

Motives and Challenges of Small Businesses for Halal Certification: The Case of Indonesia

Viverita¹, Ratih Dyah Kusumastuti², Riani Rachmawati³

The demand for halal certified products, especially for food and beverages in a country with majority Muslim customers, has increased significantly. This phenomenon shows an increasing awareness for halal products. However, only a limited number of studies examine the awareness of producers, especially small businesses, towards halal certification. Therefore, this study aims to identify the small businesses' perception of halal certification, their motives, and their challenges in certifying their products. The data is obtained by conducting a focus group discussion with small businesses operating in the Greater Jakarta Area and confirmed via an in-depth interview with the officer in charge of the certification administration. Results from the study reveal that most of the small businesses recognize the importance of halal certification to their businesses. The results also reveal that among the most important motives for the decision to get the halal certification is to increase sales or profits, to expand the market, to offer security in consuming the products, and self-awareness of the business owner. Conversely, this study also finds that the challenging factors in obtaining halal certification include different procedures and costs of applying halal certification in different provinces and the lack of standardization of information provided by different institutions. Furthermore, this study finds that the implementation of halal certification procedures and related costs depend on the policy at the district level.

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1. Introduction

As published by The PEW Research Center, as of 2010, there are about 1.6 billion Muslim population and it is estimated that it will grow to about 30 percent of the world's population in 2030 (PEW, 2011). Due to high population growth, the demand for *halal* food products will undoubtedly increase, as consumer awareness of sharia compliance also increases in countries with sizeable Muslim populations. Globally, in 2010, the market for halal products was expected to reach USD2.3 trillion, while only USD 347 billion were fulfilled (Kassim, 2011). There is thus a big opportunity to serve such a large demand.

The concept of halal food in Islam refers to the safety, hygiene, and processes that make them permissible to consume (Thalib et al., 2015). Therefore, consumers who buy halal products not only for religious reasons but also due to their concern about the *healthiness*,

¹ Corresponding author

Associate Professor. Department of Management Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia. E-mail: viverita.d@ui.ac.id; viverita@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor. Department of Management Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia. E-mail: ratih.dyah@ui.ac.id; ratih.irzan@gmail.com

³ Lecturer. Department of Management Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia. E-mail: riani.rachmawati@ui.ac.id; riani.rachmawati@gmail.com

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wholesomeness, and *hygiene* of the food (Kassim, 2011, and Soesilowati, 2010). In other words, they buy the confidence factor of the halal products. Therefore, halal products are generating more interest due to increasing consumer concern about the environment and health (Global Pathfinder Report, 2011).

The Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) in collaboration with the agency for assessment of food, medicines and cosmetics (LPPOM) has set the objective of Halal certification as “*to give a certainty about halal status of food, medicines, cosmetics and other products to reassure the consumer mind in consuming the product. Continuity of halal production process is a manufacturer guarantee by applying Halal Assurance System*” (LPPOM-MUI). Currently, the LPPOM-MUI has issued 22,245 halal certifications for food products, medicine, and cosmetics available in the Indonesian market (LPPOM-MUI, 2014). This indicates that some producers are aware of the importance of providing halal food and having halal certification. Halal consumption is not limited only to food products but may also be associated with cosmetics, medicines, and other products such as fashion and banking products, etc. (Jusmaliani and Nasution, 2009). In addition, food products are considered halal if they are made from halal materials and are processed as ordered by sharia (Islamic) law (Talib et al, 2010).

Studies of halal certification from the viewpoint of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is very rare, not to mention studies from the customers' perspective. Among others, a study by Abdul et al. (2010) reveals that more than fifty percent of Malaysian SMEs agree that Malaysia has an appropriate control method for halal certification compliance. However, less than 40 percent of the entrepreneurs agree that they receive the necessary information from the Malaysian halal hub. As micro and small businesses have an important role in the Indonesian economy, which is a huge potential market for halal products, it is important to investigate their awareness of the importance of halal certification. Furthermore, we also need to evaluate the challenges in obtaining halal food certification by micro and small businesses and confirm our findings with views from the regulators and constraints they face in disseminating and informing producers regarding halal certification. However, only a few and limited studies had been conducted to examine the perception of small business owners on halal food certification in Indonesia. For example, Abdul et al. (2013) found that most of the Indonesian SMEs in Yogyakarta City are aware of the process in halal food certification. In addition, SMEs also agreed that having halal food certification will increase customer confidence and satisfaction. In contrast, Prabowo et al. (2015) reveal several obstacles in obtaining halal food certification by the food services industry in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The most important factor is the lack of sensitization regarding halal food certification, such as the procedures, requirements, and benefits to the SMEs. In addition, the respondents also mention that halal food certification is expensive and complicated. Furthermore, most of the respondents agree that the taste of food is more important than being halal certified.

