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# SUSTAINING HALAL: A MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR COMPETITIVE THAI CERTIFICATION

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## Abstract

This research investigates the competitiveness of Halal certification organizations in Thailand amidst a dynamic organizational environment. It analyzes the current landscape, key influencing factors, and proposes an integrated management model to improve Halal certification for Thai organizations. A qualitative methodology was employed, involving in-depth interviews with 21 participants from government, the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, Halal-certified businesses, and academia. The study highlights the necessity of a robust quality assurance system with stringent quality control throughout the certification process, fostering trust between consumers and businesses. The proposed management model aims to enable Halal certification organizations in Thailand to enhance satisfaction, create sustainable value, and effectively compete. It emphasizes continuous adaptation to environmental changes, balancing operational efficiency with adherence to Islamic principles, fostering innovation, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders. This research offers practical guidance for enhancing the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of Halal certification in Thailand's evolving landscape. The findings offer valuable insights for enhancing the Halal certification ecosystem in Thailand and provide a framework for other countries seeking to strengthen their Halal industries.

**Keywords:** Halal Certification, Management Model, Competitiveness, Quality Assurance, Thailand

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## **Introduction**

The Halal certification landscape in Thailand faces a complex interplay of challenges, largely stemming from the dynamic organizational environment and inherent limitations, as researchers have identified (Yakub & Zein, 2022). Despite these constraints, Thailand possesses considerable potential to produce safe and flavorful food products capable of meeting the diverse demands of a global consumer base (Supaphol, 2010). In light of Thailand's significant reliance on exports and tourism, readily available data concerning these sectors serves to further underscore the existing problems and the critical need for Halal certification organizations operating within Thailand to enhance their operational potential across all dimensions. The core aim in this endeavor is to bolster competitiveness and maximize benefits for both the broader economy—through heightened export and tourism revenues—and Thai society as a whole, by enabling Muslim consumers to more easily adhere to Islamic principles. Concurrently, Halal certification organizations must proactively adapt to evolving environmental changes to both attain and maintain certification and secure a stable, sustainable competitive advantage that aligns with international standards (Koomsalud et al., 2023). Thus, the present need is for appropriate and effective management solutions to address existing budgetary constraints, reduce inefficiencies in the allocation of Halal budgets, foster maximum integration and benefit from the available resources, and eliminate obstacles hindering exports to Muslim trading partners. Against this backdrop, the present research seeks to meticulously study, carefully analyze, and seamlessly integrate findings to formulate a comprehensive management model designed to foster enhanced competitiveness among Halal certification organizations operating in Thailand. In summary, Halal certification organizations are subject to alterations in the organizational environment; therefore, organizations must maintain satisfaction in providing services in Halal certification operations and a competitive advantage (Mahamud, 2020). To maintain these organizational capabilities and improve their operations, organizations must continuously evolve and develop their own potential, and for all of this, it is necessary to have a management model to enhance the competitiveness of Halal certification organizations that is consistent with the environment (Mahamud & Yama, 2020).

To address these pertinent issues, the current research endeavors to first study and analyze the current operational status of Halal certification organizations within Thailand. Secondly, it aims to examine the key factors that significantly influence the competitiveness of these organizations. Finally, the research seeks to synthesize the gathered insights to propose a comprehensive management model that effectively enhances the competitiveness of Halal certification organizations in the Thai context.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Essence of Halal: Principles and Scope**

A crucial foundation for successful Halal certification lies in deeply understanding the meaning and scope of Halal itself. In the context of Islam, the term "Halal" signifies that a specific element has been formally approved by Allah (God) and is therefore binding on all Muslims. Crucially, the concept of Halal extends considerably beyond the mere realm of food items; its comprehensive meaning encompasses the fundamental principles of Muslim life, governing every act of eating, drinking, acting, and utilizing resources. Derived from Arabic etymology, the term "Halal" directly translates to "permitted" or "lawful," thereby denoting something that is not only expressly allowed but also considered to be inherently good, beneficial, and safe (Songsangchai, 2015). Consequently, all Muslims are compelled to sincerely and earnestly adhere to the commands of Allah, as meticulously outlined within the Holy Qur'an, and to follow the esteemed teachings and practical examples (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad, fully embracing that which is explicitly permitted (Halal) while willingly abstaining from all that which is explicitly forbidden (Haram) (Marnnoi & Numasuk, 2020).

