

# The Role of UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in Strengthening the Global Halal Ecosystem: Strategies, Challenges, and Innovations

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## Abstract

The halal industry has emerged as one of the key sectors in the global economy, catering not only to the needs of Muslim consumers but also attracting non-Muslim consumers who prioritize high standards of hygiene, safety, and quality. As a global leader in the halal industry, Malaysia must strengthen the mechanisms for coordinating the halal ecosystem, including aspects of governance, certification, marketing, and workforce development. This study aims to analyze the role of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in enhancing the global halal ecosystem, focusing on its development strategies, key challenges, and implications for the halal industry. A qualitative research approach was adopted, incorporating documentary analysis of the National Halal Policy 2025-2035 and the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 (HIMP 2030), alongside semi-structured interviews with halal industry entrepreneurs, government officials, and academics to gain comprehensive insights into the industry's progress. The findings indicate that the establishment of halal management centers plays a crucial role in enhancing coordination among government bodies, industry players, and academic institutions, while ensuring strict compliance with halal standards. The study identifies several key challenges, including low awareness among SMEs regarding halal standards, weaknesses in global halal market strategies, and the need for enhanced halal training for workers and micro-entrepreneurs. As a solution, this study proposes a more systematic policy coordination mechanism, empowerment of halal training through academic institutions, and export-oriented halal marketing strategies to ensure that Malaysia's halal industry remains sustainable, competitive, and globally dominant.

**Keywords:** Halal Industry, Halal Management Center, Development Strategies, Global Halal Ecosystem, Halal Certification, Industry Competitiveness.

## **Introduction**

The global halal industry is expanding rapidly, establishing itself as a key component of the global economy built on principles of purity, safety, and high-quality standards. As a leading force in the development of the halal ecosystem, Malaysia has undertaken various strategic initiatives to ensure the competitiveness of its halal industry at the international level. Within this ecosystem, academic institutions play a crucial role in strengthening the halal sector through training, research, and the development of skilled human capital.

As an Islamic higher education institution, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (UniSHAMS) has reinforced its commitment to the halal sector with the establishment of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center. Initially founded on November 1, 2023, this unit was upgraded to a full-fledged center on January 1, 2025, with the goal of enhancing expertise in halal management and supporting the industry in ensuring compliance with global halal standards.

This study aims to analyze the role of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in strengthening the global halal ecosystem, focusing on development strategies, key challenges, and implications for Malaysia's halal industry. The research examines various aspects, including governance alignment, halal standard enhancement, industry training programs, and the empowerment of halal research and innovation.

Through a systematic approach and strategic collaboration with academic institutions, halal industry stakeholders, and international certification bodies, UniSHAMS has the potential to become a leading reference center in the advancement of the global halal ecosystem. Furthermore, this study will present recommendations to enhance policy coordination and the implementation of halal ecosystem frameworks, supporting Malaysia's aspirations to become a sustainable and globally competitive halal hub.

## **Research Background**

The halal industry continues to grow as a promising global economic sector, driven by rising demand for products and services that adhere to halal standards. As a leading player in the global halal industry, Malaysia has taken strategic measures to develop a robust halal ecosystem through various policies and initiatives. In support of the nation's aspiration to become a Global Halal Hub, higher education institutions such as Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (UniSHAMS) play a vital role in advancing and strengthening the halal industry through research, training, and human capital development.

In line with this vision, the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center was established to enhance expertise in the halal sector. Initially founded on November 1, 2023, under the Kulliyah of Islamic Finance, Management Sciences, and Hospitality (KWISH), the unit received official recognition as a Registered Halal Training Provider under the Halal Professional Council on September 11, 2024. Subsequently, on January 1, 2025, the unit was upgraded to the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center and placed under the Kulliyah of Shariah and Law (KSU) to further strengthen its role in halal certification, legislation, research, and industry training.

As part of its initiatives to reinforce the halal ecosystem, UniSHAMS conducted a benchmarking visit and strategic collaboration with the Halal Management Institute of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) on January 21, 2025. This partnership aims to enhance collaboration between academic institutions to advance the field of halal studies. Additionally, UniSHAMS launched the Halal Awareness Course and Executive Halal Course, which will run throughout the year until December 31, 2025. Functioning as a JAKIM-certified Halal Training Provider, similar to UUM in Kedah, these courses support businesses seeking halal certification from JAKIM in Kedah, Penang, and Northern Perak, further strengthening strategic cooperation in the development of the regional halal industry.

