh was empowered to carry out inspections covering all aspects: documentation, processing, ingredients, handling and distribution, tools and equipment, storage, displaying and serving, hygiene and sanitation, packaging and labelling, and premises, in which their auditing result will help the Halal Committees and MUIB in their decision. Ultimately, this agency shoulders colossal responsibility to ensure halal matters in Brunei Darussalam are well managed up to the desired standards following the stipulated law and MUIB's Halal policy (Ibrahim N., 2022). It demonstrates Brunei's commitment to maintaining the integrity of halal certification throughout the supply chain.

Furthermore, the MUIB also plays a crucial role in managing halal certification in Brunei, emphasising public awareness and education as integral components of its approach. This strategy aims to ensure that the community is well-informed about halal principles and practices, which is essential for maintaining the integrity of halal standards. Although MUIB's promotion is currently limited, efforts are being made to educate the public about the importance of compliance with halal standards. However, a more intensive public awareness campaign is needed to increase compliance and broader public understanding. It aims to make the public increasingly aware of the importance of halal products and the consequences of non-compliance with these standards.

However, Brunei faces several challenges in implementing the halal certification process. Sulaiman and Hashim's (2021) study stressed that the challenges related to the halal certification process are operational inefficiency: applicants, internal officers and technology. The findings of Sulaiman and Hashim (2021) show that both parties' applicants and internal officers play vital roles in making the certification process go

smoothly with little help from technology. One of the main challenges in terms of applicants is the halal certification applicant's incompetency in completing the application forms due to poor understanding of halal certification procedures. In addition, there is also a limited workforce at certification bodies (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021), which could lead to a time-consuming certification process (Ismail et al., 2024) due to the lack of technology used as the delivery of application forms and filing systems still processed manually (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021), which could hamper the process of halal certification. Thus, MUIB has recognised these challenges and has begun implementing various initiatives to address them, including applying technology in the halal certification process. The use of digital platforms, for example, is not only for education and promotion but also to increase efficiency in the certification process and law enforcement. Overall, MUIB in Brunei ensures that products and services labelled halal meet the highest standards. Through rigorous certification, strict supervision, and ongoing public education efforts, MUIB ensures that Brunei not only complies with halal standards but also serves as an example for other countries in compliance with Islamic principles in trade and services.

### **Evaluation of Brunei's Readiness in Encouraging Innovation in the Halal Industry**

The readiness of Brunei's halal industry to innovate and proliferate reflects the country's commitment to capitalising on the growing global market opportunities. One crucial aspect is the halal solid regulatory framework. Brunei has established a well-established halal certification system overseen by bodies such as the BKMh. This system ensures that products marketed in Brunei meet stringent halal standards. Several key interrelated factors support the development of Brunei's halal industry, which can be assessed in depth to assess its readiness for halal product innovation.



## 1. Halal Regulatory Framework and Halal Certification System

Brunei has one of the world's most established halal regulatory systems. This system is the foundation for all halal product-related activities, ensuring that all products manufactured and distributed in Brunei comply with strict halal standards (Ismail et al., 2024). The Brunei government is actively strengthening and updating its halal-related laws and regulations, keeping pace with the latest developments in the global halal industry. Government and industry players are involved in improving national halal standards to maintain and enhance consumer confidence and ensure that products marketed as halal are truly Shariah-compliant. Halal certification in Brunei is also highly organised and supervised by credible authorities. This certification process is carried out to maintain consumer confidence, as a halal certificate is a sign that a product has met all Shariah requirements (Ismail et al., 2024).

However, challenges are faced, such as many small entrepreneurs in Brunei exhibit limited knowledge regarding the halal certification process. While some know the application for halal certificates, many have not pursued certification due to misunderstandings about its importance and requirements (Suhaili et al., 2023). In addition, the halal certification process can be complex, with varying requirements that may not be communicated to businesses. This complexity can deter small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from applying for certification, as they may find the process daunting or unclear (Islam et al., 2023). This knowledge gap can hinder compliance and reduce the overall market for halal products. It shows that although the halal certification system is robust, significant obstacles must be addressed to enhance the awareness and effectiveness of halal certification in the country.