### **Delineating the Permissible and Impermissible: Criteria for Halal**

In clarifying the essential criteria that guide the permissible use of "Halal" designated products and practices, it is imperative to recognize that the term encompasses any object or action unequivocally sanctioned by Islamic provisions. Conversely, "Haram" categorically denotes any object or action explicitly prohibited by Islamic law and tradition (Ridho et al., 2021). Further nuanced, the term "Mashbuh," or alternatively "Subhat," signifies something deemed questionable or suspiciously ambiguous, which practicing Muslims should actively avoid in their daily lives (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Items intrinsically derived from prohibited raw materials or components are universally deemed Haram and characteristically include the following: pork, wild boars, and domestic dogs; snakes and monkeys; carnivorous animals that possess prominent fangs and sharp claws (e.g., lions, tigers, and bears); birds of prey equipped with claws (e.g., eagles and vultures); any destructive and venomous or poisonous animals (e.g., rats, centipedes, and scorpions); animals explicitly forbidden to be killed within Islam (e.g., ants, bees, woodpeckers, and hoopoes); and any plants deemed poisonous, intoxicating, or potentially dangerous (unless the harmful and deleterious substances are carefully and completely removed during processing and production). Finally, substances also categorized as Haram include intoxicants, certain beverages, naturally occurring minerals, particular chemical substances recognized as inherently poisonous or harmful, and genetically modified food ingredients (GMOs) (Regenstein et al., 2003). The emphasis on precise and careful production in accordance with Halal is of the utmost importance.

### **Halal Slaughtering Practices: A Critical Requirement**

Moreover, the slaughtering of animals permitted under Islamic law must be strictly and unequivocally separated from the slaughtering of animals not specifically permitted for consumption. Adherence to the following criteria is compulsory: Slaughter must be performed exclusively by a knowledgeable Muslim who adheres strictly to established Islamic slaughtering methods. The animal in question must be positively permitted for consumption under Islamic law (Rakbumrunghong & Kerdkaw, 2022) and must be fully alive at the precise moment of slaughter. Specifically, the trachea, esophagus, and major arteries and veins located in the animal's neck must be severed simultaneously. Immediately before performing the act of slaughter, the sacred word "Bismillah" must be audibly uttered. Only demonstrably sharp and impeccably clean instruments should be utilized, and these instruments should never be lifted from the animal's neck during the entire slaughtering process. The animal must be permitted to die peacefully and without experiencing undue suffering. Stunning the animal before slaughter is strongly discouraged, except in situations where it is deemed absolutely necessary. Lastly, mechanized slaughter of poultry is generally discouraged, with exceptions only granted in carefully considered circumstances (Chapakiya et al., 2020).

### **The Broader Impact of Halal Certification: Economic and Socio-Cultural Dimensions**

The academic study of Halal certification in Thailand reveals its significant impact across various crucial dimensions. Physiologically, Halal food is deemed intrinsically beneficial, as it demonstrably aids in achieving proper and healthy bodily growth. From a lifestyle perspective (Nurdiansyah, 2018), consistently consuming Halal foods is believed to substantially increase the overall quality of life (Elgharbawy & Azmi, 2022), while from a broader social perspective, Halal food consumption promotes positive thoughts and behaviors, thereby leading to a more peaceful and harmonious society (Aulia & Surwandono, 2024). Furthermore, acceptance of requests for Halal food blessings is recognized as a critically important condition for obtaining a formal Halal license (Aziz & Sulaiman, 2014). Conversely, requests for foods deemed Haram are characteristically and routinely rejected by conscientious consumers (Sunmola et al., 2025). The act of consuming Halal food is also viewed as a means to actively protect oneself from potential punishment on the Day of Resurrection (Elaskary & Yun, 2017). Finally, the Halal food sector is widely recognized as representing a substantial industrial production sector

(Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016) with significantly growing export business opportunities (Qadri, 2024).

### **Organizational Culture: Shaping Performance and Adaptation**

The Role of Organizational Culture Theory must also be acknowledged. Organizational culture inherently encompasses shared values, beliefs, and recognizable behaviors (du Plessis, 2006). Organizations actively cultivate distinct cultures, which must then be adaptable to the external environment. A company's success hinges on understanding and integrating with the prevailing culture (Mahamud, 2020). Further, organizational culture shapes workplace interactions, which is a key determinant of employee satisfaction. Some scholars define organizational culture as embodying a shared set of values (Mahamud, 2020). Moreover, a strong organizational culture is recognized through observed behaviors, beliefs, and the collective values that guide actions, such as minimizing operational defects and emphasizing continuous quality improvement (Parker, 2000). Success stems from access to raw materials, labor, and information, coupled with a commitment to total quality management (TQM), including executive commitment, organizational values, clear communication, and integration of technology to analyze problems (Rollinson, 2008).