The Greater Jakarta is a city with the highest population density, and most of them are Muslim compared to other cities; so, the need for halal foods is considered high. Therefore, we need to know the producers' (especially small business) perception of halal certification and their motivations to comply with the halal assurance system. Since there are limited studies of halal food certification from the supply side, this study aims to investigate the motives and challenges faced by small business in obtaining halal food certification.

Data for this study is obtained by conducting a focus group discussion (FGD) with small business owners and in-depth interviews (IDI) with related government officers involved in the halal food certification processes. Results from this study reveal that most of the

producers agreed on the importance of halal certification to their businesses. Furthermore, most of them received information regarding the certification process and procedures from their colleagues through social media or by directly asking the officers from the Halal certification office. In general, the business owners also admitted that there are different standards and procedures for obtaining halal certification in different regions. The results also reveal that the most important motives for the decision to get halal certification are to increase sales or profits, to expand the market, to offer security in consuming the products, and self-awareness of the business owner. Findings from in-depth interviews with the officer from the agency for inspection of food, medicines and cosmetics - Indonesian Council of Ulama (LPPOM-MUI) – confirm that, although LPPOM-MUI has established a formal standard and procedure for halal certification process, the implementation depends on the policy of the local division of the relevant ministry at the district level. The remaining of the paper is as follows. Section 2 describes halal certification requirements and procedures in Indonesia, followed by the research methodology in Session 3. Section 4 presents the findings, and we conclude the paper in Section 5.

2. Review of Literature

In order to increase the consumer confidence of purchasing their products, the producers seek to obtain halal certificates to confirm that the products are safe and hygienic to consumers (Chen et al., 2014). Consumer recognition is not the only reason for obtaining food certification. Other motives for acquiring halal certification are to meet legal requirements (Kafetzopoulos and Gotzamani, 2014; Tomasevic et al., 2013; and Wu, 2012). Furthermore, Mensah and Julien (2011) suggest product quality improvement as another motivation to obtain halal certification. Nonetheless, the effort to obtain halal food certification is not without its difficulties. Several previous studies find the importance of government support as well as legal pressure in creating incentives to obtain halal food certification. For example, Chen et al. (2014), Pswarayi et al. (2014), and Karaman et al. (2012) suggest that the lack of government support is a limitation in implementing food certification. In addition, Tunalioglu et al. (2012) find the importance of financial support from the government as one way to increase food certification implementation. Meanwhile, Escanciano and Santos-Vijande et al. (2014), Maldonado-Siman et al. (2014), and Macheka et al. (2014) suggest the lack of legal pressure from the government as an obstacle to halal certification. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2014) find that limited access to adequate information is also a limitation in obtaining food certification.

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) propose the institutional theory of halal certification, which suggests that businesses are constrained by rules, regulations and policies as external environment pressures. Therefore, any strategies or any actions taken by them must comply with the environment. Based on the institutional theory, Talib et al. (2016) suggest that there are three theories that explain the motivation of halal food certification: coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphism. The coercive isomorphism suggests that the motivation to obtain halal certification is imposed by the regulatory body and the need to gain business legitimization and is known as government motivation factor. In addition, normative isomorphism advises that the pressure to obtain halal certification comes from the need to comply with industrial norms and the customers (Consumer motivation factor), while mimetic isomorphism aims to mimic competitors' best practice as an act to survive (Competitor factor).

A recent study by Thalib et al. (2015) find 15 aspects of motivation and 20 limitations as major considerations in the effort to implement halal food certification in the industry. Using Pareto

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analysis, they categorize motivation and limitation factors into major internal and major external factors. They find, in general, internal financial issues (high cost of implementation), employee-related barriers (lack of knowledge), and operationalization problems as major internal obstacles to implementing halal food certification. Meanwhile, the major external limitations consist of poor recognition, negative perception and lack of government support.