## 2. Market Demand and Research & Development

The demand for halal products is on a steady rise globally, with the global halal market projected to soar to USD 6.0 trillion by 2024. This burgeoning demand encompasses not just food and beverages but also extends to other sectors, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and banking services (Asmaria, 2023). The growing global demand for halal products presents opportunities for Brunei to position itself as a leader in this market. Brunei, recognising the immense potential in this trend, is not just reacting but strategically positioning itself to capitalise on it by nurturing its domestic halal industry. Thus, businesses must be prepared to meet these demands through innovative practices.

Therefore, Brunei strongly emphasises research and development (R&D) to foster the halal industry's growth. The role of stakeholders, including industry players and policymakers, is integral in this endeavour. R&D is geared towards enhancing our understanding of market dynamics, consumer preferences, and the most effective sales and promotion strategies. Product innovation is also a key focus, committed to developing new and improved halal products that can stand out in the international market (Rosalina & M, 2020). Hence, investing in R&D facilities dedicated to halal products can spur innovation by allowing businesses to experiment with new products and processes.

In addition, Brunei's unique cultural factors also shape Brunei's approach to innovation in the halal industry. The businesses should engage the local communities in the R&D of halal products, which can foster a sense of ownership and encourage innovative ideas that resonate with cultural values. Besides, emphasising the unique cultural aspects of Brunei's halal offerings can differentiate its products in a crowded market. Thus, strides towards fostering



innovation in the halal industry could be crucial for enhancing Brunei's readiness to capitalise on global opportunities.

### 3. Consumer Awareness, and Education & Training

The level of consumer awareness about the importance of halal products significantly influences the growth of the halal industry. Various studies highlight how awareness impacts consumer behaviour, trust, and purchasing decisions.

Research indicates that higher levels of halal awareness correlate positively with consumer trust in halal products. For instance, a study found that understanding halal principles enhances consumer confidence, influencing purchasing decisions. Consumers who know what constitutes halal products are more likely to trust brands and make informed purchase choices (Julpa & Napitu, 2023; Fahira et al., 2023). Thus, Brunei has implemented several halal awareness programs to educate the public about halal principles, certification processes, and the significance of halal products. These programs are essential for fostering a better understanding of halal practices among consumers and businesses alike.

One successful program conducted by MUIB through BKMh is the *Program Peningkatan Kesedaran Makanan Halal (PPKMh)* / Halal Food Awareness Program. PPKMH is conducted once a month and is one initiative to increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of halal principles in nutrition and non-food products, such as items used in daily life (Othman, 2020).

Apart from the awareness program conducted by BKMh, UNISSA through HTRC also conducted several programmes on halalan thayyiban to the community, for instance, Halal Lifestyle: Minan Nisa Ilan Nisa (Yahya S. , 2023; Hussin, 2023), Halal Lifestyle for All (Lim, 2024a), Program Kesehatan Warga

Emas (PKWE) / Elderly Health Program (Lim, 2024b), *Tarbiyah Halal: Generasi Genius Halal* / Halal Education: Generation of Halal Genius, and Halalan Thayyiban Talk. These programs are designed to help people understand the importance of halal products, how they are processed, and the associated health and spiritual benefits. Besides, Talib et al. (2021b) asserted that more structured and halal-centric training programs offered by the government could entice more companies to participate and potentially lead to adopting halal services.

Moreover, HTRC promotes innovation among its students by encouraging them to develop products that address real-world challenges. For instance, the innovative idea of *Ebtaj - Home Kitchen Composter Device Produce Halal Eco-Friendly Fertilizer* (Rahim et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2022) students are involved in projects aimed at reducing food waste and composting it into halal organic fertilisers. This approach helps students apply their theoretical knowledge and instils a responsibility towards societal issues. A few other innovative ideas and products that HTRC's students have developed are the BruHalal App (Zaidi et al., 2022), Baby Food Seasoning: "Ali Pow Pow" (Muhamad, et al., 2023), Halwa Candy (Mohamad et al., 2023), Children's Book: "*Apakan Halal Ani?*" (Muntil et al., 2023), GreenFlow Hydro (Rahim & Sulaiman, 2024a), One Wipe Away: A Paper-Based Sertu Soap (Muhamad et al., 2024), KATA 3 in 1 Pocket Translator Device (Mujib & Sulaiman, 2024a), Tuffah Treats (Mujib & Sulaiman, 2024b), Komochi Bites Ice Cream (Jini et al., 2024), and a lot more to come. These projects show that HTRC is effectively fostering an environment where students can innovate and develop products that have the potential to make a significant impact on society. This commitment to student-led innovation reflects a progressive approach to education that prioritises

creativity, collaboration, and social responsibility.

