

Halal Certification in Supporting the Growth of Halal MSMEs (Case Study of the Sidikalang Coffee Industry)

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Abstract

This study analyzes the role of halal certification in supporting the growth of halal MSMEs, with a case study on the coffee industry in Sidikalang. Indonesia has great potential for the halal industry due to its large Muslim population and increasing consumer awareness. Halal certification is strategic for MSMEs because it can increase competitiveness, build consumer trust, and open access to a wider supply chain. This study uses a qualitative approach through case studies, in-depth interviews with four coffee SME actors, and secondary data from policy documents, reports, and scientific articles. The results show that SMEs' understanding of halal certification is still low due to assumptions about natural raw materials, the application process being considered complicated, lengthy, and expensive, and a lack of socialization from the government. However, SMEs that have certification have experienced an increase in sales, market share, and consumer trust. Collaboration between the government, relevant agencies, and educational institutions is needed to promote inclusive halal certification, especially in non-urban areas.

Keywords: MSMEs; Infrastructure Development; Entrepreneurial Environment; Islamic Economics.

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INTRODUCTION

The halal industry has been identified as one of the economic sectors that has great potential to drive economic growth in Indonesia (Imsar et al., 2024). This potential is supported by a large Muslim population and increasing consumer awareness of halal products. However, the development of the halal industry in Indonesia still faces various challenges that need to be overcome. One important challenge is the implementation of halal certification, especially among Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (Wimala Pastika et al., 2023; Yuwana & Hasanah, 2021).

MSMEs play an important role in the Indonesian economy. Therefore, the growth of halal MSMEs is an important focus in the development of the halal industry as a whole. Halal certification has a strategic role in supporting the growth of halal MSMEs in various ways. First, halal certification can increase the competitiveness of MSME products in domestic and international markets (Camelia et al., 2024; Wartyo & Samsuri, 2020). With halal certification, MSME products can reach a wider market, including Muslim consumers who are increasingly selective in choosing products. Second, halal

certification builds consumer confidence in MSME products. Consumers feel safer and more confident in consuming halal-certified products, thereby increasing consumer loyalty and preference. Third, halal certification can open opportunities for MSMEs to enter the supply chain of the larger halal industry.

Previous theoretical and empirical studies have made significant contributions in understanding the role of halal certification. Theoretically, Consumer Protection Theory and Islamic Legal Theory (Fiqh Muamalah and Halal Guarantee) are relevant in explaining the urgency of halal certification from the perspective of consumer rights and the obligation of producers to provide halal and *thayyib* (good) products (Wimala Pastika et al., 2023). Empirically, previous research shows that halal certification has a positive influence on consumer purchase intentions, MSME logistics performance (Santosa et al., 2022), and MSME financial performance (Harahap et al., 2022). In addition, halal literacy programs and certification assistance have proven effective in increasing MSMEs' awareness and understanding of the importance of halal certification and assisting them in the certification process (Yuwana & Hasanah, 2021) (Hasanah et al., 2023).

However, the implementation of halal certification among MSMEs still faces various obstacles. Several phenomena identified in previous studies show that many MSME products, especially in the food and beverage sector, do not yet have halal certification (Yuwana & Hasanah, 2021). The obstacles faced by MSMEs include a lack of understanding of the importance of halal certification and its benefits for business. This happens because MSME actors feel that consumers mostly come from local people, which ultimately makes the actors feel that halal certification is not too important and also many MSME actors engaged in the processed plant or plant industry, think that the basic ingredients used come from natural products so there is no need for halal certification. The process of applying for certification is considered complicated, long, and expensive, as well as limited resources to meet certification requirements. The process of making halal certificates is indeed a bit complicated, which starts from submitting an application for halal certification, **verification of documents by BPJPH, determination of inspection fees by LPH, issuance of payment bills by BPJPH, payment by businesses, payment verification by BPJPH, examination by LPH, fatwa hearing by MUI fatwa commission, to issuance of halal certificates by BPJPH.** The length of the process in obtaining a halal certificate is around 15 to 21 working days with costs ranging from Rp. 300,000 to Rp. 5,000,000 for MSMEs and Rp. 12,500,000 for large businesses or those from abroad. In addition, the lack of socialization and assistance from the government is also a factor inhibiting the implementation of halal certification among MSMEs. Some MSME players feel that information from socialization activities from the government is lacking to them so they do not get clear information about halal certification.

