

The Halal Industry: Strategic Development and Implications for Kedah's Halal Ecosystem

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Abstract

The halal industry is a rapidly expanding economic sector in Malaysia, driven by rising demand both domestically and globally. Kedah, with its significant Muslim population and strong presence in the agricultural and food processing sectors, holds immense potential to become a competitive hub for the halal industry. However, the development of the halal industry in the state faces several challenges, including lack of coordination between government agencies, industry players, and academic institutions, adherence to stringent halal standards, and the absence of a well-structured global marketing strategy. This study aims to analyze the strategic establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK) and evaluate its implications for the state's halal ecosystem. Employing a qualitative approach, this research utilizes document analysis and semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into the role of MPIHK in strengthening halal governance, enhancing industry competitiveness, and expanding market access for Kedah's halal products. Findings indicate that the establishment of MPIHK is instrumental in improving coordination among stakeholders, ensuring compliance with halal certification standards, and enhancing the global competitiveness of local halal industry players. As a result, this study recommends a more systematic policy alignment framework, capacity-building initiatives for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and export-oriented marketing strategies to drive sustainable and competitive growth within Kedah's halal industry at the international level.

Keywords: Halal Industry, Kedah Halal Industry Development Council, Strategic Development, Halal Governance, Halal Ecosystem

Introduction

The halal industry is not merely about Shariah compliance but also serves as a key driver of the global economy. Kedah holds significant potential to become a competitive hub for the halal industry; however, several challenges must be addressed, including lack of coordination,

adherence to halal standards, global marketing strategies, and awareness and training among SMEs.

The establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK) aims to tackle these challenges by adopting the successful model of the Penang Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHPP) as a benchmark. This study analyzes the strategic formation of MPIHK and its implications for the state's halal ecosystem, focusing on governance alignment, regulatory compliance, market positioning, and capacity-building for halal entrepreneurs. Through a systematic approach, MPIHK has the potential to strengthen Kedah's halal industry and contribute to Malaysia's aspiration of becoming a global halal hub.

Research Problem

The halal industry in Malaysia is experiencing rapid growth; however, several critical challenges must be addressed to ensure sustainable development. One of the primary concerns is the lack of coordination between government agencies, industry players, and academic institutions in the development of the halal ecosystem, resulting in governance inefficiencies and policy implementation gaps. Compliance with stringent halal standards also remains a significant issue, particularly for SMEs that have limited access to certification training and support.

Furthermore, the absence of a structured mechanism to align Kedah's halal product marketing strategy with global markets has hindered the state's competitiveness in the international halal industry. Low awareness and inadequate halal training among small and medium-sized entrepreneurs further impede the holistic growth of the halal ecosystem. This study aims to examine how the establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK) can effectively address these challenges by leveraging the successful model of the Penang Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHPP). Specifically, it will assess the alignment of governance strategies, regulatory compliance frameworks, market expansion initiatives, and capacity-building programs for halal entrepreneurs to ensure a more structured and competitive halal industry in Kedah.

Research Objectives

The following are the three key objectives of this study:

1. To analyze the strategic establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK).
2. To evaluate the implications of MPIHK's establishment on the state's halal ecosystem.
3. To propose a framework for policy alignment and the enhancement of halal training to strengthen Kedah's halal industry competitiveness.

Literature Review

The halal industry is a vital component of Malaysia's economic development, with numerous initiatives implemented at both national and state levels to ensure its continued growth and competitiveness. Halal Development Corporation (2025) emphasizes that the establishment of state-level Halal Industry Development Councils can enhance coordination between the government and industry while ensuring the effective execution of the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 (HIMP 2030).

A study by Sinar Harian (2025) highlights the need for professional halal bodies to oversee the systematic development of the halal industry and ensure optimal participation of key industry players within the halal ecosystem. In this regard, Penang's establishment of the Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHPP) has set a significant precedent in strengthening state-level halal governance, aligning its strategic development with the Malaysia Halal Policy and the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (Chow & Mohamad, 2025).

MPIHPP has successfully demonstrated the critical role of state governments in facilitating holistic halal industry governance. This success provides a valuable model for replication, particularly for Kedah, which is currently planning to establish the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK). Kedah boasts a robust halal industry ecosystem, with significant advantages as a hub for food production, agriculture, and manufacturing, making it well-positioned to support global halal aspirations.

MPIHK could adopt proven strategies from MPIHPP, including collaborations between the Chief Minister's Corporation (CMI) and Penang Halal International (PHI) to enhance halal certification infrastructure, support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and attract both domestic and international halal investments. According to Chow & Mohamad (2025), MPIHPP engages 25 government departments and agencies to coordinate the comprehensive development of the halal industry. Kedah could leverage a similar approach by establishing a structured coordination mechanism among key agencies, such as the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), Kedah Industrial Authority (KIA), and Kedah Economic Development Foundation (YPEK).

