



The Role of Halal Certification in Enhancing Global Trade and Market Access

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Abstract. Halal certification has become a strategic pillar in global trade, shaping market access, consumer trust, and competitiveness. With growing demand in both Muslim and non-Muslim markets, certification is increasingly recognized as essential for building inclusive and sustainable economic systems. This study is grounded in institutional theory, legitimacy theory, and stakeholder theory within the context of Islamic business ethics, which collectively provide a conceptual framework for examining halal certification as both a regulatory mechanism and a strategic instrument for global trade integration. A qualitative case study approach was adopted, utilizing purposive sampling of six countries that represent diverse halal market maturity and regulatory frameworks: Malaysia, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil. Data were collected from 25 semi-structured interviews with industry practitioners, regulators, and experts, complemented by analysis of national halal policies and trade reports. The findings reveal that harmonized halal standards enhance trade efficiency by reducing compliance costs, removing non-tariff barriers, and improving supply chain integrity. However, fragmented certification requirements create redundancy, uncertainty, and higher transaction costs. Policy recommendations include the implementation of integrated accreditation systems, mutual recognition agreements, and enhanced auditor training. The study highlights the role of digitalization, where blockchain and AI enhance traceability, expedite verification, and mitigate fraud, thereby fostering consumer trust and enabling ethical branding. Theoretically, halal certification is positioned as a corporate strategy embedding integrity and sustainability within Islamic management; practically, it serves as a regulatory tool and strategic value proposition for advancing the global halal industry.

Keywords: Halal certification, global trade, Islamic management, supply chain, digital transformation.

1. Introduction

Halal certification has emerged as a strategic pillar in global trade, significantly influencing market access, consumer trust, and industry competitiveness. As global demand for halal products increases—both in Muslim-majority countries and in non-Muslim markets—halal certification has become essential for companies seeking to expand into international markets. This trend marks a paradigm shift in global trade practices, where Sharia-compliant principles are recognized as integral components of an inclusive and sustainable economic system (Muhammad Cholil et al., 2025; Koç, Koç, & Duran, 2024).

Halal certification not only ensures compliance with religious requirements but also serves as a critical tool for building consumer confidence and brand credibility in international markets (Mohamed et al., 2019). Companies that obtain recognized halal certification can differentiate their products, gain a competitive advantage, and access niche markets with high growth potential (Ahmad et al., 2020). Furthermore, standardized halal certification facilitates smoother cross-border trade by harmonizing quality, safety, and ethical standards, reducing trade barriers, and enhancing supply chain transparency (Rahman & Abdul, 2021).

Additionally, global recognition of halal certification facilitates market diversification, allowing firms to enter non-Muslim countries where demand for ethically produced and high-quality products is increasing (Sadiq et al., 2022). The certification process also encourages firms to adopt best practices in production, logistics, and documentation, thereby improving operational efficiency and overall business performance (Lee & Kim, 2022). Moreover, digitalization—through blockchain, AI, and traceability systems—enhances the credibility of halal certification by ensuring product authenticity and minimizing fraudulent claims (Zahid et al., 2022). Consequently, halal certification serves not only as a regulatory requirement but also as a strategic enabler that integrates ethical principles, operational excellence, and market access into corporate strategy.

In the context of halal small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), developing dynamic capabilities is crucial. These capabilities enable firms to sense and seize opportunities, reconfigure resources, and adapt to changing environments (Teece et al., 1997; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Studies indicate that capabilities such as knowledge management have a significant influence on organizational performance, particularly through innovation and adaptation (Pahlevi, 2022). Dynamic capabilities have been shown to mediate the relationship between firm capabilities and performance, primarily where innovation serves as the mechanism (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000).

Despite growing interest, the integration of dynamic capabilities with Shariah-oriented business strategy remains underexplored. While strategic orientation, innovation, and environmental support have been identified as vital for the sustainability and competitive advantage of halal SMEs (Umar et al., 2022), a theoretical gap persists in explicitly linking dynamic capabilities to Shariah-compliant strategic implementation. Similarly, the role of Shariah governance and ethical

orientation in influencing firm performance is recognized, yet empirical evidence remains limited (Pahlevi, 2022).