### **Research Methodology**

This research adopted a qualitative approach, embracing an exploratory design to thoroughly investigate the competitiveness of Halal certification organizations (HCOs) in Thailand. This qualitative lens was chosen to facilitate a deep understanding of the intricate dynamics, challenges, and opportunities that shape the Thai Halal certification landscape, capturing the nuanced perspectives of the diverse stakeholders involved. To allow themes and patterns to emerge naturally from the data, the study employed an inductive approach, refraining from imposing pre-determined hypotheses.

The study strategically employed purposive sampling to select key informants with substantial knowledge and experience in the realm of Halal certification within Thailand. Participants were carefully chosen based on their distinct roles and perspectives within the Halal ecosystem. The final sample comprised 21 individuals representing four vital stakeholder groups: senior executives from government agencies responsible for overseeing and supporting the Halal industry in Thailand, executives and Halal certification officers from the Central Islamic Council of Thailand (CICOT)—the primary Halal certification body in the nation—owners and managers of businesses that have successfully obtained Halal certification in Thailand, and academics with expertise in Halal, Islamic economics, and management. These government representatives provided invaluable insights into policy and regulatory frameworks, while CICOT participants offered critical perspectives on certification standards and processes. The inclusion of business owners and managers, representing diverse sectors and business sizes, ensured practical insights into the benefits and challenges of certification. Finally, the academics contributed theoretical frameworks and a broader contextual understanding.

Selection criteria for participants included a minimum of three years of experience in their respective fields, a demonstrated understanding of Halal principles and certification practices, and a willingness to openly share their perspectives and experiences. Data collection was executed through two primary methods: in-depth, semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion. The 21 participants each engaged in in-depth interviews guided by a flexible protocol that explored key themes such as: the current state of competitiveness among Thai HCOs, factors influencing the effectiveness and efficiency of Halal certification, challenges faced by these organizations, opportunities for improvement, and perspectives on potential management models that could foster enhanced competitiveness. Interviews, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, were conducted in Thai or English based on participant preference and were audio-recorded with consent to ensure accurate transcription. In addition to the interviews, a

focus group discussion was held, uniting entrepreneur executives, Halal certification officers, and representatives from related government agencies to facilitate brainstorming, validate initial findings, and explore potential solutions. The session, lasting approximately two hours, was expertly moderated to encourage open dialogue and insightful contributions.

All audio recordings were meticulously transcribed verbatim. The resulting data was then analyzed using thematic analysis, a systematic approach for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within the data. The analysis process involved several distinct steps. First, transcripts were thoroughly read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. Next, the transcripts were systematically coded, with labels assigned to segments of text representing key ideas, concepts, or themes. These codes were then grouped into broader themes based on shared meanings and patterns, which were subsequently refined and organized into a coherent framework that captured the key findings of the study.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were implemented. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing information from diverse sources, including interviews and the focus group, and by examining the perspectives of the different participant groups. Additionally, preliminary findings were shared with selected participants to ensure accuracy and validate the interpretation of their responses—a process known as member checking. Finally, the research process and emerging findings were discussed with other researchers to obtain feedback and promote objectivity. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully informed about the research purpose and methods and their right to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained by removing participant names and identifying information from all transcripts and reports. The entire research process was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines and principles.

## **Research Findings**

This research aimed to develop a management model tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities facing Halal certification organizations (HCOs) in Thailand. The study adopted a qualitative approach, gathering rich data through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders.

The analysis revealed a complex interplay of factors influencing the competitiveness of these organizations, ranging from adherence to Islamic principles to the impact of global trade dynamics. The findings highlight the urgent need for a strategic and multifaceted approach to enhance the long-term sustainability and relevance of Halal certification in Thailand.