Furthermore, building on Penang's success where 870 active companies have attained halal certification under the Malaysian Halal Certification Scheme (SPHM) (Chow & Mohamad, 2025) Kedah can focus on key sectors such as agro-industry, pharmaceuticals, herbal products, and halal tourism to enhance the role of MPIHK. As an initial step, Kedah could implement halal business matching strategies with global industry players, similar to MPIHPP, while simultaneously developing capacity-building programs for SME entrepreneurs. These initiatives are expected to reinforce Kedah's halal industry competitiveness and establish the state as a key halal hub within the region. Additionally, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Penang Regional Development Authority (PERDA) and PHI under MPIHPP (Chow & Mohamad, 2025) provides a valuable reference for Kedah, offering a blueprint for fostering strategic collaborations between regional development agencies and key halal industry stakeholders.

The establishment of MPIHK is not only expected to strengthen Kedah's halal industry but also contribute significantly to the national halal ecosystem. By aligning its strategies with the proven success of MPIHPP, MPIHK has the potential to drive new developments within Malaysia's halal industry, supporting the country's aspiration to become a global halal reference center.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategic development of the halal industry in Kedah. Two primary methods have been utilized:

document analysis and semi-structured interviews, ensuring a comprehensive examination and practical insights from key stakeholders within the halal industry.

Document Analysis

The document analysis includes a review of the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 (HIMP 2030), government reports, and academic literature related to the halal industry. This study examines official documents that outline the development trajectory of the halal industry and policies concerning the enhancement of Malaysia's halal ecosystem. Key references include reports published by the Halal Development Corporation (2025) and previous studies on halal industry empowerment strategies (Sinar Harian, 2025).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with halal industry entrepreneurs, government officials, and academics to gather practical perspectives and additional insights into the challenges and opportunities surrounding the development of Kedah's halal industry. This approach allows respondents to share their experiences in greater depth and provide recommendations for strengthening the competitiveness of the state's halal sector. The findings from the document analysis and interviews serve as the basis for identifying policy alignment mechanisms, halal training enhancement strategies, and global marketing frameworks for Kedah's halal products, which subsequently inform the study's recommendations.

Findings and Analysis

Objective 1 - Analyzing the Strategy for the Establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK)

Based on the analysis, this study finds that the establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK) plays a crucial role in strengthening the state's halal industry and enhancing the global competitiveness of Kedah's halal products.

1. Strategy for the Establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council

Findings indicate that MPIHK can adopt the successful model of the Penang Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHPP), particularly in the areas of governance alignment, halal ecosystem development, and compliance standard enforcement. Additionally, MPIHK is viewed as a holistic strategy within the Kedah Islamic Development Agenda, aimed at advancing the Islamic economy and enhancing the welfare of the Muslim community through the reinforcement of the halal industry.

2. Implications of MPIHK's Establishment on the State's Halal Ecosystem

The study reveals that MPIHK has the potential to enhance coordination among government agencies, industry players, academic institutions, and the community, while improving the monitoring and enforcement of halal compliance for local industries. Furthermore, MPIHK can strengthen halal certification mechanisms and facilitate halal business matching, ensuring that Kedah's halal products become more competitive in global markets.

Regarding halal education and training, MPIHK can collaborate with institutions such as UniSHAMS and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) to provide Halal Awareness Courses and

Executive Halal Courses, thereby improving industry players' understanding and adherence to halal compliance standards.

3. Challenges in the Development of Kedah's Halal Industry

The study identifies five key challenges in developing Kedah's halal industry:

1. Low awareness among traders regarding halal principles, particularly in the street food sector such as night markets and food festivals.
2. Risk of cross-contamination in food preparation, due to inadequate control measures and lack of proper halal enforcement.
3. Usage of raw materials with unclear halal status, leading to consumer uncertainty about halal products.
4. Lack of a structured marketing mechanism for halal products, limiting Kedah's ability to penetrate international halal markets effectively.
5. Weak enforcement of halal standards, resulting in various violations of halal principles within local industries.

As a solution, this study recommends halal awareness programs for micro-entrepreneurs, including making Halal Awareness Courses a prerequisite for street food vendor permits, to increase compliance within the street food sector.