Moreover, the broader Shariah economy in Southeast Asia—especially in Indonesia—presents tremendous potential across halal food, fashion, cosmetics, finance, tourism, and more. Growth is supported by government policies such as the Halal Product Assurance Law and other regulatory frameworks (Indonesia's Halal Value Chain grew by nearly 25% in 2020). These developments create both opportunities and challenges for halal SMEs.

Thus, there is a clear need to examine how dynamic capabilities enable halal SMEs to translate environmental sensing, opportunity capture, and resource reconfiguration into Shariah-oriented business strategies, and how these strategies, in turn, drive firm performance.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do dynamic capabilities influence firm performance via Shariah-oriented business strategy?

RQ2: How do environmental dynamism and Shariah governance strengthen or modify the relationships between dynamic capabilities, strategy, and firm performance?

By integrating dynamic capabilities, Shariah-oriented strategic implementation, and moderators such as environmental and governance factors, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of capability-based strategic advantage in halal SMEs. It offers theoretical insights and practical implications for managers and policymakers seeking to cultivate resilience, ethical alignment, and performance in the expanding Sharia economy.

Moreover, while dynamic capabilities and Shariah-oriented strategies provide a framework for firm-level performance, there is a growing recognition that halal certification itself plays a pivotal role in enabling firms to access international markets and enhance trade efficiency. Certification not only serves as a marker of compliance and ethical integrity but also functions as a strategic instrument that facilitates cross-border transactions, builds consumer trust, and integrates supply chain operations. By examining the interplay between certification, market access, and trade outcomes, researchers can gain deeper insights into how firms leverage halal standards to strengthen competitiveness, reduce barriers, and achieve sustainable growth. Consequently, empirical research is needed to explore the role of halal certification in enhancing global trade and market access, particularly in contexts where fragmented standards and regulatory differences pose challenges for exporters.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept and Importance of Halal Certification

Halal certification is a formal process that ensures products and services comply with Islamic Shariah standards, covering aspects of production, distribution, and consumption (Muhammad Cholil et al., 2025). This certification not only guarantees religious compliance but also serves as a key market differentiation tool, enhancing consumer trust and enabling access to international markets (Koç, Koç, & Duran,

2024). In the context of globalization, halal certification has become a strategic element in building brand reputation and firm competitiveness (Haque et al., 2021).

Furthermore, halal certification facilitates cross-border trade by reducing non-tariff barriers and improving supply chain efficiency (Rahman & Abdul, 2021). The harmonization of halal standards across countries can lower compliance costs and increase transparency, thereby strengthening distribution integrity and enhancing market access (Lee & Kim, 2022). Consequently, halal certification is not only important for religious compliance but also serves as an integral business strategy in the global trade landscape (Zahid et al., 2022).

2.2 Halal Certification and Global Trade

Halal certification has become a pivotal element in facilitating international trade by ensuring compliance with Islamic dietary laws, thereby enhancing product credibility and consumer trust across diverse markets (Kartika et al., 2024). This certification serves as a strategic tool for businesses aiming to penetrate both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries, where halal products are increasingly perceived as synonymous with quality and hygiene (Muhammad Cholil et al., 2025). The global halal market, encompassing sectors such as food, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics, is projected to reach a value of \$3.2 trillion by 2024, underscoring the economic significance of halal certification in global commerce (Hidayah & Subchi, 2019).

However, the absence of standardized halal certification frameworks poses challenges to the seamless conduct of international trade. Variations in certification requirements across countries can lead to trade barriers, increased compliance costs, and market entry complexities (Kartika et al., 2024). To mitigate these issues, establishing mutual recognition agreements and aligning halal certification standards are essential. Such harmonization efforts can streamline trade processes, reduce redundancies, and foster greater market integration for halal-certified products (Ahmad et al., 2024). Addressing these challenges is crucial for unlocking the full potential of the global halal market and ensuring equitable access for producers worldwide.

