

Research Article

Role of Industry Players in Brunei's Halal Industry Development

Siti Majidah Rahim*, Nor Surilawana Sulaiman

Halalan Thayyiban Research Centre, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Sinaut Campus, KM33, Jalan Tutong, Kampung Sinaut, Tutong TB1741, Brunei Darussalam

ORCIDSiti Majidah Rahim <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3493-8957>Nor Surilawana Sulaiman: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4227-9703>**Abstract.**

The global halal market is a substantial and expanding consumer market, both domestically and internationally. With the projected increase in the world's Muslim population by 35% by 2030, reaching 2.2 billion, the demand for halal products is expected to soar, potentially reaching USD 6.0 trillion by 2024. Brunei holds great potential to become a prominent halal hub worldwide and offer its high-quality local halal brand to the global market, contingent on the government's concerted efforts to foster the growth of the halal industry in the country. To understand the role of industrial players in Brunei, this study aims to assess their impact, particularly considering the challenges they face in influencing the government's direction in the country. Through an online survey, 150 respondents, who specialized in Bachelor of Halal Science, provided additional insights on the significance of industry players in shaping the development of Brunei's halal industry. The majority of respondents believe that industry players play a significant role alongside policymakers and the Brunei government in reinforcing and continuously enhancing the nation's halal standards, laws, and regulations.

Keywords: Brunei, government, halal industry, industry development, industry players

1. Introduction

The global halal industry is one of the world's largest consumer markets, and it is growing and becoming a significant industry both locally and internationally. The growing Muslim population around the world has caused a massive demand for halal products [1], an increase in consumer awareness [2], and favourable acceptance among non-Muslims. The world's overall Muslim population is predicted to rise by 35% by 2030, reaching 2.2 billion people of the world's population [3], indicating that the demand for halal products will continue to grow. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the growth of the halal industry, it is estimated that the size of the global halal market would climb to the USD 6.0 trillion mark by 2024 [4].

Corresponding Author: Siti
Majidah Rahim; email:
surilawana.sulaiman@gmail.com**Published** 30 October 2023Publishing services provided by
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Halal (which means “lawful” or “permissible”) is not merely a spiritual expression of what is permissible, rather it is beyond religious compliance [5]; nevertheless, it is a unification between the Muslim world and the recent growing global market of production, trade and consumption that has now evolved into a major market force for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In short, halal products and services are not designed or produced only for Muslims living around the globe, people from other religions and beliefs are also interested in and do consume Halal products and services due to health or ethical concerns [6].

The addition of the word “Halal” to a product has become a global symbol of quality assurance and lifestyle choice [7]. This is demonstrated by the fact that a great number of non-Muslim countries in the West are making attempts to gain a foothold in the halal industry [8] and are now becoming key providers of the world’s halal industry. Mexico, Russia, Japan, Thailand, South Korea, and Spain, have already developed halal industrial activities [9] and as much as 90% of the world’s products originated from non-Muslim countries.

Hence, the government of Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei) is focusing its efforts not only on the halal food industry but also on the overall development of Brunei’s halal industry. Indeed, Brunei can become a global player because of its strength as Brunei has a variety of different agencies that monitor halal products and play diverse roles in verifying the halal status of products in terms of food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. Furthermore, the Majlis Ugama Islam Brunei (MUIB)/Brunei Islamic Religious Council (BIRC) serves as the national Halal Certification Body (HCB), and is considered one of the strict HCBs in the region [10] and becoming a global recognition. The BIRC also notify to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and has identity verification with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Moreover, as a Muslim-majority country with a total Muslim population of 78%, consumers in the country have developed a high level of trust in local halal products. Besides that, the country’s implementation of strong Islamic laws and values, a *Zikir* nation (remembrance of Allah), and Malay Islamic Monarchy’s/ *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB) practice are strengths that can develop it into a global halal hub [11].

