

Halal Certification, Market Access and Consumer Trust in Japan's Hospitality and Food Industry

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ABSTRACT

Halal certification has become a strategic aspect in the development of the global halal industry, including in Japan, a country with a minority Muslim population but experiencing significant growth in demand for Muslim friendly services. This study aims to analyze the impact of halal certification on market access, consumer confidence, and the competitiveness of the halal hospitality and food industry in Japan. Using a qualitative approach based on literature review, this article examines the results of previous studies from various international and national journals. The results show that halal certification serves as a market entry tool that can expand market access, both domestically and internationally. Halal certified restaurants in Japan have experienced a significant increase in sales, and the hospitality sector has seen an increase in occupancy. This study contributes to enriching halal industry research by examining the role of halal certification as a strategic instrument for market access and consumer trust building in countries with Muslim minority populations, particularly Japan, which is still relatively limited in global halal literature.

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INTRODUCTION

Halal certification in the era of globalization has become a strategic issue that is not only viewed solely as a normative obligation related to religious dimensions, but has developed into a strategic issue that intersects with economic, social, and cultural aspects. Halal certification plays an important role in bridging the spiritual needs of Muslim consumers with the increasingly competitive dynamics of the global market. In the food and hospitality industries, halal certification serves as a key means of ensuring compliance with sharia principles and building the credibility of products and services in the eyes of Muslim consumers. This is in line with the development of the global halal market, which is estimated to reach USD 2.8 trillion by 2025 (Utami et al., 2024), covering various sectors ranging from food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, to halal tourism.

Japan is not a Muslim-majority country and has a relatively small domestic Muslim population, indicating a growing interest in the potential of the halal industry. This is triggered by the increasing number of Muslim tourists coming to Japan, especially from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and countries in the Middle East. According to the Japan National Tourism Organization, since 2015 there has been an average increase of 15%

per year in Muslim tourists. This trend has encouraged hospitality, restaurant, and food industry providers in Japan to adopt halal standards as a form of adaptation to international market demand (Satomi Ohgata, 2024). In addition to fulfilling religious requirements, halal certification also has strategic value in increasing global market access. Products and services that have obtained halal certification have a greater opportunity to enter the international Muslim market. On the other hand, halal certification plays a significant role in building consumer trust. Muslim consumers, especially tourists, often face limited information about the halal status of a product or service in non-Muslim countries. In this context, halal certification serves as a signaling mechanism that reduces information asymmetry between service providers and consumers.

Amid growing attention to the halal industry in Japan, the implementation of halal certification in the country still faces a number of issues. The limited number of widely recognized certification bodies has led to variations in standards, causing doubts among Muslim consumers about the validity of existing halal labels. Some businesses in the hospitality and food sectors do not fully understand the principles and procedures of halal certification, so that implementation efforts are often perceived as an additional burden rather than a valuable business strategy. On the other hand, Muslim tourists visiting Japan still face difficulties in obtaining clear and transparent information about the halal status of products or services. This situation creates a gap between the huge potential of the halal market and the readiness of local industries to respond to these needs.

Muslim tourists in Japan value two main approaches, namely official halal certification and ingredient disclosure as a form of transparency and assurance of trust. Ideally, halal certification is expected to play a role in expanding the market reach of the hospitality and food industries, particularly through an increase in the flow of Muslim tourists and strengthening the trust of local and global consumers in halal products and services. However, in practice, the adoption of halal certification is still limited. (Alfarizi, 2023) identified obstacles such as high certification costs, fragmented standards due to management by various private institutions, limited certified raw materials, and low awareness among local businesses regarding the importance of the Muslim market. (Riyadi et al., 2021).

Halal certification is seen not only as a religious obligation, but also as related to aspects of health, hygiene, and sustainability, which make halal relevant to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. Therefore, halal certification serves as a guarantee of quality that strengthens consumer confidence, expands the market, and increases the competitiveness of the halal industry (Elwardah et al., 2024) This is in line with other findings that show that halal certification encourages culinary innovation and is an effective strategy to increase consumer confidence (Rochmawati, 2025). The development of the halal industry in Japan is influenced by the transformation of Muslim consumer values and academic support in Islamic studies, which strengthens the legitimacy of halal certification while shaping consumer preferences and trust (Natsir, 2025).