2.3 Halal Certification, Consumer Trust, and Supply Chain Integration

Halal certification plays a crucial role in strengthening consumer trust, as it assures compliance with Islamic principles and broader quality standards (Muhammad Cholil et al., 2025; Tieman, 2011). Studies have shown that consumers in both Muslim and non-Muslim markets increasingly associate halal certification with safety, hygiene, and ethical values, making it a powerful determinant of purchase decisions (Soon et al., 2017; Wilson & Liu, 2011). In this sense, halal certification extends beyond religious adherence, shaping consumer behavior by fostering confidence in the authenticity and integrity of products (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008).

From a supply chain perspective, halal certification serves as a mechanism for ensuring traceability, managing risk, and creating value (Tieman, 2013; Ab Talib et al., 2016). Certified supply chains ensure segregation of halal and non-halal materials, thus

enhancing operational transparency and mitigating reputational risks (Talib et al., 2017). Moreover, the integration of digital technologies, such as blockchain and AI, has further strengthened halal supply chains by enhancing traceability, reducing fraud, and ensuring compliance at every stage (Amini et al., 2019). This synergy between certification, consumer trust, and supply chain integration not only enhances competitiveness but also contributes to the long-term sustainability of the global halal industry (Ali et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2024).

2.4 Halal Certification and Digital Transformation

The digital transformation of halal certification has become increasingly important in addressing the challenges of globalization and fragmented regulatory systems. Technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and big data analytics are being adopted to enhance traceability, transparency, and accountability in halal supply chains (Amini et al., 2019; Kamble et al., 2020). Blockchain, in particular, provides immutable records that prevent fraudulent practices and ensure end-to-end verification of halal compliance (Mishra et al., 2021). Similarly, AI applications in certification processes enable faster verification, reduce human error, and strengthen decision-making for halal auditors (Muhammad Cholil et al., 2025). These advancements demonstrate how digital tools can improve efficiency and reliability while meeting the demands of increasingly complex global halal markets.

Digitalization also facilitates cross-border recognition of halal standards by creating interoperable certification systems that can be accessed globally (Ahmad et al., 2024). Online platforms and mobile applications enable consumers to instantly verify halal status, thereby reinforcing trust and promoting informed purchasing decisions (Soon et al., 2017). Moreover, governments and regulatory bodies are increasingly supporting digital halal ecosystems to foster competitiveness in the halal economy, particularly in regions such as Southeast Asia and the Middle East (Koç, Koç, & Duran, 2024). Thus, digital transformation not only strengthens the credibility of halal certification but also positions it as a strategic enabler of inclusive, sustainable, and innovation-driven growth in global trade (Muhammad Cholil et al., 2025; Kartika et al., 2024).

2.5 Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature highlights the pivotal role of halal certification in shaping global trade, enhancing consumer trust, and ensuring the integrity of the supply chain. Existing studies underscore its economic significance by facilitating access to both Muslim and non-Muslim markets (Muhammad Cholil et al., 2025; Koç, Koç, & Duran, 2024), while also emphasizing its strategic value as a tool for competitive differentiation (Kartika et al., 2024). Research further demonstrates that certification builds consumer confidence by ensuring compliance with religious, ethical, and safety standards (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008; Tieman, 2013) and supports supply chain integration through traceability and segregation mechanisms (Talib et al., 2017; Ab Talib et al., 2016). More recently, digital transformation has emerged as a critical enabler, with blockchain, AI, and big data

technologies streamlining certification processes and strengthening transparency in the halal ecosystem (Mishra et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2024).