Therefore, to strengthen the aspiration of *Wawasan Brunei 2035/ Brunei Vision 2035*, which is to become the global halal hub, the industry players indeed play a significant role in establishing the integrity of the halal product they produce as well as determining the development of the Brunei halal industry. As a result, this study aims to evaluate the role of industry players in Brunei, as well as the challenges they face in shaping the direction the government takes in the development of the local halal industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Industry Players

A key player in an industry or sector is referred to as an industry player. Producers, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers serve the ever-growing need, and the term "players" implies an active and perhaps influential position. Each halal industry player has a distinct function to perform, including specific customers to service and unique effects on supply and demand across the industry. Every step from "seed to fork" appeared to be crucial before consumption, especially for Muslim customers. For example, in the halal food industry, industry players must ensure that the entire supply chain, including animal slaughter, storage, display, and preparation adheres to the halal standard. This is to maintain the wholesomeness of the Shariah law and to emphasize the elements of hygiene, sanitation, and safety [12, 13].

2.2. Issues and Challenges in the Field of Halal Industry

Misuse of Islamic symbols and phrases on product packaging is a major worry in the halal industry, as it would be highly irresponsible and inappropriate for manufacturers to purposefully challenge Muslims by introducing non-halal elements into halal food, clothing, and services, as this will erode consumer confidence, lower the integrity of these products and pose a threat to the market's development. Recently, there are a few cases of restaurants in Brunei operating without a valid halal certification and displaying an expired halal certification. For instance, as reported by Rokiah Mahmud in Borneo Bulletin, the Halal Food Control Division (HFCD) at the Shariah Affairs Department found that out of 53 food establishments inspected in June 2022, 31 had not applied for the halal certification, 3 had used the halal logo without permission, while 6 others had displayed expired halal certificates [14]. As stated by Mohamed et.al [15], consumers are sensitive to the fact that any false information may result in the loss of their confidence level and it would also affect their intended purchasing decisions, which could lead to brand hatred [16]. As such, these issues need to be addressed as much as possible to ensure Bruneians are eating and consuming *halalan thayyiban* food.

Moreover, Brunei's halal logistics infrastructure lacks the capacity and capability to handle halal deliveries. Halal logistics infrastructure would necessitate halal transport carriers, halal warehouses, and storage facilities, as well as ports and terminals, all of which are critical components of the halal supply chain [17, 18, 19]. Unfortunately, in Brunei, these facilities do not exist. To support the country's rising halal imports and

exports, as well as to attract potential investors, dedicated halal logistics infrastructures are necessary, while maintaining halal integrity and boosting the halal value chain [20].

3. Materials and Methods

A quantitative study on the Brunei population's view on the significance of the role of industry players in the development of the local halal industry was conducted in addition to the analysis of relevant articles, journals, and media. A cross-sectional web-survey survey was conducted to collect data. Approximately 150 respondents were recruited for the survey, and all of the respondents were undergraduate students majoring in Halal Science at UNISSA. In June 2022, an invitation link to take part in the study was sent via WhatsApp and Telegram, which were then connected to the survey's corresponding Google Forms questionnaire. The study's participants were recruited using a simplified snowball sampling technique, in which responders were invited to disseminate the link as widely as possible to Halal Science students on their various WhatsApp and Telegram groups.

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of a frequency table, which shows the number and percentage of observations in each variable category. IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics version 26 frequency tables are preferred because they allow them to arrange and summarize survey data in a tabular style that is simple to interpret [21]. The authors also analyse the standard error of means (SE or SEM) to measure the precision of the estimate of the sample mean [22]. In other words, when the sample is representative, the standard error will be small [23]. While sampling bias means that the samples of a stochastic variable that are collected to determine its distribution are selected incorrectly and do not represent the true distribution because of non-random reasons [24].

4. Research Findings

4.1. Sociodemographic Data

According to the data analysed, female Halal Science students have the highest frequency with 68.7%, followed by 88% of students aged 18 to 25 years old. Based on the data, year three students have the highest frequency among undergraduate students, accounting for 44.7%, followed by years two and four. Due to the newest admission in August 2022, the survey was unable to obtain the first-year undergraduate students.