This study aims to analyze in depth the role of halal certification in supporting the growth of halal MSMEs, with a case study of the coffee industry in Sidikalang. The Sidikalang coffee industry was chosen as a case study because it is one of the leading MSME sectors in the area that has great potential to thrive in the halal market. However, challenges in implementing halal certification in the Sidikalang coffee industry need to be identified and overcome so that this potential can be optimally realized. Through this case study, it is expected to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of coffee MSME players in Sidikalang towards halal certification, the

obstacles they face in the certification process, and the impact of halal certification on the development of Coffee MSMEs in Sidikalang.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, because it is able to explore in-depth information about perceptions, challenges, and the impact of halal certification on the growth of coffee MSMEs in Sidikalang. The data sources used are primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with four coffee MSME owners in Sidikalang, with 2 MSMEs that already have halal certification, namely from Tanpak Coffee and Zest Coffee, and 2 MSMEs that do not yet have halal certification, namely Sari Coffee and Nuel Coffee. This interview explores perceptions, obstacles, and the impact of halal certification on their business. In addition, interviews were also conducted with the relevant halal certification bodies. Secondary data is obtained from policy documents, official reports, scientific articles, and publications from halal institutions such as BPJPH and LPH. In analyzing the data, this research uses qualitative descriptive analysis techniques with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was carried out inductively, interpreting field data based on thematic categories that emerged from the interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MSME Perceptions of Halal Certification

The understanding of coffee MSME players in Sidikalang regarding halal certification is still relatively low and uneven. This is a significant obstacle in efforts to increase the competitiveness of Sidikalang coffee products in a market that is increasingly concerned with halal aspects. Many MSME players have not yet realized the importance of halal certification, both in terms of sharia compliance and the potential for market expansion, especially for Muslim consumers (Fitri & Anindya, 2024). As expressed by Mr. Sitanggang, owner of Kopi Sari,

"I have heard about halal certification, but frankly I don't really understand the details. What I know is that it is a kind of label that shows the food we make is safe for Muslims to eat".

This statement shows that the low literacy about halal certificates has led to the low urgency felt by business actors towards the importance of halal certificate ownership. This is in line with the findings of Yuwana & Hasanah (2021), which found that the lack of knowledge about halal literacy among MSMEs has led to many MSME players who do not care about the halalness of the products they market.

One of the main causes of this condition is the assumption among MSME players that the ingredients of coffee products come from natural raw materials. This can be seen in Mr. Sitanggang's statement,

"Actually, I think that coffee is a natural product, from direct coffee beans. So I think it is halal by itself without the need for halal certification. Besides, what I know is that the cost of taking care of halal certification is very difficult, long and also quite expensive. My business is still small, so the capital is limited".

Another thing was also conveyed by Mr. Panggabean from Nuel Coffee,

"I don't think halal certification is too important because in my opinion all food is halal as long as it does not contain pork".

This view shows a lack of understanding of the basic principles of the halal product assurance system, which not only assesses the main ingredients, but also pays

attention to the processing process, equipment hygiene, and logistical aspects. In addition, the certification process is considered difficult because it takes a long time and administrative requirements are considered burdensome, especially for MSME players who have limited resources. This is in line with research findings Wimala Pastika et al. (2023), related to coffee beverage MSMEs, shows that challenges such as costs, lack of information, and changes in regulations are also the main obstacles. Similarly, the findings by Siagian et al. (2024) highlighted that religiosity is not the main factor in obtaining halal certification, but economic and administrative factors are decisive, which is also reflected in interviews with business actors in Sidikalang.

Another factor that influences negative perceptions of halal certification is the lack of information available directly at the local level. Mr Sitanggung explained that information on socialization activities that had been carried out from the government was not clear to them. Socialization from certification bodies or related agencies has not widely reached business actors, especially in remote areas. This is in line with previous research, one of which is a study Ansyah et al (2024) which shows that MSME actors tend to experience difficulties in the certification process due to the lack of socialization and low assistance from the authorities. Similarly, in the study Asro & Sofyan (2022), mentioning that the lack of initiative from institutions such as the regional MUI or BPJPH is a major factor in the low halal certification rate among small business actors. Although BPJPH has provided online services through the SIHALAL application and assisted several MSMEs, not all business actors know the existence and how to use the platform. In addition, limited human resources at related institutions are also a challenge in expanding the reach of education and assistance to all MSME players, especially those in rural areas (Asro & Sofyan, 2022)

The Role of Halal Certification on the Growth of Halal MSMEs in Sidikalang

Halal certification has a significant impact on business development, especially for coffee MSME players who have obtained halal certificates. This positive impact is not only limited to increasing sales, but also includes expanding market share, increasing consumer confidence, and product competitiveness. This was conveyed by Mr. Maha from Tanpak Coffee, who stated,

"since having halal certification our products have become more marketable. Customers may be more confident in buying our coffee with its quality and halalness".

Mr. Hariono from Zest Coffee added,

"what I feel is there, because those who buy are not from non-Muslims but even Muslims buy".