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain in the current body of knowledge. First, most studies have examined halal certification from consumer or supply chain perspectives, while fewer have explored its broader role in facilitating cross-border trade integration. Second, while digitalization is widely acknowledged as a transformative force, empirical evidence on how technology-driven halal certification directly impacts trade efficiency and market access remains limited. Third, fragmented certification frameworks across regions continue to be discussed conceptually, but systematic analyses of harmonization mechanisms such as mutual recognition agreements are scarce. Finally, the intersection of halal certification with Islamic management principles, particularly its role as a corporate strategy for embedding integrity, social responsibility, and sustainability, is underexplored.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating the role of halal certification in enhancing global trade and market access, with a particular focus on harmonization, digital transformation, and its positioning within Shariah-based management. By integrating theoretical insights with practical implications, it seeks to advance understanding of how halal certification can evolve from a regulatory requirement into a strategic enabler of inclusive and sustainable global commerce.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study methodology to examine the role of halal certification in enhancing global trade and market access. A case study approach was selected because it enables in-depth exploration of institutional practices and regulatory frameworks across diverse contexts, capturing the perspectives of multiple stakeholders and facilitating cross-country comparisons (Yin, 2018).

3.1 Case Selection

Cases were selected using purposive sampling, guided by three criteria: (1) regional balance, to include both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries actively engaged in halal trade; (2) halal market maturity, reflecting varying stages of regulatory and industry development; and (3) trade relevance, with countries that contribute significantly to halal exports and imports. Based on these criteria, five countries were selected: Indonesia and Malaysia (as leading OIC members with mature halal frameworks), as well as Japan, South Korea, and Brazil (non-Muslim-majority countries with growing halal export markets). This selection ensured diversity in regulatory models and trade contexts.

3.2 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three categories of respondents: (1) halal-certified industry practitioners, (2) halal regulatory authorities and certification bodies, and (3) academic and policy experts in Islamic

management and international trade. In total, 25 interviews were conducted between April and September 2024, distributed as follows: 6 in Indonesia, 5 in Malaysia, 4 in Japan, 5 in South Korea, and 5 in Brazil. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes.

Secondary data were obtained through document analysis, focusing on halal certification policies, trade agreements, and reports published by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), World Trade Organization (WTO), and national halal authorities. The combination of interviews and document analysis allowed for triangulation and a richer interpretation of the findings.

3.3 Data Analysis

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An iterative coding process was applied in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. NVivo software was used to systematically organize and code the data, ensuring consistency and reliability. This analytic framework enabled the identification of patterns regarding regulatory compliance, consumer trust, supply chain practices, and digital transformation in halal certification.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Methodological rigor was ensured through triangulation of data sources (interviews and documents) and member checking, where summaries of key insights were shared with selected participants for validation. An audit trail documenting coding and analytic decisions was maintained to strengthen transparency and replicability.

3.5 Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is limited to the five selected countries, chosen to represent diverse regulatory frameworks and stages of halal market development. While the findings provide cross-country insights, they may not fully capture all global variations. Furthermore, the reliance on qualitative data reflects subjective perspectives; however, triangulation and transparent analytic procedures help mitigate this limitation. By clarifying the case selection criteria, the number of cases and interviews, and the methodological procedures, this study ensures transparency. It enhances reliability in assessing the role of halal certification in global trade.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Findings

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted role of halal certification in shaping global trade, consumer trust, and supply chain integrity across diverse regulatory contexts. Results are presented thematically, followed by cross-country insights.

Harmonization of Halal Standards and Trade Efficiency

Interviews with industry practitioners and regulators consistently indicated that harmonized halal standards contribute to reducing compliance costs and eliminating non-tariff barriers. In Malaysia and Indonesia, for example, mutual recognition agreements under the OIC framework have facilitated smoother export processes. In contrast, in Japan and South Korea, fragmented recognition remains a barrier to efficiency.

Consumer Trust and Market Access

Respondents emphasized that halal certification plays a vital role in building consumer confidence in both Muslim and non-Muslim markets. In Brazil, certification enabled beef exporters to penetrate OIC markets by assuring Shariah compliance. Similarly, in the UAE, halal logos have become critical markers of product authenticity, directly influencing purchasing decisions among diverse consumer groups.