TABLE 1: Sociodemographic Data (n = 150).

			f	%	Valid %	Cumulative %	Bias	Std. Error
Valid	Age	18-25	132	88.0	88.0	88.0	.0	2.6
		26-30	18	12.0	12.0	100.00	.0	2.6
		Total	150	100.0	100.0		.0	.0
	Gender	Female	103	68.7	68.7	68.7	.6	3.5
		Male	47	31.3	31.3	100.0	-.6	3.5
		Total	150	100.0	100.0		.0	.0
	Undergraduate Year	Year 2	42	28.0	28.0	28.0	-.1	3.2
		Year 3	67	44.7	44.7	72.7	-.1	3.4
		Year 4	41	27.3	27.3	100.0	.2	3.3
		Total	150	100.0	100.0		.0	.0

Source: Data Analysis

4.2. Leading Halal Sector in Brunei

92% of the respondents believe that the food industry is the leading halal sector in Brunei, followed by the entertainment industry and pharmaceutical with 8% and 4% respectively, as illustrated in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Analysis of perception on the leading halal sector in Brunei (n = 150).

		f	%	Valid %	Cumulative %	Bias	Std. Error
Valid	Entertainment Industry	8	5.3	5.3	5.3	.0	1.8
	Food Industry	138	92.0	92.0	97.3	.2	2.2
	Pharmaceutical	4	2.7	2.7	100.0	-.2	1.4
	Total	150	100.0	100.0		.0	.0

Source: Data Analysis

4.3. The Significance of Industry Players

The majority of Halal Science students believe that Brunei has the potential to develop into a major halal hub, particularly in terms of providing the world with comparatively strong halal-brand food products. Brunei is known for its rigorous halal certification requirements [25] before allowing local halal brands to sell their products to the general public. Therefore, based on the results, 98% of respondents believe that it is obvious that industry players play a significant role in the development of the halal industry sectors

in Brunei since they will be responsible for producing, distributing, and preserving the halal integrity of the products throughout the entire supply chain, *from seed to fork*.

TABLE 3: The analysis of the significance of industry players lead to the development of the local halal industry (*n* = 150).

		f	%	Valid %	Cumulative %	Bias	Std. Error
Valid	Maybe	3	2.0	2.0	2.0	-.1	1.1
	Yes	147	98.0	98.0	100.0	.1	1.1
	Total	150	100.0	100.0		-4.7	21.2

Source: Data Analysis

Respondents also stated that some other stakeholders and agencies play some roles in the development of the Brunei halal industry as illustrated in Table 4. The majority of students also believe that policymakers play a significant role in the development of the halal industry in Brunei as they will strengthen and continuously improve the policy, standards, and regulations to meet the ever-changing halal ecosystem as well as conduct inspections of all halal industries in Brunei to ensure that the producers adhere to the standard and guideline set out and do not transgress the laws stipulated by the government

TABLE 4: The analysis of other stakeholders that also contribute to the development of the halal industry (*n* = 150).

		f	%	Valid %	Cumulative %	Bias	Std. Error
Valid	Academics	25	16.7	16.7	16.7	.1	3.1
	Government	34	22.7	22.7	39.3	.1	3.7
	Policy Makers	75	50.0	50.0	89.3	.1	4.4
	Public	3	2.0	2.0	91.3	-.1	1.2
	Scientist	13	8.7	8.7	100.0	-.1	2.3
	Total	150	100.0	100.0		.0	.0

Source: Data Analysis

5. Discussion

5.1. The Importance of Industry Players in Shaping Government Directions for the Development of the Local Halal Industry

Every producer must ensure that the food, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics they manufacture are halal and of excellent quality. However, this does not just entail inspecting the ingredients, but also ensuring that the entire process, adheres to Shariah standards [26].

The role of the industry player here is to ensure that the entire value chain can provide the highest standard, which includes ethical and sustainable farming, transportation, slaughter, processing, and logistics to provide integrity throughout the supply chain.

Furthermore, the role of the industry player here is also to manufacture products that the ingredients used in products such as gelatine, animal-derived emulsifier, enzymes, lecithin, and glycerine, as well as a range of chemical and nutritional additives such as flavourings and colourings used, must be categorized as 'pork free' in their physical existence and of excellent quality [27]. In terms of ingredients, manufacturers must be aware of the requirements for alcohol level, sources of gelatine and halal base additive that conform to Islamic dietary laws as well as avoid doubtful materials. Moreover, products containing non-halal (*haram*) substances such as pork gelatine or alcohol should be modified and used the other alternative halal ingredients to be ably marketed as halal products.

Aside from food, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics are in the same boat, especially those containing gelatine or collagen peptides. The market needs education for more natural alternatives such as alginates and pectin which can be reformulated to offer the same physical properties. Porcine derivatives are commonly used because they are less expensive and readily available, causing concern among consumers. Hence, using Halal Assurance Management System (HAMS), Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), and Good Hygiene Practice (GHP) to assure Shariah-compliant products is critical.