#### 4. Infrastructure and Export Opportunities

Good infrastructure is the backbone of Brunei's halal industry development. The country has invested significant resources in developing infrastructure, including logistics and transportation facilities, that can support the production and distribution of halal products (Rosalina & M, 2020). Efficient infrastructure allows Brunei's halal products to reach global markets quickly and safely, ensuring they remain aligned with halal standards throughout shipping. Brunei seeks to expand its halal market share internationally with a solid infrastructure. Premium local halal brands are expected to compete in the global market, and the Brunei government strongly supports the diversification of halal products to meet the various needs of the international market. Effective logistics management is also a priority, ensuring Brunei's halal products meet stringent international standards, including quality, safety, and traceability (Talib & Wahab, 2021c).

#### 5. Collaboration

Collaboration between various stakeholders in the halal industry, including industry players, policymakers, and the government, is critical to the sector's progress. This collaboration ensures that all parties work towards the same goal of improving halal standards, promoting halal products, and addressing emerging challenges (Rahim & Sulaiman, 2024b). This collaborative initiative also helps share knowledge and resources, which drives innovation in the halal industry.

One concrete example of this collaboration is the inked MoU between HTRC and the Department of Shariah Affairs, MoRA. The MoU was for the framework of bilateral cooperation and collaboration in maximising the

opportunity to explore the development of innovation in the manufacturing and manufacturing sectors and the advancement of food science and technology (Mohamad L. , 2023). The centre serves as a platform for innovation and collaboration, where new ideas and technologies in the halal industry can be tested and developed. The centre also serves as a gathering place for experts and professionals in the halal industry, both from within and outside the country, to share their knowledge and experiences.

Furthermore, Risza (2024) also encourages established partnerships between universities and halal businesses, which can lead to joint research projects, internships, and innovation incubators that promote new product development and technological advancements within the halal industry. Hence, HTRC strives to foster halal partnerships with other universities as it is perceived as a vehicle to enhance innovation through knowledge exchange. With these partnerships, HTRC has sent their students abroad for mobility, student exchange and internships to gain more knowledge on halal and technology, for instance, Universiti Putra Malaysia (Institut Penyelidikan Produk Halal, 2019), Osaka University (Borneo Bulletin, 2023), and Universiti Teknologi MARA (Hassan, 2024).

#### 6. Government Support

The Brunei government has firmly committed to supporting the halal industry, primarily through support for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The government provides various facilities and programs to assist MSMEs in developing their halal products, ranging from financing and training to access to international markets. This support ensures that MSMEs can compete effectively in the global halal market (Nurrachmi, 2017). In addition, the Brunei government has also



developed a comprehensive policy framework to encourage the growth of the halal industry. These efforts include implementing policies that support innovation, improving product quality, and promoting Brunei's halal brand internationally. The Brunei government is also working to build the country's reputation as one of the world's leading halal hubs, which can attract investment and expand the market for Brunei's halal products. Several complementary factors strongly support Brunei's readiness for innovation in the halal product industry. From a robust regulatory framework to developed infrastructure, as well as government support and close industry collaboration, all of these factors contribute significantly to the potential for growth and innovation in Brunei's halal industry. With this integrated and comprehensive approach, Brunei is well-positioned to become a significant player in the global halal industry in the future.

### **Potential for Innovation in the Halal Industry in Brunei Darussalam**

The halal industry in Brunei has excellent potential to grow through innovations that can support its growth and sustainability. Brunei can focus on several key areas to strengthen its position in the global halal market and contribute to sustainable development.