On April 29, 2025, UniSHAMS conducted an official visit to the Halal Management Division of the Kedah State Islamic Religious Affairs Department (JHEAIK). Discussions during the visit focused on industry training, halal module development, and the organization of seminars and scholarly discourses to enhance the halal assurance system in Kedah. UniSHAMS strives to align its halal development strategies with the National Halal Policy 2025-2035, which aims to establish a holistic and conducive halal ecosystem, emphasizing legislation, certification, technology, innovation, and consumer awareness.

As an academic institution committed to halal training and human capital development, the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center plays a crucial role in providing expertise, training, and research related to halal governance. To further strengthen this sector, UniSHAMS is currently developing a Bachelor of Shariah Studies (Halal Management) program, which will focus on halal governance, compliance with halal standards, and enhancing the competitiveness of Malaysia's halal industry.

This study aims to analyze the strategies, challenges, and implications of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in strengthening the global halal ecosystem. Additionally, it will assess the effectiveness of policy coordination mechanisms, the impact of halal training initiatives, and the competitiveness of halal products and services supported by UniSHAMS. With a comprehensive approach, this research has the potential to provide strategic recommendations to state governments, halal certification bodies, and academic institutions, ultimately supporting a sustainable, competitive, and globally recognized halal ecosystem in Malaysia.

### **Research Problem**

The global halal industry is experiencing rapid growth, yet several key challenges continue to hinder Malaysia's competitiveness as a leading halal hub. A lack of coordination among government agencies, industry players, and academic institutions has resulted in an imbalance in halal governance, creating inefficiencies in the development and regulation of the sector. Additionally, achieving and maintaining high halal standards remains a challenge, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-businesses, which struggle with compliance and certification processes.

The absence of a structured halal marketing strategy has further limited Malaysia's ability to penetrate international markets, reducing the global reach of its halal products. Moreover, low awareness and inadequate halal training among small business owners pose a significant obstacle to grassroots empowerment within the halal industry. Within the framework of the

National Halal Policy (NHP) 2025-2035, halal tourism emerges as a crucial sector supporting Malaysia's aspirations as a global halal hub. However, ensuring uniform halal compliance across tourism destinations and enhancing industry players' awareness of halal certification requirements remain substantial challenges. This study seeks to analyze the strategic role of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center, identify key challenges in halal industry development, and propose mechanisms for policy alignment and halal training empowerment to enhance Malaysia's global competitiveness in the halal sector.

### **Research Objectives**

The following are three key objectives that are well-aligned with the scope of this study:

1. To analyze the role of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in strengthening the global halal ecosystem through development strategies and governance alignment in halal administration.
2. To assess the implications of establishing the Halal Management Center on the competitiveness of the halal industry, focusing on certification, research, and halal investment perspectives.
3. To identify key challenges and propose mechanisms for policy coordination and halal training empowerment to enhance the competitiveness and effectiveness of the global halal industry.

### **Literature Review**

#### *The Importance of the Halal Industry in Global Economic Development*

The halal industry has evolved into a key sector within the global economy, catering not only to the needs of Muslims but also appealing to non-Muslim consumers who value hygiene, safety, and high-quality products (World Halal Summit, 2023). As a global leader in the halal industry, Malaysia must adopt strategic and innovative approaches to maintain its competitive edge in the international market (BBC Portal, 2024).

A study by UMNO Online (2024) highlights the necessity for Malaysia to lead the transformation of the global halal industry, particularly through effective marketing strategies for Malaysian halal products in international markets. Additionally, Halal Journal (2023) reports that halal certification recognition by major exporting countries such as Brazil, Australia, and Thailand plays a crucial role in ensuring the competitiveness of halal products globally.

#### *The Impact of Halal Certification on Economic Growth and Global Competitiveness*

Halal certification is not just a compliance requirement based on Islamic law; it has become a catalyst for growth in industries such as food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and halal tourism (Halal Weekly, 2023). Brazil, as the world's largest exporter of halal chicken, has successfully strengthened its competitive position in the Middle Eastern market through rigorous halal certification processes (Halal Journal, 2023).

Similarly, in Australia, halal certification provided by AHFS and HCA has opened export opportunities to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, demonstrating that halal certification is not merely a regulatory requirement but a crucial factor in export success (Expert Market Research, 2025). Meanwhile, Malaysia, through Halal Development

Corporation, has positioned halal as a strategic economic brand, setting an export target of RM 56 billion by 2030 (The Star, 2023).