In addition, the role of the industry players, and notable producers in terms of packaging and labelling must follow PBD24: 2007 Halal Food Standard. Products should be packed using packaging materials that are not made from raw materials that have been decreed as *najs* by Shariah, as this could be hazardous to health; and not prepared, processed, or manufactured using equipment that is contaminated. Hence, the packing process must be carried out in a clean and safe condition. In terms of labelling, each package should be labelled with the name of the product; net content is expressed in the metric system; name, address, and trademark of the manufacturer of local origin and importer or local distributor are included; list of ingredients are specified; batch number and expiry date are stated. According to Mohamed Yunos et al. [28] assertion, that the Halal attribute refers to its origin, nature and processing method, the credibility of the quality must be informed through on-pack or on-label indication.

5.2. Reforms that Industry Players Should Implement to Benefit the Country

For Brunei to develop its industry, the country must develop a greater connection with international partners, starting with the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and make Brunei products well-known particularly in food manufacturing. As stated by the former minister of Energy, Manpower and Industry during Brunei Halal Showcase (BruHAS) 2019 the theme for BruHAS, '*Leading the Halal Economy in BIMP-EAGA*', is in line with His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam's titah, and hope the connections with international partners, starting with the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) will enhance Brunei's position as a business hub [29]. The five keys to becoming a successful industry player are: having the best sourcing and manufacturing capabilities; finding the best regulatory team to understand and navigate regulations; having deep customer insights; having customer insights to lead the core product line, and having a consistent R&D investment to create new and innovative products.

Apart from international partners with BIMP-EAGA, Brunei also starts collaborated with other countries, for instance, Japan. Amid growing interest from Japan in halal food, BMC Food Industries has collaborated with four Japanese companies to come up with Brunei-made Halal Japanese food products, which started its operation in Mentiri at the end of 2019 and has a current production capacity of 400,000 products per month [30, 31].

In addition, Brunei must establish strong brands that guarantee the quality of the product, the marketing messaging, the packaging, and the overall process. It is time for Brunei to promote the Brunei brand by using traditional Brunei goods such as "*bedak kelulut*" to have proper packaging, labelling, and handling so that the product can be introduced worldwide. In addition, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics should have active collaboration with key parallel interest groups such as organic, vegan, ethical, and environmental rights to further strengthen the value of halal cosmetic products in the global market.

Perhaps, local halal products should market their product under the brand name of *bruneihalalfoods* brand (formerly known as *BruneiHalal*). The *bruneihalalfoods* brand plays a key role in the development of the halal food industry and economic diversification by developing, marketing, and promoting *bruneihalalfoods* products in Brunei and

around the world. Ghanim's *bruneihalalfoods* brand is dedicated to being the global standard brand and the most trusted company for providing halal product solutions. Therefore, the local halal industry may also export its goods under the *bruneihalalfood* brand. To pursue economic goals, the *bruneihalalfood* brand has been one of the forces behind encompassing halal industry products, particularly food [25]. It is hoped that the *bruneihalalfood* brand's success will establish Brunei Darussalam as one of the world's top players in the halal sector and help it to realise its objectives of generating employment opportunities for locals and promoting economic diversification.

Furthermore, the growing advanced food industry today has provided a variety of food substances that are initiated from either plant or animal origins. Most of the time consumers are unable to determine which food are halal simply by reading the label on the packaging, which is due to some producers using specific terminology of the component in their product, in which the terms are most probably unfathomable by the average consumer that could lead to suspicions because of their unfamiliarity with the content. In addition, the halal logo itself does not indicate good manufacturing practices neither good hygiene practices but the majority believe that it is a way to promote the sanitary and hygienic aspects of manufactured products [32]. Therefore, it is recommended for the industry player label their products in more detail as labelling plays a role in providing necessary information for the consumers in making purchasing decisions [33].

Besides, Brunei should develop food traceability to increase full transparency about what is in the food and how it is created. After repeated outbreaks of food-borne diseases and disagreement over the negative effects of Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) technology on human foods, the need for food traceability is becoming a major public and government concern. Although the technology is being praised for its ability to address present farming deficiencies and food shortages, the technology's potential for several other negative consequences must be considered. Examples of potential harmful effects of consuming GMO foods include alteration in the nutritional quality of food, potential toxicity, possible antibiotic resistance from GMO crops, potential allergenicity, and carcinogenicity [34]. It is suggested that halal product traceability should be able to follow the movement of a food through specified stages, production, processing, and distribution.