#### **1. Halal Food Processing Technology & Plant-Based Products and Alternative Proteins**

One of the most promising areas for innovation is halal food processing technology. Innovation in this technology can improve halal product production's quality, safety, and efficiency. For example, by using advanced technologies such as high-pressure processing or freeze-drying, manufacturers can ensure that halal food products meet Shariah standards and have better quality and longer shelf life (Syamsuri et al., 2024). In addition, with the increasing global demand for plant-based products and

alternative proteins, Brunei has the opportunity to develop halal-certified plant-based protein products. These products will not only meet the needs of consumers looking for healthier and more sustainable food options. Still, they will also appeal to non-Muslim consumers increasingly concerned about environmental and health issues.

#### **2. Halal Tourism Services & Halal Food Services**

Brunei is making significant strides in developing its halal tourism and food services, capitalising on its Islamic heritage and the growing global demand for halal products. Brunei has great potential in developing the halal tourism sector. The development of halal and Islamic goods and services presents a significant opportunity for Brunei Darussalam as the global halal industry expands (Borneo Bulletin, 2024). Halal tourism is a concept that integrates halal principles into all aspects of the tourism experience, from food and accommodation to the tourism activities themselves. By improving halal food services and ensuring that accommodation facilities throughout the country comply with halal standards, Brunei can become a preferred tourist destination for Muslim tourists worldwide. In addition, Brunei can also develop guided tours highlighting the country's rich Islamic heritage, including visits to historical mosques, Islamic cultural sites, and religious education centres. The development of the halal tourism sector will increase tourism revenue and strengthen Brunei's image as a country that promotes Islamic values.

#### **3. Sustainable Halal Practices**

Sustainability is one of the main topics in the halal industry, and it aligns with the global commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Brunei's commitment to sustainable halal practices reflects its broader goals of

economic diversification, environmental responsibility, and adherence to Islamic principles. Brunei emphasises the use of local resources in its halal food production. Initiatives include partnerships with local farmers and producers to source ingredients sustainably, thereby reducing carbon footprints associated with transportation and supporting local economies (Borneo Bulletin, 2024). Hence, The government supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the halal sector by reducing certification fees significantly, making it easier for local businesses to comply with halal standards. This initiative not only encourages more businesses to enter the halal market but also promotes sustainable practices by ensuring that local products are produced environmentally friendly (Ismail et al., 2024). This approach aligns with global trends towards sustainability in food sourcing.

Thus, Brunei can promote sustainable halal practices by implementing environmentally friendly production methods. It could also include reducing the use of hazardous chemicals in production, utilising renewable energy, and reducing production waste. In addition, by promoting eco-friendly packaging, Brunei can help reduce the negative environmental impact and strengthen its product position in an increasingly environmentally conscious global market. Brunei will reinforce its halal industry through this initiative and contribute to global environmental sustainability.

#### 4. Halal E-commerce Platform

The development of digital technology opens excellent opportunities for the halal industry in Brunei to expand its market reach through e-commerce platforms. An e-commerce platform explicitly dedicated to halal products will allow consumers to find and purchase certified ones locally and internationally

easily (Muttaqin et al., 2023). This platform can also be a tool for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the halal sector to increase their exposure and expand their customer base without spending large amounts on traditional marketing. In addition, e-commerce can facilitate the growth of Brunei's halal product exports to the global market, especially in countries with large Muslim populations.

#### 5. Halal Certification Technology

Improving halal certification technology is a step in maintaining the integrity of the halal industry. In this digital era, developing more sophisticated certification systems can help ensure that every stage of production and distribution of halal products is by strict Shariah standards. It could include using blockchain to monitor and record every step in the supply chain, from raw materials to finished products. This technology's transparency in the certification process can increase consumer confidence in halal products (Talib & Wahab, 2021c). The development of certification technology will also make it easier for consumers to identify genuine halal products, reducing the risk of fraud and promoting brand loyalty.

#### 6. Traceability and Transparency

Traceability and transparency in the supply chain are valuable elements to maintain consumer trust in halal products. Brunei can ensure consumers can trace their halal products' origin and production process by implementing a robust traceability system. Transparency in labelling and certification processes will also give consumers greater confidence that their products are by halal standards. This is especially true in an era where consumers are increasingly savvy and demand more in-depth information about the products they consume. Brunei can strengthen its



industry's reputation in the eyes of global consumers by ensuring accurate traceability and complete transparency. By focusing on these areas, Brunei has the potential to improve its position not only in the global halal market but also become a leader in innovation and sustainability in the halal industry. These initiatives will help drive economic growth, strengthen critical sectors, and contribute to the broader sustainable development goals.