The increase in the number of Muslim tourists globally has created an urgent demand for the availability of halal products and services with reliable quality standards, especially in non-Muslim countries such as Japan. Although previous studies have extensively discussed halal certification in Muslim-majority countries and emphasized its role in ensuring religious compliance, empirical studies that specifically explore the strategic role of halal certification in expanding market access and strengthening consumer trust in the hospitality and food industries in Muslim-minority contexts remain limited. Existing research has focused more on operational aspects, such as the availability of halal food, certification procedures, and the provision of Muslim-friendly facilities, while the

integration of halal certification as a market entry tool and trust-building mechanism has not been comprehensively explored. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the impact of halal certification on market access and consumer trust in the halal hospitality and food industry in Japan through a qualitative literature review, thereby contributing to the development of halal industry studies in non-Muslim countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal Certification

Halal certification is a quality assurance process carried out by an authoritative institution to ensure that a product or service complies with Islamic sharia principles, in terms of raw materials, production processes, storage, distribution, and the implementation of the Halal Assurance System (SJH) in accordance with LPPOM MUI standards. After the enactment of the Halal Product Assurance Law No. 33 of 2014, halal certification is defined as a form of recognition of the halal status of a product determined by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) based on a written fatwa from the Indonesian Ulema Council. Prior to this regulation, the authority for halal certification rested with the MUI, which was technically carried out by the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Assessment Agency (LPPOM). The halal label can be understood as a marker indicating the halal status of a product. Halal certification can be categorized as a credence attribute. Unlike search attributes (which can be assessed before purchase, such as price or color) and experience attributes (which can be assessed after consumption, such as taste or comfort), credence attributes cannot be directly verified by consumers even after consumption. Therefore, consumers are highly dependent on third parties, namely halal certification bodies, to obtain objective assurance regarding the halal status of a product (Muhamad, 2020).

Halal labeling is a form of marking in the form of halal writing or statements printed on product packaging to confirm that the product meets the requirements as a halal product. The management of halal labeling activities is under the authority of the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM). In Law Number 7 of 1996 concerning Food, which is the main regulation in the food sector, it is emphasized that every food product in packaging must include at least six elements of information, one of which is information regarding halal status. The main purpose of halal certification is to provide legal and formal recognition that a product has met halal requirements. Therefore, every business actor who wishes to include a halal label on their product packaging must first obtain a halal certificate as a form of official legitimacy.

The main purpose of halal certification is to provide legal and formal recognition that a product has met halal requirements. Therefore, every business operator who wishes to include a halal label on their product packaging must first obtain a halal certificate as a form of official legitimacy. The certification process is carried out through a series of inspections conducted by auditors who are competent in their field to assess the conformity of products with halal standards (Lies, 2014). If all halal requirements are declared to have been met, the producer is entitled to obtain a halal certificate for the product produced.

Consumer Trust Theory

Consumer trust is defined as the belief that a product or service is of reliable quality, meets expectations, and is safe for consumption. In the context of Muslim consumers, trust encompasses not only general aspects of quality such as hygiene or food safety, but also product compliance with sharia standards. Consumer trust has cognitive and affective dimensions. The cognitive dimension is related to rational assessments of product reliability and quality based on information and experience, while the affective dimension concerns

feelings of safety, comfort, and emotional confidence arising from interactions with brands or companies. These two dimensions complement each other in shaping positive consumer attitudes that lead to loyalty and repeat purchasing behavior (Isaeva et al., 2020).

According to the Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing, trust is a fundamental element in building long-term relationships between producers and consumers. Halal certification is an external factor that fosters trust because it provides objective evidence of a product's halal claims. Furthermore, signaling theory explains that in situations of information asymmetry, producers can signal to consumers about product quality through certain indicators, one of which is halal certification. This signal reduces uncertainty and strengthens consumer confidence in the product. The study (Alfarizi, 2023) supports this theory by showing that Muslim tourists in Japan place greater trust in restaurants that have halal certification or at least provide clear ingredient disclosure.