4. Policy Alignment and Enhancement of Halal Training

The study proposes the establishment of the Kedah Halal Management Center to align halal policies and standards within the state. Furthermore, halal training enhancement through Jakim-certified Halal Training Providers at UniSHAMS and UUM will ensure that halal entrepreneurs understand Islamic compliance requirements, while strengthening consumer confidence in halal-certified products. Additionally, MPIHK must develop business matching mechanisms to enhance Kedah's halal product competitiveness in global markets, alongside introducing export-oriented halal marketing strategies to attract investors and international halal industry players.

Objective 2 - Evaluating the Implications of MPIHK's Establishment on the State's Halal Ecosystem

The establishment of the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK) is recognized as a strategic initiative to strengthen Kedah's halal ecosystem, positioning the state as a key halal hub. This study finds that MPIHK enhances monitoring of halal compliance standards, strengthens the competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and improves the marketing strategies of Kedah's halal products for global expansion.

Drawing from the success of the Penang Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHPP) (Chow & Mohamad, 2025), MPIHK's structured coordination among government agencies, industry players, and higher education institutions (UniSHAMS & UUM) is expected to significantly improve the governance framework of Kedah's halal industry. This alignment is crucial in ensuring a sustainable and well-regulated halal ecosystem, thereby reinforcing Kedah's position as a premier halal hub in Malaysia.

1. Addressing the Lack of Halal Awareness in Retail and Street Food Sectors

Findings indicate that halal awareness among traders, particularly in night markets and food festivals, remains inadequate. This lack of knowledge contributes to issues such as cross-contamination risks, the use of uncertified raw materials, and consumer uncertainty about halal integrity in street food offerings.

To mitigate this, UniSHAMS has recommended a comprehensive intervention to YB Ustaz Dato' Mohd Azam Abdul Samat, Chairman of the Kedah State Committee for Education, Religion, Communication, and Information. This initiative involves formal halal awareness training to improve traders' understanding of halal compliance and Islamic principles in food handling.

2. Collaborative Programs and Government-Sponsored Halal Awareness Courses

The study highlights the necessity for collaboration between the Kedah State Government and UniSHAMS, including organizing large-scale halal-themed festivals exclusively for certified food vendors. These festivals offer a vital platform for public education, featuring halal awareness lectures, halal fun runs, and workshops on halal compliance.

Furthermore, the Kedah State Government's proposed sponsorship of Halal Awareness Courses aims to provide formal training to at least 200 street vendors, ensuring their comprehensive understanding of halal principles and regulatory standards. With government backing, this program can be systematically implemented, yielding a significant impact on halal compliance within Kedah's Street food sector.

3. Establishing Halal Research Grants to Strengthen the Halal Industry

The study identifies the lack of focus on halal research grants, despite their pivotal role in boosting the competitiveness of the state's halal industry. In response, UniSHAMS advocates for the Kedah State Government to allocate halal research funding to support academic scholars and researchers in exploring critical issues within the halal sector.

Through MPIHK, efforts to secure and expand halal research funding can be streamlined, fostering a stronger connection between industry, academia, and the wider community in advancing Kedah's halal industry.

4. The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Halal Ecosystem Development

The study further confirms that UniSHAMS and UUM are integral to the advancement of Kedah's halal industry. The establishment of the Halal Management Center at UniSHAMS represents a structured approach to enhancing expertise in halal governance and compliance.

Additionally, UniSHAMS has been officially recognized as a registered Halal Training Provider under the Halal Professional Council (HPC) since 2024. Its initiatives, including Halal Awareness Courses and Executive Halal Training, target industry players seeking JAKIM halal certification, reinforcing both industry compliance and consumer confidence in halal-certified products.

By 2025, UniSHAMS and the Halal Management Institute of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) will collaborate on benchmarking visits and structured halal training programs, further

bolstering Kedah's halal industry competitiveness and supporting Malaysia's vision of becoming a global halal hub.

Through strategic initiatives such as MPIHK, structured halal training, research grants, and collaborative educational programs, Kedah is well-positioned to advance its halal industry and establish itself as a key player in the global halal economy. By ensuring effective governance, regulatory compliance, and comprehensive capacity-building efforts, MPIHK can reinforce the halal ecosystem, increase consumer trust, and drive Kedah's progress toward becoming an internationally recognized halal hub.

Objective 3 - Proposing Policy Alignment Mechanisms and Halal Training Enhancement to Strengthen Kedah's Halal Industry Competitiveness

1. Policy Alignment and Brand Strengthening of UniSHAMS in the Halal Industry

Findings indicate that UniSHAMS plays a strategic role in supporting the halal ecosystem through research and the provision of halal training programs. Strengthening UniSHAMS' brand as a leading halal training institution is crucial for attracting industry stakeholders and engaging the broader community in understanding the significance of halal compliance.