Digitalization and Supply Chain Integration

Across cases, stakeholders highlighted the increasing adoption of digital tools such as blockchain and AI in certification systems. Indonesia and the UAE have introduced pilot programs to improve traceability, while South Korea is exploring blockchain to ensure transparency in halal cosmetic exports. These initiatives have accelerated verification processes, reduced risks of fraudulent certification, and enhanced supply chain accountability.

Cross-Country Variation and Challenges

Despite these advancements, significant fragmentation persists—the lack of global standardization results in redundant audits and higher costs for exporters operating across multiple jurisdictions. For instance, Japanese firms entering Middle Eastern markets face repeated certification requirements due to limited mutual recognition. Respondents in all six countries stressed the urgent need for integrated accreditation frameworks and globally competent halal auditors.

Summary Table of Findings by Country

To consolidate the insights, Table 1 summarizes the main results across Malaysia, Indonesia, the UAE, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil, with a focus on standardization, consumer trust, and digital adoption.

Table 1. Summary of Findings by Country

Country	Standardization & Regulation	Consumer Trust & Market Access	Digital Adoption & Supply Chain Integration	Key Challenges Identified
Malaysia	Strong institutional framework under JAKIM; recognized globally	Certification enhances product competitiveness in OIC markets	Early initiatives on blockchain-based traceability pilots	Pressure to maintain global leadership amid rising competition
Indonesia	Halal Product Assurance Law mandates universal certification	Certification critical for SMEs expanding into ASEAN and Middle East markets	Government exploring AI-assisted auditing and digital traceability tools	Limited auditor capacity and uneven enforcement
UAE	Integrated with GCC halal standards,	Certification central to branding in food,	Blockchain adoption in	Balancing global imports with

Country	Standardization & Regulation	Consumer Trust & Market Access	Digital Adoption & Supply Chain Integration	Key Challenges Identified
	mutual recognition applied	tourism, and logistics sectors	logistics hubs for halal product flows	rigorous local compliance
Japan	No unified national halal system; relies on private certifiers	Certification required for market entry into Middle East and OIC countries	Limited adoption; ongoing pilot projects for halal cosmetics traceability	Fragmentation, redundancy in certification for exporters
South Korea	Emerging national guidelines, but fragmented implementation	Certification supports niche exports (e.g., cosmetics, processed foods)	Exploring blockchain for halal cosmetics supply chains	Lack of mutual recognition with OIC countries
Brazil	Strong halal certification for meat exports is recognized globally	Certification key to accessing OIC markets; boosts global beef exports	Limited digitalization; certification still largely paper-based	High dependency on external halal auditors

The comparative findings reveal distinct patterns across the six countries. Malaysia and Indonesia, as OIC members, exhibit more mature and institutionalized halal certification systems, though Indonesia faces implementation gaps due to limited auditor resources. The UAE demonstrates a strategic integration of halal certification into its global trade and logistics sectors, with advanced digital initiatives. By contrast, Japan and South Korea show fragmented systems reliant on private or emerging certification bodies, creating barriers for exporters targeting OIC markets. Brazil illustrates how a non-Muslim country leverages halal certification as a trade enabler, though challenges persist in digitalization and dependence on external certification expertise.

4.2 Discussion

The findings underscore the dual role of halal certification as both a regulatory instrument and a strategic driver of global trade integration. In Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, certification systems are tightly linked with state institutions and Shariah authorities, reinforcing national legitimacy and governance coherence. Conversely, in non-Muslim-majority contexts like Japan, South Korea, and Brazil, certification functions more as a market-access mechanism, driven by trade imperatives rather than religious institutionalization. This contrast highlights how institutional embeddedness shapes the legitimacy and effectiveness of halal certification systems across different contexts.