#### *Innovative Approaches to Harmonizing International Halal Standards*

One of the major challenges in the halal industry is the lack of uniformity in halal standards among countries, which often serves as a barrier to international trade (Salaam Gateway, 2024). However, modern technology has provided solutions to address this issue:

- i. Blockchain technology ensures transparency in the halal supply chain, allowing consumers to digitally verify the halal status of products (Halal Food Council USA, 2024).
- ii. Artificial intelligence (AI) accelerates halal certification through automated slaughterhouse inspections and large-scale ingredient monitoring (Halal Times, 2024).
- iii. Collaborations between the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) and GCC nations have expedited efforts to standardize halal regulations globally, reducing trade barriers in the international halal market (Salaam Gateway, 2024).

#### *International Collaboration in Strengthening the Halal Ecosystem*

In an increasingly interconnected world, international cooperation plays a crucial role in the development of the halal industry. Malaysia has demonstrated the effectiveness of strategic partnerships in technology exchange and human capital development, forging collaborations with Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia (Business Today, 2022). Meanwhile, in Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina has leveraged its strategic position as a halal hub for the EU market, attracting Islamic countries to expand halal trade in the region (Halal Times, 2025). Additionally, discussions at the Halal Makkah Forum emphasized the importance of transparency in the halal supply chain and the harmonization of halal standards, reaffirming that global collaboration is a key driver for the future success of the halal industry (Halal Times, 2025).

This literature review underscores the pivotal role of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in strengthening the global halal ecosystem, with a focus on development strategies, certification challenges, and the enhancement of halal training and research innovations. The effectiveness of halal certification systems, the adoption of modern technology, and international partnerships are critical aspects in ensuring Malaysia remains a leading global halal hub. This study recommends a more systematic approach to halal standard harmonization, the integration of digital technologies such as blockchain and AI in halal certification, and a well-structured export marketing strategy to reinforce Malaysia's position as a dominant player in the international halal industry.

#### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the strategies, challenges, and implications of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in strengthening the global halal ecosystem. The research methodology comprises two primary methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews, enabling an in-depth understanding and comprehensive perspectives from key stakeholders within the halal industry.

#### *Document Analysis*

This study conducts a comprehensive document analysis to examine policies, regulations, and strategies related to the development of the halal industry, focusing on the effectiveness of

governance alignment, certification mechanisms, and regulatory standardization at the national and global levels. Key sources include official government reports, policy documents, and academic research, providing a holistic overview of the halal industry's direction and implementation strategies.

One of the key documents analyzed is the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 (HIMP 2030), which serves as the primary policy framework for Malaysia's halal industry development. It outlines strategic objectives, implementation measures, and competitiveness enhancement initiatives aimed at solidifying Malaysia's position in the global halal market. Additionally, the National Halal Policy 2025–2035 was examined to evaluate governance mechanisms, certification policies, and legislative frameworks that ensure regulatory coherence among various stakeholders within the halal ecosystem.

Beyond official documents, this study also reviews academic research and prior studies related to halal industry empowerment strategies, including competitive business models, innovations in halal certification, and the integration of digital technology for halal compliance monitoring. The document analysis identifies emerging trends in halal industry developments, such as technological advancements in certification, the need for enhanced halal training programs, and key governance challenges in policy implementation.

The findings from the document analysis provide a strong foundation for assessing the effectiveness of halal industry development strategies and proposing recommendations to reinforce Malaysia's position as a global halal hub. With a structured and systematic approach, Malaysia has the potential to sustain the growth of its halal industry while expanding its market reach internationally.

#### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather practical insights and additional perspectives from individuals directly involved in halal ecosystem development. These interviews aim to evaluate strategies, challenges, and governance alignment efforts that impact the competitiveness of Malaysia's halal industry at both national and international levels.

Among the key respondents were halal industry entrepreneurs, who provided valuable insights into the challenges of halal compliance. Discussions revealed difficulties in meeting certification requirements, financial constraints, and hurdles in expanding market reach internationally. Additionally, the interviews highlighted the strategies employed by industry players to enhance competitiveness, including business modernization, brand positioning, and the adoption of digital technology for halal management.

The study also involved government officials, who play a crucial role in halal governance and policy enforcement. Their perspectives offered insights into the efficiency of monitoring mechanisms, enforcement challenges, and the need for policy harmonization between regional and global regulatory frameworks. Government officials further discussed ongoing initiatives to strengthen the halal ecosystem, such as the development of the National Halal Policy and collaborations with international certification bodies.