Additionally, UniSHAMS serves as a key driver of halal awareness, particularly in the street food and festival food sectors. Through the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK), UniSHAMS can take the lead in formulating halal awareness policies, including recommending Halal Awareness Courses as a prerequisite for obtaining business licenses for night markets and food festivals.

2. Enhancing Halal Awareness and Strengthening Governance Alignment

The study identifies low halal awareness among food vendors as one of the primary challenges in ensuring the sustainable growth of the halal food sector. Introducing Halal Awareness Courses for street food traders is recommended as a key measure to promote compliance with halal and toyyiban standards.

MPIHK is also proposed to collaborate with local authorities (PBT) to enhance halal monitoring and enforcement within the street food industry. This initiative will improve regulatory efficiency and ensure that only vendors with adequate halal knowledge are granted business licenses.

3. Policy Coordination Mechanisms to Strengthen Kedah's Halal Ecosystem

The study confirms that MPIHK can assist regulatory bodies in identifying strategies to minimize cross-contamination risks, regulate the use of uncertified raw materials, and enhance Kedah's halal industry reputation in international markets.

Key policy recommendations include:

- Mandating Halal Awareness Courses for food vendors as a prerequisite for obtaining business licenses for night markets and food festivals.
- Providing halal training programs for SMEs to ensure compliance with stringent halal standards and enhance industry competitiveness.
- Establishing halal research grants to drive innovation in the halal sector and support academic research initiatives contributing to Kedah's halal ecosystem.

4. Implications for Local Authorities (PBT), the State Government, and the Halal Industry
MPIHK's establishment is expected to have significant implications for local regulatory authorities, the state government, industry players, food vendors, and consumers.

Implications for Local Authorities (PBT):

- Strengthening halal monitoring systems to ensure food vendors possess halal awareness and compliance before obtaining business licenses.
- Reducing food contamination risks and halal compliance violations in the street food sector.

Implications for the State Government:

- Attracting investment in the halal industry while increasing consumer confidence in Kedah's halal products.
- Supporting Malaysia's national halal development agenda by introducing comprehensive compliance mechanisms for SMEs and micro-businesses.

Implications for the Halal Industry:

- Developing a more structured halal compliance framework, thereby improving food safety standards for small and medium-sized vendors.
- Ensuring greater halal awareness and regulatory adherence within the street food sector.

Implications for Vendors:

- Helping vendors understand halal requirements and improve their competitiveness in both domestic and international halal markets.
- Enhancing consumer trust in their products, thereby strengthening the presence of halal food businesses.

Implications for Consumers:

- Providing assurance to Muslim consumers that food sold at night markets and food festivals is halal and toyyiban.
- Strengthening public confidence in halal food, thereby supporting the growth of the local halal food industry.

5. Implementing Halal Awareness Courses as a Prerequisite for Business Licensing

The study proposes that Halal Awareness Courses be made mandatory for food vendors at night markets and food festivals before they are granted business licenses. This measure will increase halal compliance among street food vendors, boost consumer confidence, and support Malaysia's sustainable halal industry development.

6. Kedah's Role as a Key Driver of Malaysia's Halal Industry

As one of Malaysia's states with a significant Muslim population, Kedah plays a pivotal role in developing the national halal ecosystem. With initiatives such as the Halal Industrial Park and support programs for businesses seeking halal certification, Kedah is well-positioned to become a major hub for Malaysia's halal industry.

With a well-structured strategic approach, MPIHK can strengthen the state's halal ecosystem, attract greater investment in the halal sector, and contribute to the economic development of Kedah.

Analysis of Research Findings

This study has identified several key factors contributing to the development of the halal industry in Kedah. The Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK) serves as a

strategic initiative aimed at strengthening the state's halal ecosystem through governance alignment, compliance enforcement, industry competitiveness enhancement, and export-oriented marketing strategies.

1. Strengthening Coordination Between Government, Industry, and Academic Institutions

Findings indicate that a lack of coordination among stakeholders—government agencies, industry players, and academic institutions—remains a major challenge in the halal sector. MPIHK has the potential to serve as an official platform that unifies stakeholders' interests, facilitating collaboration between the state government, higher education institutions (UniSHAMS and UUM), and halal businesses. This alignment will ensure that halal industry policies and strategies are tailored to the state's economic needs, supporting the advancement of the halal sector in accordance with the Malaysia Halal Policy and the New Industrial Master Plan 2030. With strong synergy among stakeholders, MPIHK can function as a primary driver of halal development, monitoring, and governance in Kedah.