Several studies add the dimension of cultural familiarity, which is the level of comfort Muslim consumers feel toward the culture of the producing country. The aspect of cultural familiarity is also closely related to the concepts of consumer ethnocentrism and country-of-origin effect, whereby perceptions of a product can be influenced by the image of the producing country and the perceived cultural closeness. Consumers tend to trust products from countries that are considered friendly, understanding, or accommodating to their needs.

Market Access

Market access refers to the capacity of business actors to reach potential consumers and enter a market optimally. This concept covers various aspects, such as market size, consumer demand, availability of distribution channels, and connectivity with suppliers. The better the market access, the greater the opportunity for entrepreneurs to expand their business and achieve sustainable growth (Perdana et al., 2023). Market access reflects the complex interconnection between supply and demand mechanisms, the influence of regulations, and the dynamics of consumer perceptions that determine the success of a product or service in gaining legitimacy and sustainability in the global market. Market access is often associated with tariff and non-tariff barriers that can facilitate or restrict the movement of products to a region. At the micro level, market access can be influenced by brand reputation, distribution networks, and consumer confidence in product quality. Thus, this theory places market access as an important determinant in the success of a business, as it determines the extent to which a product can be accepted and compete in the midst of ever-changing market dynamics.

Market access is not only understood as the physical ability to enter a marketing territory, but also as an institutional and strategic process that involves compliance with standards, regulations, and consumer preferences. Some experts define market access as the extent to which a product or service is able to meet the regulatory, technical, and social requirements that apply in the target market, so that it can be legally and socially accepted by consumers (Nugroho & Jati, 2018).

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to analyze the impact of halal certification on market access and consumer trust. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a deep understanding of social and cultural phenomena in specific contexts. Data was collected through a literature review covering academic journals, books, industry reports, and official documents related to halal certification in Japan. Data collection was carried out using documentation techniques, namely searching for, identifying, and collecting literature relevant to the research theme.

This study used source triangulation techniques, namely by comparing findings from various literature sources, including academic journals, industry reports, and reference books (Donkoh, 2023). In addition, the principle of critical appraisal was also used, namely assessing the quality of the methodology and credibility of the literature sources so that the conclusions drawn could be academically accountable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Halal Certification on Market Access for Halal Hospitality and Food Industry Players in Japan

Halal certification has a significant impact on market access for halal hospitality and food industry players in Japan. Halal certification enables industry players to reach the Muslim tourist market segment, which has been growing steadily since 2015, with an annual growth rate of 15% according to the Japan National Tourism Organization. Restaurants and hotels that have obtained halal certification, such as that issued by the Japan Halal Association, report a 20-30% increase in sales compared to businesses without certification.

Businesses that have obtained halal certification have proven to perform better economically than those that have not been certified. This is due to increased consumer trust and loyalty, both among Muslims and non-Muslims. Restaurants and hotels that have obtained halal certification show a significant increase in sales, with the halal label serving both as a religious guarantee and as a business strategy that attracts consumers and strengthens their loyalty (Arifin et al., 2023). Certification opens up opportunities to export halal food products to Muslim-majority countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, which have high demand for Japanese halal products, such as halal wagyu beef and processed foods. Halal certification can serve as a market entry tool that strengthens the position of products in Muslim markets. This legitimacy provides added value in the form of consumer trust and quality assurance.

Halal certification has an impact on expanding the consumer base in a more inclusive manner. The halal label is perceived as a religious symbol and is synonymous with quality, hygiene, food safety, and ethical principles in the production process. This makes halal products increasingly relevant to non-Muslim consumers who have a preference for products that are considered healthy, clean, and ethical. Thus, halal certification expands market coverage not only geographically but also demographically across cultures and religions. Theoretically, this is in line with the concept of competitive advantage, where differentiation is one of the main strategies in strengthening market position. Halal certification can be seen as a form of strategic differentiation that emphasizes both religious and universal values, thereby enhancing positive image and consumer trust (Novianti et al., 2021). Companies that consistently implement halal certification have the potential to gain stronger consumer loyalty, expand their distribution networks, and strengthen their competitiveness in an increasingly competitive global market. The growth of the global halal industry shows enormous market potential, with the number of Muslim consumers reaching more than 1.9 billion people and an estimated economic value exceeding trillions of US dollars per year (Standard, 2022). These figures confirm that halal-certified products and services can meet religious needs and open up vast commercial opportunities in various economic sectors.