### **The Primacy of Islamic Principles and Ethical Conduct**

The research underscored the paramount importance of upholding the core tenets of Islamic law in all aspects of Halal certification. Participants consistently emphasized that the foundation of trust and credibility lies in the strict adherence to Shariah principles and internationally recognized Halal standards. This commitment extends beyond mere compliance; it encompasses a deep understanding and embodiment of Islamic values in the organizational culture and decision-making processes.

While adhering to Islamic law and the Quran helps establish order, trust, and value, a lack of resources and other barriers can harm progress and cause the objectives of small businesses to stall, as found in many related studies.

### **Managing Resources and Fostering Operational Excellence**

One of the most pervasive challenges identified was the limited access to resources faced by Thai Halal certification bodies. While all recognized the importance of maintaining high standards of expertise and integrity, organizations struggled to secure adequate funding for personnel development, technology upgrades, and international accreditation efforts.

The data underscores the urgent need for the government and industry stakeholders to address these resource constraints through targeted initiatives such as dedicated funding programs, technical assistance, and capacity-building workshops. By investing in the organizational infrastructure and human capital of these certification bodies, Thailand can ensure a robust and reliable Halal certification system capable of meeting the evolving demands of the global market.

### **Adapting to a Dynamic and Complex Environment**

In light of these challenges and opportunities, a core need of the Halal world is to continue being fluid and capable of shifting focus, and that a strategy for solving this issue comes with the careful assessment of the environment, as well as the implementation of flexible organizational strategies that allow staff to be readily able to meet the challenge ahead.

### **Fostering Collaboration and Building Trust**

The research also highlighted the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and relationship-building among all stakeholders in the Halal ecosystem. This encompasses building strong partnerships with government agencies, industry associations, research institutions, and consumer groups.

To effectively reach both the local communities and international markets, an organization must craft an impactful image and build trust, for a lack of doing so may diminish a community's economic growth as well as affect their daily lives.

By fostering a culture of transparency, open communication, and collaboration, Thailand can establish a more robust and resilient Halal certification system that is capable of meeting the evolving needs of consumers, businesses, and the global market.

### **Toward a Competitiveness Management Model**

Based on these findings, the research proposes a competitiveness management model for Halal certification organizations in Thailand. The model is grounded in the principles of Islamic law, emphasizes continuous improvement, fosters collaboration, and promotes adaptation to a dynamic environment.

This model encompasses several interconnected components, including strategic planning, resource management, personnel development, quality assurance, stakeholder engagement, and marketing/promotion. By implementing this model, Thai Halal certification organizations can enhance their operational efficiency, improve their credibility, and contribute to the sustainable growth of Thailand's Halal industry.

This will require these businesses to stay on top of trends as well, and these trends for halal certifications should continue to be recognized through future analyses and iterations.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

This research offers a timely and critical examination of the competitive landscape faced by Halal certification organizations (HCOs) in Thailand. While the Thai context presents unique opportunities and challenges, many of the findings resonate across the broader ASEAN region, where the Halal industry is rapidly expanding and gaining increasing economic and socio-cultural significance.

The findings emphasize the fundamental importance of upholding the core tenets of Islamic law in Halal certification. This underscores the need for Thai HCOs to prioritize adherence to Shariah principles and internationally recognized Halal standards to maintain credibility and build trust among consumers and businesses. To further incentivize compliance, the Thai government could consider lowering or eliminating taxes for companies adhering to Islamic law.

Within Thailand, the industry should place greater emphasis on local small businesses and the communities they support. Halal certifications can sometimes present economic hurdles for

these businesses and community members. Providing additional resources and support could lead to more positive outcomes and a more inclusive industry.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of Thailand's Halal industry, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among all stakeholders in the region is crucial. This includes strengthening partnerships with governments, industry associations, research institutions, and consumer groups across ASEAN to harmonize standards, promote best practices, and facilitate mutual recognition agreements. Establishing platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity building will also empower HCOs and businesses throughout the region to meet the evolving demands of the global Halal market.

The proposed management model, with its focus on strategic planning, resource management, personnel development, quality assurance, and stakeholder engagement, offers a viable framework for achieving these goals.

This research highlights the crucial role of Halal certification in promoting economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability in Thailand and the broader ASEAN region. While the recommendations presented are tailored to the Thai context, they hold valuable lessons for other countries seeking to develop and enhance their Halal certification systems.

By embracing a collaborative, innovative, and ethically grounded approach, Thailand and its ASEAN partners can collectively unlock the full potential of the Halal industry, creating a more prosperous and sustainable future for all.

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