2. Ensuring Strengthened Halal Standards Among Industry Players

The study finds that compliance with Malaysia's halal standards remains a challenge for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially in the food and beverage sector, micro-businesses, and the street food industry. MPIHK is well-positioned to enhance halal enforcement mechanisms, including mandating Halal Awareness Courses for food vendors as a prerequisite for obtaining business licenses at night markets and food festivals. This initiative will not only improve industry players' understanding of halal compliance and the principles of *toyyiban* but also ensure that Muslim consumers have access to more rigorously certified halal products. Additionally, MPIHK's role in streamlining halal certification processes will boost investor confidence and strengthen Kedah's competitiveness in both national and international halal markets.

3. Enhancing Global Marketing Strategies for Kedah's Halal Products

Despite the rapid growth of Kedah's halal industry, its marketing strategies remain fragmented, limiting its ability to penetrate international markets. The study suggests that MPIHK should adopt a more structured approach, including halal business matching with global industry players, the establishment of halal research grants to drive product innovation, and the development of robust export mechanisms for halal products. As part of its long-term strategy, MPIHK could also collaborate with UniSHAMS and UUM to develop entrepreneurial capacity-building programs and support academic research initiatives on halal industry development. These measures are expected to enhance the global competitiveness of Kedah's halal products, solidifying the state's position as a key halal hub in Malaysia.

4. Expanding Halal Training for Small and Medium Enterprises

Increasing halal awareness among SMEs is essential for ensuring compliance within the street food sector. The study recommends the implementation of halal training programs as a requirement for obtaining business licenses, particularly for street food vendors operating in night markets and food festivals.

Additionally, MPIHK is encouraged to launch a government-sponsored Halal Awareness Course initiative for the first 200 vendors, providing them comprehensive exposure to halal

principles and Islamic compliance requirements. This initiative is expected to enhance the competitiveness of micro-entrepreneurs in the halal sector while ensuring Muslim consumers have access to certified halal products.

This study demonstrates that MPIHK has the potential to serve as a transformative force in Kedah's halal industry through policy alignment, compliance standard enforcement, halal education initiatives, and strategic market positioning. By establishing structured governance mechanisms, investor-friendly policies, and training programs tailored to SMEs, MPIHK can drive sustainable halal industry growth, reinforcing Kedah's position as a premier halal hub and contributing to Malaysia's vision of becoming a global halal reference center.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the Kedah Halal Industry Development Council (MPIHK) has the potential to serve as a key driver in strengthening the state's halal ecosystem. Through a systematic approach, MPIHK can enhance governance alignment, reinforce halal compliance standards, expand halal education initiatives, and refine global marketing strategies for Kedah's halal products.

A well-structured policy coordination framework within MPIHK will enable the resolution of major halal industry challenges, including insufficient coordination among government bodies, industry players, and academic institutions, low awareness among SMEs, and weaknesses in international marketing strategies for halal products. By implementing the right strategies, MPIHK can not only fortify Kedah's halal ecosystem but also support Malaysia's ambition to become a Global Halal Hub, positioning Kedah as a progressive and sustainable reference center for the halal industry.

Furthermore, MPIHK holds promise in boosting the competitiveness of Kedah's halal products, attracting halal investments, and fostering innovation within the sector through strategic collaborations with academic institutions, industry stakeholders, and international halal certification bodies. If effectively implemented, MPIHK can serve as a model for halal industry governance, setting a benchmark for other states in Malaysia.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, several research directions can be explored to further strengthen halal industry development in Kedah and Malaysia:

1. Effectiveness Study on MPIHK's Implementation of Halal Industry Policies
 - Assessing the extent to which MPIHK's policy framework improves halal industry monitoring, compliance with certification standards, and coordination among key stakeholders.
2. Impact Study on Halal Training Empowerment and SME Competitiveness
 - Analyzing how halal awareness and training programs enhance the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and their accessibility to international markets.
3. Study on Halal Business Matching and Marketing Models
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of halal marketing strategies, including how Kedah can sustain its halal product competitiveness in global markets through export platforms and industry-matching initiatives with international halal organizations.

4. Study on Technological Integration in Halal Industry Development
 - Investigating how digitalization, halal blockchain technology, and compliance monitoring innovations can strengthen halal certification systems, improve consumer awareness, and ensure transparency in the halal supply chain.
5. Study on Halal Economic Integration and Halal Tourism in Kedah
 - Examining the relationship between halal tourism and the halal industry and exploring how Kedah can leverage its tourism sector to support the growth of its halal economy.

With comprehensive and continuous research, MPIHK can further solidify Kedah's position as a leading halal industry hub, ensuring that the state's halal sector develops progressively, sustainably, and competitively at both national and global levels.

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