Previous studies also suggest that halal certification for foods is a critical element that can influence some important factors of buying decisions (Alam and Sayuti, 2011), consumer preference (Mohayidin and Kamarulzaman, 2014) and willingness to pay (Verbeke et al., 2013), as well as their confidence (Escanciano and Santos-Vijande, 2014a). These findings can be related to the motivational factors of obtaining halal certification by producers.

Other studies reveal that the need for halal products depends on the availability of information about the products, which is represented by the halal certificate. Previous studies find that one of the important factors customers are concerned about when purchasing a product is the halal certification issued by respected institutions (Umihanic, 2009). Furthermore, Yusof et al. (2014) examine Muslim consumers' perception on halal branding in Malaysia and find that most of them agree that producers need to follow all requirements needed for halal certification to obtain consumers' trust and confidence. In addition, the survey results of restaurant managers' perception about halal food certification reveal that most of them agree that having halal certification is an advantage (Marzuki et al., 2014). However, Veldstra et al. (2014) find that some fruit producers in the US were reluctant to certify their product due to its having higher financial costs than benefits.

Based on the literature it can be concluded that important factors considered by producers to obtain halal certification range from the regulatory push factor to the need to survive. In addition, lack of government support and the high cost of obtaining certification are also recognized as obstacles.

3. Halal Certification in Indonesia

The Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) founded LPPOM-MUI in 1989 to perform halal certification in Indonesia. The position of LPPOM-MUI was strengthened with the issuance of Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs in 2001, which declared MUI as the halal certification body to perform inspection/audit, determination of fatwa (Islamic sharia decree), and issuing of halal certificates in Indonesia. Beside LPPOM-MUI, MUI also has the Fatwa Committee, which issues a fatwa based on the results of halal certification processes conducted by LPPOM-MUI. The agency also acknowledges halal certificates issued by 39 foreign halal certification bodies in 23 countries, and currently, LPPOM-MUI has a subsidiary in thirty-three provinces.

The process of halal certification mainly consists of seven steps (LPPOM-MUI, 2015a) as follows.

1. The applying company understands the requirement of halal certification (as stated in HAS 23000 standard) and attends a halal assurance system seminar/training.
2. The applying company implements the halal assurance system.
3. The applying company prepares halal certification documents.
4. The applying company registers for halal certification.

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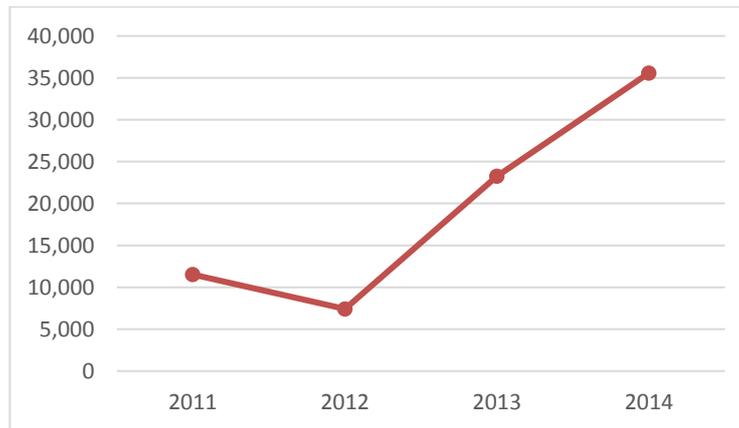
5. The applying company conducts monitoring prior to auditing and pays for the certification process.
6. LPPOM-MUI conducts the auditing process at the applying company's sites.
7. The applying company conducts monitoring in the post-auditing period.
8. The applying company receives a halal certificate, and it is valid for a two-year period.

The certification process is conducted for each product. According to HAS 23000 standard, companies have the freedom to choose the appropriate methods and approaches to apply the halal assurance system, as long as they can meet the following eleven criteria (LPPOM-MUI, 2015b).