Halal certification supports the growth of halal tourism in Japan, especially in the hospitality sector. Halal-certified hotels report increased occupancy through the provision of Muslim-friendly facilities such as halal menus and prayer rooms. During Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. Japanese government initiatives, such as promoting “Muslim-friendly” destinations in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, as well as collaborating with halal travel agencies for integrated

tour packages, are further driving the growth of this sector (Yasuda, 2017). Development trends in Japan confirm that halal certification has now become one of the main factors in increasing the competitiveness of the industry. The growth in the number of halal-certified restaurants, hotels, and products is in line with the increasing number of Muslim tourists visiting the country. This also reflects that halal certification has a real impact on business sustainability. Thus, halal certification can be understood not merely as an administrative procedure, but as an important strategy capable of strengthening the position of products and services in both domestic and global markets.

The Impact of Halal Certification on the Trust of Muslim and Non-Muslim Consumers in Japan

Halal certification plays a strategic role in building and strengthening consumer trust, both among Muslims and non-Muslims, especially in the context of the Japanese market, which is increasingly open to the needs of international tourists. For Muslim consumers, halal certification issued by credible institutions, such as the Japan Halal Association or certification bodies recognized by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and other international institutions, serves as a means of validating that a product or service complies with sharia standards. This validation covers aspects ranging from raw materials and production processes to storage and distribution systems that are free from contamination by haram ingredients. Research by (Ahmed et al., 2019) shows that more than 80% of Muslim consumers in the global market place halal certification as a major factor in their purchasing decisions, and a similar trend is seen in Japan, where Muslim tourists rely on certification to ensure the halal status of food and hotel services. These findings are in line with Rochmawati's (2025) research, which confirms that halal certification contributes directly to increased consumer confidence and encourages product innovation. From a non-Muslim perspective, halal labels are often associated with a more hygienic, healthy, and high-quality product image. This is reinforced by qualitative studies in the Japanese culinary sector, which found that restaurants with halal labels tend to be perceived as more professional in maintaining standards of hygiene and ingredient quality. Thus, halal certification has undergone a shift in meaning from merely an instrument of religious compliance to a symbol of universal quality that is accepted across consumer segments.

Halal certification faces challenges in terms of cost, process complexity, and low awareness among some small and medium-sized businesses in both Japan and Indonesia. Rochmawati's (2025) research reveals that many MSMEs consider halal certification “ideal but not a priority” due to limited resources. The increasing demand for halal products in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Western countries makes halal certification a factor that strengthens competitive position in international trade. The limited implementation of halal certification in Japan does not diminish its significance as a strategic instrument to strengthen consumer confidence while supporting sustainable market development.

Empirical evidence from further international studies supports the role of halal certification in strengthening consumer confidence beyond religious boundaries. Halal certification has evolved into a global quality assurance system, which is increasingly associated with ethical production, food safety, and sustainability. In a similar context, (Takeshita, 2020) show that non-Muslim consumers often view halal-certified products as cleaner and safer, leading to positive attitudes and higher purchase intentions. These findings are consistent with the Japanese context, where food safety and hygiene are highly valued cultural norms, making halal certification consistent with existing consumer expectations (Kubota et al., 2017). Dependence on halal certification is particularly prominent in countries where informal trust mechanisms, such as cultural similarities or shared religious identities, are limited. Halal certification strengthens the credibility of destinations and positively

influences satisfaction and the intention to return among Muslim tourists (Hasnan & Kohda, 2023).

Although the importance of halal certification continues to increase, its adoption remains uneven. Previous research shows that high certification costs, limited institutional support, and lack of awareness continue to hinder wider implementation. These challenges are also evident in Japan, where the absence of a centralized halal authority has led to fragmented standards and varying levels of international recognition. However, global market trends show that halal certification is increasingly functioning as a strategic asset rather than a regulatory burden, especially for businesses seeking access to international Muslim markets.

Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Halal Certification in Increasing the Competitiveness of the Halal Industry in Japan

The effectiveness of halal certification in enhancing the competitiveness of the halal industry in Japan is not only determined by the existence of the halal label itself, but is also influenced by various interrelated factors, both from the internal side of business actors and from external aspects. Below are the factors that influence the effectiveness of halal certification in enhancing the competitiveness of the halal industry in Japan:

First, Business Capacity Costs. The halal certification process requires relatively high costs. The halal certification process is not limited to submitting documents, but includes a series of procedures that require considerable costs, such as audit fees, adjusting production facilities to comply with halal standards, training employees to understand halal principles, and the costs of maintaining standards through periodic audits. Limited financial resources are often a major obstacle for SMEs in obtaining halal certification. In the Japanese context, this poses a particular challenge given that many halal businesses operate on a small scale, such as family restaurants or local culinary businesses that rely on limited production scales. This challenge is becoming increasingly significant in Japan, given that many halal businesses operate on a small scale, such as family restaurants or local culinary businesses with limited production capacity and profit margins (Nandini et al., 2025). For these businesses, the cost of halal certification is often perceived as an additional burden that is not commensurate with the short-term benefits, thereby reducing their interest in adopting halal certification.

Second, Business Actor Awareness. Business actors in Japan still view halal certification as an administrative requirement to attract Muslim tourists, without seeing it as part of a long-term and sustainable business strategy. A low level of understanding of halal principles can lead to inconsistent practices, both in processing and in product presentation, thereby reducing the credibility of business actors in the eyes of consumers. This is in line with the findings of Kawamura and Huda, which emphasize the importance of a value-based approach to halal certification, whereby business actors not only fulfill formal aspects but also understand the philosophy of halal, which includes quality, hygiene, and production ethics (Gandhi et al., 2024).

Third, Fragmentation of Certification Institutions. Certification bodies in Japan have different standards, causing confusion for businesses and consumers alike. Differences in certification standards between institutions can weaken the effectiveness of halal certification because they raise doubts about its legitimacy and international recognition. For Japanese businesses, this situation has direct implications for limited export penetration because not all halal certificates are recognized by destination countries (Pg Hj Idris, 2024). The fragmentation of halal certification standards creates regulatory uncertainty that impacts business decision-making. Businesses often face the dilemma of choosing the most credible

and globally recognized certification body, while the certification process itself requires considerable costs and resources. This inconsistency in standards also has the potential to reduce the level of trust among Muslim consumers, especially international tourists who rely on halal certification as a guarantee of sharia compliance in non-Muslim countries (Naila Naila et al., 2025).

Fourth, Government Regulatory and Policy Support. The Japanese government has demonstrated its commitment to promoting Muslim-friendly tourism and expanding halal product exports, but regulations related to halal standards are still limited and not fully integrated with global standards. These limitations create a gap between global market demands for certainty and consistency in halal standards and domestic policies that are still partial. As a result, the competitiveness of Japanese halal products in the international market is at risk of weakening because not all certificates issued are recognized across countries (Hosen & Lathifah, 2020). Emphasizes the need for synergy between the government, academics, and the private sector in building a more inclusive halal ecosystem so that halal certification can truly provide a competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that halal certification plays a significant role in promoting the development of the halal hospitality and food industry in Japan through expanded market access, both domestically and internationally. The existence of halal certification has been proven to increase the utilization of services by Muslim tourists and open up opportunities for food product exports to countries with Muslim-majority populations, thereby strengthening the industry's competitiveness in the global market. In addition to ensuring compliance with sharia principles for Muslim consumers, halal certification also reinforces the perception of product quality and hygiene among non-Muslim consumers. However, the implementation of halal certification in Japan still faces various obstacles, such as high certification costs, differences in standards between certification bodies, and limited awareness among some business actors. Therefore, halal certification can be seen as a long-term investment strategy that supports the sustainability of the halal industry. This study still has limitations, so further research is needed to deepen and refine the existing findings. Future research can focus on more empirical field research, with field data obtained through consumer surveys and interviews with business actors to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the impact of halal certification. Additional research is also needed to explore collaboration strategies between the government, certification bodies, and business actors to establish integrated and internationally recognized halal standards. Further research results are expected to contribute more significantly to the development of the halal ecosystem in Japan and serve as a reference for other non-Muslim countries that are developing their halal industries.

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