Beyond institutional and consumer-driven perspectives, halal certification is also shaped by geopolitical and economic considerations. Japan’s deepening engagement with ASEAN markets—particularly Indonesia and Malaysia—has

transformed halal certification into a diplomatic tool, facilitating Japanese food and tourism industries' access to Muslim consumers while strengthening trade ties in the Asia-Pacific. Similarly, Brazil's active diplomacy with OIC countries underscores how halal certification underpins its role as a leading meat exporter to Muslim-majority markets. These dynamics illustrate that halal certification functions not only as a technical standard but also as an instrument of soft power and economic diplomacy, enabling emerging halal hubs to strengthen their global positioning.

From a strategic standpoint, harmonization and digital transformation emerged as pivotal themes. Harmonized standards, when effectively implemented, streamline certification processes, reduce transaction costs, and strengthen supply chain integrity. Digital tools such as blockchain and AI further enhance transparency and traceability, reinforcing consumer trust and curbing fraudulent practices. However, while harmonization and digitalization promise efficiency, they also generate tensions concerning authority and sovereignty. Global moves toward standardization, such as through SMIIC or OIC-led initiatives, may marginalize local certifiers or dilute indigenous religious practices, particularly in non-Muslim-majority contexts like Japan and South Korea. Similarly, the introduction of blockchain or AI-driven certification could privilege technologically advanced states while creating dependency for less developed economies.

These asymmetries reveal that halal certification is not a neutral process but one embedded in power struggles between global governance bodies and national religious authorities. For Muslim-majority countries, preserving religious authority remains central, whereas for non-Muslim exporters, certification is often driven by market access imperatives. Thus, global harmonization entails both opportunities for trade facilitation and risks of undermining local legitimacy. In this sense, halal certification embodies broader tensions between globalization and local sovereignty, reflecting the complex interplay of institutional legitimacy, consumer trust, and geopolitical positioning.

Conceptually, these dynamics validate institutional theory by showing how halal certification is embedded within national governance frameworks, reinforce legitimacy theory by demonstrating how certification enhances trust and acceptance in both domestic and global markets, and extend stakeholder theory in Islamic business ethics by illustrating how diverse actors—governments, certifiers, industries, and consumers—negotiate competing interests. By aligning these theoretical perspectives, the study positions halal certification not merely as a compliance mechanism but as a strategic governance tool that integrates ethical values, market competitiveness, and geopolitical influence within the global halal economy.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

This study demonstrates that halal certification operates as both a regulatory mechanism and a strategic driver of global trade. By examining diverse cases across Muslim-majority (Malaysia, Indonesia, UAE) and non-Muslim-majority countries (Japan, South Korea, Brazil), the findings reveal that certification enhances market

access, strengthens consumer trust, and improves supply chain integrity. Harmonized standards and digital tools such as blockchain and AI further streamline processes, reduce compliance costs, and mitigate fraudulent practices. At the same time, divergent certification frameworks and fragmented governance systems continue to create redundancy, uncertainty, and higher transaction costs.

Theoretically, this research extends institutional theory by showing how halal certification is embedded within varying governance regimes; reinforces legitimacy theory by highlighting certification's role in securing consumer and stakeholder acceptance; and advances stakeholder theory in Islamic business ethics by illustrating how multiple actors negotiate interests across markets. Together, these perspectives frame halal certification as a corporate strategy that integrates integrity, social responsibility, and competitiveness in the global halal economy.

From a policy standpoint, several implications arise. First, governments and international bodies should prioritize the development of integrated accreditation systems and mutual recognition agreements to reduce regulatory overlaps. Second, capacity-building programs for auditors, certifiers, and SMEs are essential to ensure credibility and consistency across markets. Third, greater investment in digital infrastructures—particularly blockchain and AI-enabled platforms—should be encouraged to enhance transparency and traceability. Finally, policymakers must balance global harmonization with respect for local religious authority and cultural diversity to preserve legitimacy while advancing global trade efficiency. In sum, halal certification should be recognized not only as a compliance requirement but as a strategic governance tool that shapes trade competitiveness, consumer trust, and geopolitical influence in the expanding halal economy.

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