1. The top management team (TMT) has a halal policy and publicizes it to the stakeholders.
2. The TMT must establish a halal management team.
3. The company must have a written procedure for training and education, which must be conducted at least once a year.
4. Materials do not contain anything from pork or its derivatives, alcoholic beverage or its derivatives, blood, flesh, and parts of the human body.
5. The product's name or brand is not associated with non-halal materials.
6. Production facilities cannot be used interchangeably with non-halal products.
7. The company must have a written procedure for critical activities (such as new material selection, purchasing, inspection, production, etc.)
8. The company must have a written procedure that ensures product traceability: products are from approved materials and made in the approved production facility.
9. The company must have a written procedure for handling products that have already been made from unapproved materials and in an unapproved production facility.
10. The company must have a written procedure for internal audit, which must be conducted at least once every six months, and the results should be reported to LPPOM-MUI.
11. The TMT must evaluate the effectiveness of halal assurance system implementation at least once every year, and the results must be disseminated to all parties involved.

In order to increase the number of halal products in Indonesia and support small industries, the government of Indonesia allocates a budget for the halal certification process fees of small industries. The number of products that can be supported depends on the available budget each year. The number of products certified by LPPOM-MUI in the period of 2011-2014 can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Number products certified in 2011-2014 (Source: LPPOM-MUI, 2015b)



4. Data Collection and Analysis

The focus group discussion is conducted using a structured format consisting of five topics: motivation(s) to certify, the benefits of being certified, knowledge of certification procedures, perception of certification processes, and obstacles in obtaining certification. The discussion with small business owners lasts approximately for two hours. The discussion is audio-taped and transcribed. There are nine informants that have been selected for this study. Seven out of nine informants are females, while the rest are males. The business area of the respondents varied from snack producers, frozen chicken sellers, and snack sellers to catering owners. In addition, we also conduct interviews with an officer in charge of halal certification matters to get information from the institution’s perspectives to verify the views expressed by small business owners.

The detailed profiles of the informants are described in Table 1 as stated below.

Table 1: Detailed profiles of respondents

No.	Respondents	Products	Location
1	A	Frozen Chicken	Tangerang
2	B	Snacks	Depok
3	C	Aloe Vera Drinks	Depok
4	D	Milk Pie	Depok
5	E	Catering	Depok
6	F	Mini Spring rolls	Tangerang
7	G	Processed Meat (Chicken rendang)	Depok
8	H	Snacks	Depok
9	I	Snacks	Depok

This section describes results from *focus group discussion* (FGD) conducted with the owners of small businesses whose products have been halal certified as well as *in-depth interviews* with the officer from the Halal certification office (LPPOM MUI) to confirm the information provided by the small business owners.

4.1 Motives for Applying Halal Certification

The results from the focus group discussion reveal that most of the business owners agree on the importance of halal certification to their businesses. Most of the informants also agree that increasing the value of the products is their motive for certifying their products, as mentioned by some informants.

Several motives for obtaining halal food certification are revealed by the informants in the discussion. For example, they agree that having halal food certification will increase the product's value and offers the feeling of safety and certainty to customers. These findings are consistent with Chen et al. (2014). Furthermore, we also find that there are at least three factors that motivate small firms to obtain halal food certification: to increase income, to educate the public towards consumption of halal products, and to increase their competitive advantages (Thalib et al., 2015. See also Escanciano and Santos-Vijande, 2014a; Wu, 2012; Fotopoulos et al., 2011; Wilcock et al., 2011).

In addition, they also add that being Muslims themselves, they are aware of their obligation to provide halal foods to their consumers. Therefore, they need to offer security for their customers in consuming their products. Respondents also reveal that consumer awareness of halal products is one of the motivations behind the certification. This result is consistent with Chen et al. (2014) that one of the motivations to implement food certification is to meet the customers' requirements.

4.2 Benefits of Halal Certification

When asked about the benefits of having halal certification, most of the informants agree that it increases demand for their products, thereby increasing their profits. In addition, having halal certification will increase the value of their products and will increase employees' self-confidence since consumers will prefer products with halal certification than not, thereby increasing the firm's competitive advantage.

Based on the above statements, informants agree that having halal certification will increase demand for their products and thus increase the confidence in producing and selling them as well as their competitive advantage. This finding indicates that there are competitive advantages from implementing food certification as a result of increased consumers' confidence as suggested by Escanciano and Santos-Vijande (2014a).