5.3. Halal Industry Development

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as one of the industry players have a very crucial role in halal industry development as well as contribution to the nation's economy [35]. According to the WTO, SMEs represent over 90% of the business population, 60-70% of employment and 55% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in developed economies [36]. Whereas for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries SMEs are the main type of enterprise, for nearly 99% of whole businesses, supply the primary cause of employment (around 70% of jobs), main sources of value creation (around 50% and 60%) of value added on [37]. SMEs are crucial for increasing inclusive globalization and economic growth [35]. Industry players have a significant impact on both profitability and competitiveness, according to Muli and Pellissier [38].

Meanwhile, Wei Hin, *et al.* [39] mentions that it is undeniable that the development of SMEs contributes significantly to economic growth by raising national income, generating tax revenue, and creating jobs. Nurrachmi [40] also said that nations should embrace this industry as a new source of revenue in light of the global halal market trends. Therefore, during the Brunei Halal Showcase 2017 (BruHAS 2017), Honourable Pehin Datu Singamanteri Colonel (Rtd) Dato Seri Setia (Dr) Haji Mohammad Yasmin bin Haji Umar, former Minister of Energy and Industry in the Prime Minister's Department, stated that halal food and lifestyle are anticipated to grow to up to USD 3 trillion by 2021 and even generated BND88 million to Brunei income. Provided that the Honourable Pehin recommended that local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) take advantage of this market trend and sell their goods in domestic, regional, and international markets up to a point because of this [41]. Brunei has high hopes that its halal market will enjoy significant growth during the coming year and play a key part in the Sultanate's economic expansion [42].

As asserted by Wardana, Liano, & Araz [43], by counting the number of halal certification holders, one can gauge the development of the halal industry. Haji Ibrahim [44] pointed out that since the mandatory application requirement was implemented in 2017, there has been a significant rise in the number of businesses in Brunei Darussalam that have received halal certification. From 2008 to 2020, 376 local companies received a total of 2005 halal certificates and 9240 halal permits, while 29 international companies received a total of 405 halal permits [44]. MoRA revised its halal permit rate to account for the size and scale of businesses that manufacture and produce food for the supply, which increased the number of halal certifications [45, 46].

Developing the halal food industry and businesses is a development strategy envisioned in Brunei Vision 2035 [47]. Besides, according to Mohamed et. al [32] that consumers want the government to play important role in ensuring that the halal logo can be trusted and truthful, and they are more confident in the products that have been approved by the government. So, to achieve it, the MoRA through BIRC implemented the compulsory halal standardization aimed at 'halalising' the agri-food industries and businesses in 2011 [47]. In the case of Brunei Darussalam, the halal agri-food industry is seen as one of the key industries to assist the nation in its diversification strategy away from the oil and gas sector which has continuously dominated the national GDP. Therefore, as the halal industry continues its global expansion, it will only be a matter of time before this niche market becomes a mass consumer market. To sustain its expansion, relevant governance policy, blueprint, masterplan and mechanisms related to halal industry development is necessary not only at the global level but also at the macroregional and national level.

6. Conclusion

There has not been much research on factors of Brunei's halal industry development. Therefore, the study was crucial as the halal industry in Brunei is still in its early stages. To fill in the gaps in our knowledge, studying Brunei halal industry development from any perspective is consequently required. Hence, the knowledge of factors that lead to halal industry development is pertinent to the industry players and related stakeholders alike in developing halal industry infrastructure and facilities, products, and services.

Brunei aspires to be one of the region's worldwide halal hubs, providing halal products as well as halal services. Brunei is working to improve its halal business by cooperating with the government and necessary authorities. To better govern the local halal business, laws and policies should be re-evaluated. Workshops and training are provided for local businesses to develop. Furthermore, the involvement of industry players in the growth of the halal industry is unquestionably vital because they will be responsible for producing local halal brands by adhering to the government's standards, which are based on Islamic law. It is proposed that additional research should be conducted on the role of academics and scientists in the development of the halal industry since this study solely focuses on the involvement of industry players.

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