Furthermore, academic scholars were interviewed to assess their role in researching and contributing to halal industry advancements through education and innovation. Their analyses covered current trends in halal industry developments, the significance of research in enhancing halal compliance standards, and the role of higher education institutions in producing skilled halal professionals. Scholars also emphasized the importance of advancing halal technology research, including blockchain applications, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation to ensure greater efficiency and transparency in halal certification.

Through semi-structured interviews, this study successfully collected in-depth insights into the current state of the halal ecosystem, identifying key challenges and proposing improvements in policy alignment, certification system enhancement, and international market expansion strategies. The data obtained provides a clearer picture of industry needs and actionable measures to reinforce Malaysia's status as a global halal hub.

The findings from these interviews contribute to evaluating the impact of establishing a halal management center, identifying industry challenges, and proposing policy alignment mechanisms and training initiatives to enhance the global competitiveness of the halal industry.

This research methodology allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the role of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center, identifying the most effective strategies for governance alignment, certification enhancement, and halal training optimization. The findings will serve as a critical resource in policy formulation, providing actionable recommendations to reinforce Malaysia's global halal aspirations and establish a sustainable and internationally recognized halal ecosystem.

### **Research Findings**

#### *The Role of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center in Strengthening the Global Halal Ecosystem*

Findings indicate that the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center serves as a key driver in reinforcing the halal ecosystem, primarily through coordination between government agencies, industry players, and academic institutions. The Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 has provided a strategic framework for the development of Malaysia's halal industry, while the National Halal Policy supports governance enhancement and halal certification regulation, ensuring comprehensive compliance across all sectors.

Higher education institutions such as UniSHAMS and UUM play a strategic role in halal human capital development, offering comprehensive training programs and academic research, which contribute to the growth of a highly skilled workforce in the halal sector. With structured research initiatives and academic-driven solutions, these efforts not only improve halal governance efficiency but also strengthen the global competitiveness of Malaysia's halal industry.

#### *The Implications of Establishing a Halal Management Center on Industry Competitiveness*

The study finds that the establishment of halal management centers has had a significant impact on enhancing Malaysia's competitiveness in the global halal industry. With a more streamlined and standardized halal certification process, halal businesses are better

positioned to penetrate international markets effectively, increasing export value and expanding the market reach of halal products.

Moreover, innovation and research within the halal industry play a crucial role in ensuring resilient and highly competitive halal products in global trade. Investment in halal technology and automation is a major factor in accelerating production processes, improving operational efficiency, and ensuring compliance with global halal standards, positioning Malaysia as a leading player in the international halal economy.

#### *Key Challenges and Policy Coordination Mechanisms for Strengthening the Halal Industry*

This study identifies several critical challenges that must be addressed to ensure the sustainable growth and global competitiveness of Malaysia's halal industry. One of the primary issues is low awareness and compliance with halal standards among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-businesses. Their inability to meet halal certification requirements is often attributed to a lack of structured education and training, making the certification process complex and difficult to navigate. Therefore, a more comprehensive training framework is essential to enhance halal awareness and ensure businesses fully understand halal certification requirements and procedures.

Additionally, the study underscores the need for stricter monitoring and enforcement of halal standards, especially for exported halal products. Halal integrity must be maintained not only at the production level but throughout the supply chain, ensuring compliance with the stringent regulations imposed by importing countries. This requires strengthening monitoring mechanisms, including the integration of blockchain technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance transparency and verification of halal products. A more robust and transparent monitoring system can bolster global consumer trust in Malaysia's halal products, further reinforcing the nation's leadership in the halal industry.

The study also highlights the importance of refining halal marketing strategies, adopting a more structured and targeted approach to boost the competitiveness of Malaysian halal products in international markets. Findings suggest that industry matchmaking and halal certification incentives should be expanded, providing halal businesses with greater support to establish themselves in the global market. Initiatives such as export facilitation, partnerships with international halal certification bodies, and digital marketing strategies can significantly enhance the global reach of Malaysia's halal products. By implementing these measures, Malaysia's halal industry can become more resilient in the face of global challenges, ensuring the long-term sustainability of its halal ecosystem.

Overall, this study emphasizes that holistic empowerment of the halal industry is crucial, encompassing halal awareness, enhanced monitoring and enforcement, and export-driven marketing strategies. With a structured and systematic approach, Malaysia's halal industry is well-positioned to achieve sustainable growth, meet rising global demand more effectively, and retain its status as a premier halal hub on the international stage.

#### **Analysis of Research Findings**

This study reveals that the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center holds significant potential in strengthening Malaysia's halal industry, yet several critical challenges must be addressed to

ensure the effectiveness of the halal ecosystem at both national and global levels. Among the key challenges identified are gaps in governance coordination, difficulties in meeting halal compliance standards, and weaknesses in global marketing strategies, all of which hinder the comprehensive growth of the halal industry.