4.3 Knowledge, Information and Perception Towards Halal Certification Procedures and Process

In Indonesia, halal certification for foods, medicines and cosmetics is conducted by LPPOM-MUI under the supervision by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI). The information about the requirements and procedures for obtaining halal certification has been published through various media. For example, in the website of LPPOM-MUI, related government offices include the district office of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises, district office of Trade and Industry, as well as district office of Health. However, when we ask the informants about their sources of information on halal certification, most of them gain the knowledge from their colleagues through social media or from the officers from the local office of the Ministry of Trade and Industry or from the local office of the Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises. However, the informants also mention that there is inadequate information about the requirements as well as procedures to obtain halal certification. This finding is similar to

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that of Escanciano and Santos-Vijande (2014b) which mentioned it as one of the limitations to obtaining certification. In addition, it is also in line with Prabowo et al. (2015)'s study which examined the food service industry in East Kalimantan.

The informants also mention that although LPPOM-MUI has announced the criteria and details of the process, which consists of seven steps, there are still variations in the implementation of the rules in different areas.

4.4 Views from the Regulator

In order to have balanced information on the procedures and processes required to obtain halal certification, we conduct an in-depth interview with an officer from the agency for the inspection of food, medicines, and cosmetics—Indonesian Council of Ulama (LPPOM-MUI).

The interview reveals that actually there are standards and procedures to follow in order for Indonesian businesses to obtain halal certificate. As mentioned by the officer, every business owner who wants to apply for halal certification must follow three necessary steps. First, they have to attend the sensitization program. Second, they will be assessed; this includes the legal aspect of their businesses and the requirements for health certification. Third, if they have fulfilled all the requirements, they will be given the certificate. However, there is a different procedure applied between processing (retail) products and restaurants. The former must have health certification before applying for halal certification, while the latter may directly apply for halal certification.

In terms of publicizing the halal certification, the office for inspection of food, medicines, and cosmetics – Indonesian Council of Ulama (LPPOM-MUI) – has posted all the requirements and procedures on its website. In addition, to reach those who do not have internet access, the office also regularly disseminates the information through the representative office in each province and district as well as collaborate with the District Office of the Ministry of Health, the District Office of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, as well as the District Office of the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs. For example, the Jakarta Province conducts open house as a socialization program every Tuesday. Furthermore, there is also a regular Halal Olympiad for elementary to senior high school students every year to increase their awareness of halal products.

In terms of the cost of obtaining halal certification, LPPOM-MUI has set a standard price for halal certification of each product, ranging from IDR 2.8 million – IDR 3.7 million. However, for small businesses, this may be too expensive, especially for newly established businesses. This issue is consistent with the limitations of small businesses in obtaining halal food certification, as mentioned by the small business' owners in East Kalimantan (Prabowo et al., 2015).

Furthermore, since SMEs are under the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs, LPPOM-MUI has no obligation to directly support them in obtaining halal certification. By coordinating with the district office of the related parties, such as the district office of the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs, as well as the district office of the Ministry of Health, they try to help in educating SMEs about the importance of having halal certification, and they conduct halal-related events regularly. Therefore, the local government has to allocate a certain amount of its annual budget to the district/local office of the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs and the district/local office of the Ministry of Trade and Industry to help small businesses applying for halal certification by subsidizing the certification fee. However, the amount of allocated budget may

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differ in various areas/districts, resulting in a limited number of small businesses that can receive support within a certain period in one area/district. Therefore, some small businesses may not need to pay the certification fee, while others may need to pay for themselves.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to examine the perception of small businesses towards halal certification and their motives for obtaining the certification. A number of issues are discussed and have been explained and justified by the informants. In terms of their perceptions of halal certification, most of the respondents are aware of the importance of having the certification and consider it as important to expand their market. In addition, they also mention that having halal certification will increase their profits. This finding is agreed by an officer from the LPPOM-MUI, as the only agency for inspection of food, medicines, and cosmetics under the supervision of the Indonesian Council of Ulama. He mention that halal certification will increase small business' growth since it will provide consumers with a product that is known to be safe and hygienic.

Furthermore, most of the informants also mention different procedures and costs for applying halal certification in different regions. The officer agrees with this finding that there may be different procedures for obtaining halal certification, based on the types of products registered for the certification. For example, for processed foods, it is required to have a health certification first before registering for a halal certification. On the other hand, restaurants may directly apply for halal certification without having a health certification first as a requirement.

In terms of the cost of applying for halal certification, he mention that SMEs are associated with the Ministry of Cooperative and SMEs in each province/district, and they may have different amount of budget allocated for the halal certification process. In addition, most of the respondents say that there is not much information about halal certification, including its requirements and procedures.

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