### **Challenges in the Development of the Halal Industry in Brunei Darussalam**

The challenges in developing the halal industry in Brunei Darussalam cover various interrelated aspects, ranging from market research to environmental sustainability. Brunei must address these challenges with a coordinated and comprehensive strategy to achieve sustainable growth and compete globally.

#### **1. Market Research and Consumer Preferences**

One of the main challenges in developing the halal industry in Brunei is the limited availability of accurate market research data. In-depth data on halal consumer preferences in Brunei is still lacking, making it difficult for companies to develop targeted marketing strategies. With sufficient data, it is easier to identify consumer trends, develop appropriate products, and segment the market effectively. In addition, the high dependence on the local market makes the halal industry in Brunei vulnerable to fluctuations in domestic consumer demand. Market diversification efforts are needed to reduce this dependence through exports and targeting consumers in the international market (Ismail et al., 2024).

#### **2. Research & Development (R&D) and Limited Technical Expertise**

The halal industry in Brunei needs help in terms of human resources and technical expertise. The limited technical

knowledge and skills required to develop innovative halal products hamper Brunei's ability to compete with other more advanced countries. The development of halal technology, including information technology and automation, remains challenging due to the lack of investment in R&D (Rosalina & M, 2020). To address this, Brunei needs to increase efforts to build human resource capacity through training and education and increase investment in R&D to drive product innovation.

#### **3. Infrastructure and Innovation Costs**

Adequate infrastructure is the foundation for the development of an efficient halal industry. However, Brunei's logistics infrastructure still faces several obstacles, including a suboptimal distribution network and high operational costs. These conditions can slow down the distribution process of halal products, thereby reducing business efficiency. In addition, high innovation costs can be a barrier for halal companies to develop new products or adopt new technologies. To address these issues, the government and private sector must work together to improve logistics infrastructure and incentivise innovation in the halal industry.

#### **4. Regulatory Compliance and Halal Certification Standards**

Compliance with regulations and halal certification standards is critical to maintaining integrity and trust in halal products (Rahim & Sulaiman, 2024b). However, Brunei faces challenges in developing and implementing consistent halal certification standards. The limitations of these standards can be straightforward to manufacturers and hinder their ability to meet halal requirements, especially when using additives. In addition, strict government oversight is needed to ensure that halal companies in Brunei comply with these standards. Without adequate oversight,



there is a risk that products that do not meet halal standards may enter the market, damaging the reputation of Brunei's halal industry.

### 5. Supply Chain Management

Effective supply chain management ensures halal products are produced and distributed according to established standards. Reliance on suppliers who need to be more adequate or consistent in meeting halal requirements can affect the product's final quality. Therefore, strict monitoring in the supply chain is necessary to ensure that every ingredient used in production meets halal standards. Transparency and accountability in the supply chain are also essential, as consumers increasingly demand products that are produced ethically and safely (Talib & Zulfakar, 2023). Implementing a traceability and transparency system in the supply chain can help increase consumer confidence in Brunei halal products.

### 6. Consumer Education

Consumer awareness of the importance of halal in everyday life still needs to be improved in Brunei (Lubis, R.G.P., & Yuandita, 2022). Although the majority of Brunei society is Muslim, there is still a need for more in-depth education on how to distinguish halal products from other products and why to choose products that are by Shariah. Effective halal promotion is also needed to increase consumer awareness of the benefits of halal products, not only from a religious perspective but also from a health and sustainability perspective. With proper education and promotion, consumers will be more likely to choose halal products, ultimately increasing the demand and growth of this industry.