One of the fundamental issues requiring attention is the need to enhance coordination between government agencies, industry players, and academic institutions, particularly in halal certification implementation and policy harmonization. Governance inconsistencies within the halal industry can lead to complications in regulatory enforcement and reduced efficiency in halal certification systems, which are essential for maintaining consumer trust and industry integrity. Therefore, closer collaboration among key stakeholders is vital to establish a standardized, efficient, and globally recognized halal certification framework.

Additionally, the study highlights the necessity of expanding halal training programs for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-business owners to improve compliance with halal standards. A lack of awareness and inadequate knowledge about halal certification requirements often prevents smaller businesses from penetrating broader halal markets. By introducing more structured and practical training initiatives, SMEs can develop a deeper understanding of industry needs and enhance the marketability of their halal products internationally.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of introducing more innovative halal marketing strategies to ensure Malaysian halal products can compete effectively in global markets. Modern technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) play a crucial role in strengthening transparency in halal supply chains and streamlining certification processes. Integrating these technologies not only fosters greater consumer trust but also bolsters Malaysia's reputation as a global leader in the halal industry.

Investment in halal innovation must also be intensified, particularly in halal pharmaceuticals, food technology, and automation. Advancements in these areas can create new opportunities within the halal sector, further solidifying Malaysia's position as a leading global halal hub. With strong research and development support, Malaysia's halal industry can continue to evolve and meet the increasing demands of the international market.

Overall, this study emphasizes that enhancing governance frameworks, optimizing halal certification, refining marketing strategies, and advancing human capital development are essential components in reinforcing Malaysia's halal ecosystem. With a systematic and innovative approach, Malaysia's halal industry can achieve sustainable growth, compete effectively in the global arena, and maintain its status as a leader in the global halal economy.

## **Conclusion**

This study confirms that the establishment of the UniSHAMS Halal Management Center plays a pivotal role in aligning the global halal ecosystem, enhancing industry competitiveness, and ensuring adherence to stringent halal standards. However, several areas require improvement, particularly in governance frameworks, certification processes, marketing strategies, and the development of a skilled halal workforce, to guarantee the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the halal ecosystem.

With a structured and systematic approach, Malaysia has the potential to maintain its position as a global leader in the halal industry, transforming halal from a religious necessity into a competitive economic brand at the international level. This initiative will not only strengthen the competitiveness of Malaysia's halal products and services but also attract greater investments and solidify the nation's presence in the global halal market.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings of this study, several key areas merit further research to strengthen Malaysia's halal industry. First, an investigation into the effectiveness of halal policy coordination mechanisms should be conducted to evaluate how existing policies and strategies improve collaboration between the government, industry players, and academic institutions in advancing the halal sector. Such research will help identify weaknesses in governance structures and propose enhancements for a more systematic and efficient policy framework.

Additionally, research on the impact of halal training on the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is essential. Strengthening halal training programs has the potential to assist SMEs in obtaining halal certification, thereby expanding their access to international markets. This study should assess the effectiveness of existing halal training programs in improving compliance with halal standards while evaluating their impact on business growth and halal product exports.

Moreover, research into halal business matchmaking models and marketing strategies should be pursued to analyze the effectiveness of halal export strategies, including the integration of digital technology in halal certification. Investigating how innovative marketing approaches can help Malaysian halal products penetrate global markets more effectively will be crucial in enhancing the country's competitiveness in the international halal industry.

Given the digital transformation of industries, research on the adoption of technology in halal sector development is increasingly relevant. Technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation play a critical role in enhancing transparency and compliance with halal standards, particularly within the halal product supply chain. Future studies should explore how these technologies can be more widely implemented in the halal industry to ensure higher certification standards and streamline the certification process, making it faster, more accurate, and more efficient.

Additionally, research on the integration of the halal economy with halal tourism is necessary to evaluate how the halal tourism sector can support the growth of Malaysia's halal industry. With increasing demand for halal-compliant services among Muslim travelers, this study will be instrumental in formulating strategic frameworks for halal tourism development while ensuring uniform halal compliance across all tourism destinations.

Through in-depth research into these areas, Malaysia will be able to continue strengthening its halal ecosystem, enhancing its global competitiveness, and advancing a more sustainable and resilient halal industry. This research will also serve as a crucial reference in shaping more comprehensive policies and reinforcing Malaysia's position as a leading global halal hub.

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