### 7. Global Competition

Brunei's halal industry must face competition from other countries that are more advanced, such as Malaysia and

Indonesia. Both countries have developed their halal industries well and have competitive advantages in the global market. To compete, Brunei needs to improve the quality of its products. However, Ismail, Shahlehi, and Shaya (2024) assert that the Brunei halal logo faces limited recognition in other countries and poses a challenge for businesses venturing into exporting. Besides, each country follows different standards, leading to a lack of standard harmonisation (Asa, 2019). Thus, Bruneian Halal food SMEs must engage a trusted external auditor, typically from Malaysia or Singapore, before acquiring an internationally recognised Halal certificate and logo (Ismail et al., 2024). These international standards ensure Brunei's products are acceptable internationally, especially in countries with large Muslim populations (Talib & Wahab, 2021c). Hence, the absence of international recognition may constrain the significance of the Halal certificate and logo as a resource, especially in markets where the certification is not actively sought or does not serve as a substantial differentiator (Ismail et al., 2024).

### 8. Export Considerations

Brunei's halal products are gaining traction in the global market, but several export considerations must be addressed to enhance competitiveness and market reach. These considerations include regulatory compliance, logistical infrastructure, product quality, and international recognition of halal certification. Brunei must ensure that its products meet all requirements set by the destination countries regarding halal certification and quality standards. Quality control during the production process and before the products are shipped abroad helps maintain the reputation and trust of the international market towards Brunei's halal products. Investment in developing export



infrastructure and increasing international cooperation can help overcome this challenge. Besides, developing a robust halal logistics framework is critical for maintaining the integrity of the halal supply chain. This includes ensuring that transportation and storage facilities adhere to halal standards to prevent contamination (Talib, Pang, & Said, 2021b).

### 9. Halal Branding and Marketing

Developing a solid brand and effective marketing strategy are indicators for promoting Brunei's halal products globally. Halal branding not only involves creating an attractive logo or label but also includes efforts to build a strong and trusted image in the eyes of consumers. Marketing strategies must be designed to target the right consumer segments, both in local and international markets. It includes using digital media and e-commerce platforms to expand marketing reach and increase exposure to Brunei's halal products.

### 10. Scaling Up

Brunei's halal industry needs to expand its production scale to meet the growing demand and compete in the global market. It includes increasing production capacity, distribution efficiency, and market expansion. Scaling up requires significant capital investment from the public and private sectors to build better infrastructure, adopt new technologies, and strengthen human resources. With a larger scale, Brunei's halal industry will be better able to meet the needs of consumers in the international market and increase its competitiveness.

### 11. Environmental and Sustainability Concerns

Environmental sustainability is a challenge in the halal industry. Global consumers are increasingly concerned about the environmental impact of their products, including halal products.

Therefore, Brunei needs to ensure that production practices in the halal industry are aligned with sustainability principles. It can include using environmentally friendly materials, effective waste management, and producing renewable energy. Developing these sustainable practices will improve Brunei's efficiency, competitiveness, and halal industry. Still, it will also help meet the demands of consumers increasingly concerned about environmental issues. Overall, the challenges faced by the halal sector in Brunei require a holistic and coordinated approach. By addressing these challenges, Brunei can strengthen its position as a critical player in the global halal industry while contributing to sustainable economic development and societal well-being (Talib & Zulfakar, 2023).

### Effective Strategies to Maximize the Potential of the Halal Industry in Brunei Darussalam

The halal industry in Brunei Darussalam has great potential but also faces several challenges that require an integrated and comprehensive strategy. Several steps can be taken to overcome these challenges and maximise the potential of the halal industry in Brunei, including approaches from various aspects, such as market research, human resource development, infrastructure, halal certification, supply chain, and branding. To understand the needs and preferences of halal consumers, Brunei must invest more resources in market research. This research should focus not only on domestic consumers but also on international consumers. Brunei can develop a more targeted diversification strategy by identifying global consumer trends. This step will allow Brunei to expand its market to countries with large Muslim populations and increase exports of halal products abroad. Establishing a national halal research centre that analyses consumer data and global trends is very important to achieve this.

Innovation in halal products, especially in food processing technology and halal

certification, is the key to the global halal industry's success (Adinugraha, et al., 2022). Investment in research and development (R&D) can drive innovation, helping Brunei improve its product competitiveness in the international market (Rosalina & M, 2020). In addition, human resource capacity development is also needed. Brunei needs to open special education programs in universities focusing on halal technology, provide technical training to industry players, and create a skilled workforce in halal standards. Infrastructure barriers such as logistics efficiency and high distribution costs can hinder the growth of Brunei's halal industry. Therefore, the government must invest in physical infrastructure supporting halal product distribution. In addition, providing incentives to companies that invest in halal innovation and technology, such as financial assistance, can encourage more innovation in a sustainable halal supply chain (Talib & Zulfakar, 2023).

Consumer trust in halal products is highly dependent on the transparency and reliability of the halal certification system. Blockchain technology can help ensure the halalness of products throughout the supply chain, from producers to consumers. Developing a sophisticated, consistent, and globally standardised certification system will facilitate the expansion of Brunei's halal products into the international market (Talib & Wahab, 2021c). Establishing a halal certification body that uses digital technology for product tracking and monitoring is also a step in the right direction. Transparency in the supply chain maintains consumer confidence in halal products. Brunei needs to ensure that all suppliers comply with strict halal standards. Implementing a technology-based tracking system that allows real-time supply chain monitoring can ensure the quality and halalness of products from upstream to downstream. Consumers can also easily access information about the origin of the product and its production process.

Consumer awareness of the importance of halal products also needs to be increased

to drive domestic demand. Brunei can launch a marketing campaign highlighting the benefits of halal products from a religious perspective and a health and environmental sustainability perspective. This educational program can involve various media, schools, and religious communities to strengthen public understanding of the importance of choosing halal products. With the development of the digital era, an e-commerce platform specifically for halal products can be a solution to expand market reach. Brunei can build a national e-commerce platform that focuses on halal products and utilises digital marketing through social media to promote halal products globally. It will also help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the halal sector to reach a broader market. In addition, Brunei must also build a solid halal brand image to face global competition, especially from countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. Marketing strategies highlighting the advantages of Brunei's halal products, such as high quality, sustainability, and Islamic values, can help Brunei products compete in the global market. By focusing on solid branding, Brunei can position itself as a quality and environmentally friendly halal industry leader.

Sustainability should be at the heart of Brunei's halal industry development. Environmentally friendly production practices, use of renewable energy, and effective waste management will help the environment and enhance Brunei's image as a country that supports a sustainable halal industry (Talib & Zulfakar, 2023). Sustainable halal production standards need to be developed with the involvement of environmental and religious institutions. Brunei must also strengthen cooperation with Muslim countries and expand access to global markets. This can be done through bilateral trade agreements, promoting halal products in international markets, and collaboration with global halal certification bodies (Talib et al., 2021b). Participation in international halal industry exhibitions can also increase Brunei's halal products' visibility



in the worldwide arena. Brunei must increase its production capacity to meet the growing global market demand. Investment in new technologies, automation, and infrastructure development will help Brunei produce halal products on a larger scale and more efficiently. It will also support Brunei's expansion in the international market. With these strategic steps, Brunei can strengthen its position as a central player in the global halal industry, drive sustainable economic growth, and maintain its reputation as a country that supports Islamic values in innovation and sustainability.

### Conclusion

Brunei is a country with a Muslim-majority population and has enormous potential to develop the halal industry. The significant Muslim population in Brunei creates a high demand for halal products in the food, beverage, cosmetics, and tourism service sectors. Various countries worldwide are actively promoting and investing in the halal product industry. They are taking advantage of the increasing global demand for halal products, which covers multiple sectors, from food to tourism, finance, and others. The readiness of the halal industry in Brunei to innovate and proliferate reflects the country's commitment to taking advantage of the growing global market opportunities. One crucial aspect is a solid halal regulatory framework. Brunei has established a well-established halal certification system overseen by bodies such as the Halal Food Control Division under the Department of Shariah Affairs. However, Brunei faces several challenges in developing its halal industry, such as limited, accurate market research data, limited technical expertise, less than optimal distribution networks and high operational costs, supply chain management, consumer awareness, global competition, and export requirements, halal branding and marketing, and development of production scale. Several steps can be taken to overcome these challenges and maximise the potential of the halal industry in Brunei, including approaches from various aspects, such as

market research, human resource development, infrastructure, halal certification, supply chain, and branding.

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