Thus, halal certificates have become an added value in building Muslim consumer confidence in buying products. This finding is in line with the results of research by Sari et al. (2023) which shows that consumer confidence has a positive and significant influence on consumptive behavior towards halal products on e-commerce platforms. In the context of MSMEs, this trust can be strengthened through halal certification which serves as a guarantor of quality, safety, and compliance with sharia. This means that for business actors, especially MSMEs in the food and beverage sector such as coffee, obtaining halal certification is no longer just a formality, but a strategic necessity to be able to compete and develop in a Muslim-majority market like Indonesia. This statement is in accordance with the findings of Santosa et al. (2022), which found that halal certification has a positive impact on the logistics and finances

of MSMEs, the results of research in Sidikalang show similar potential, although it has not been optimized. This belief shows that MSME players see halal certification as an important element in business professionalization efforts. This is also supported by research (Kristiana et al. (2020) which states that halal certification is able to increase product credibility and expand market access, especially in national and international trade which requires official halal legality.

In addition, certified businesses are also able to expand distribution to modern markets such as minimarkets and online marketplaces, which usually require ownership of halal certificates as part of product eligibility standards. The official recognition from the state through BPJPH increases business credibility and opens up opportunities for collaboration with other parties such as cooperatives, BUMDes, and Islamic financial institutions. Thus, halal certification not only fulfills sharia aspects, but also has a positive influence on the economic growth of MSME players in the regions. In contrast, the other two businesses, Kopi Sari and Kopi Nuel, have not experienced similar benefits because they have not yet certified. Their business focus is still limited to the local market and they do not have a strategy to expand their market reach. Lack of incentives, limited capital to finance the certification process, and lack of assistance are the main reasons they delay the certification process. In fact, in the context of a growing halal industry, delays in the adoption of halal certification have the potential to become obstacles in long-term competition.

In this case, BPJPH's efforts to encourage the acceleration of halal certification should be appreciated. The strategic steps taken by BPJPH, such as simplifying procedures, massive socialization, and financing facilitation programs, are crucial in helping businesses, especially MSMEs, to obtain halal certificates. Mr. Riswan Gaja from BPJPH explained that,

"The stages include submitting applications, checking documents, field audits to inspect production facilities and raw materials, and issuing halal certificates if all requirements are met. Or you can do it online through the free halal application (SEHATI). We emphasize the importance of separating production facilities between halal and non-halal products to avoid contamination".

Mr. Riswan Gaja also conveyed the efforts of the halal certification body in supporting Sidikalang MSMEs, namely,

"from us, we try to provide socialization and assistance to coffee MSMEs in Sidikalang through various activities, such as socialization as we have done and direct visits to MSMEs' places of business".

The implementation of an online system through the SIHALAL application and the availability of a free halal certification program for MSMEs (SEHATI) are positive innovations that facilitate the management process (BPJPH, 2025). This effort not only speeds up the process, but also increases awareness and understanding of the importance of halal product guarantees among the public and producers. With more halal-certified products, Muslim consumer confidence will continue to increase, while opening up wider market opportunities for Indonesian products in the global arena. BPJPH plays an important role in realizing a strong and competitive halal product ecosystem. However, the effectiveness of this program is still limited because it has not been fully socialized. Therefore, more active collaboration is needed between local governments, cooperative offices, and educational institutions or local communities to disseminate information and assist MSME players to be able to undergo the

certification process smoothly. In other words, halal certification has great potential in encouraging the growth of coffee MSMEs in Sidikalang if supported by business awareness, ease of procedures, and a comprehensive support system (Fathoni, 2020). The absence of a certificate is not only an administrative issue, but can have implications for limited competitiveness and market access in the midst of increasingly fierce competition in the food and beverage industry.

This research reveals that MSME players in Sidikalang generally have a basic understanding of the meaning and purpose of halal certification. They realize that the halal label is not just a religious symbol, but a guarantee of product quality that can increase consumer confidence. This view shows a positive initial form of awareness, although it has not been fully followed by concrete actions in the form of processing certification. This is in line with the *theory of consumer awareness* put forward by Schiffman and Kanuk, where consumer awareness, including business actors as part of the production chain, is influenced by perceptions of product value, health aspects, and trust in labels attached to products consumed or marketed. However, some MSME players who do not have halal certification are caused by low halal literacy (Nurbaiti et al., 2023). On the one hand, halal literacy is the knowledge of individuals or communities about a product that they will consume. The halalness or forbiddenness of a product is not only determined by the halal label, but also by the public's understanding of the ingredients used (Mashudi & Ilmi, 2024). Halal literacy helps distinguish halal or haram goods and services, thus increasing understanding of Islamic law or sharia (Yuwana & Hasanah, 2021).

Although MSME players realize the strategic value of halal certification, they still face a number of obstacles in the implementation process. Some of them are limited technical information related to the certification process, costs that are considered quite high, and the assumption that the procedure is too administrative and difficult. For MSME businesses, this is quite burdensome, resulting in many entrepreneurs who are reluctant to register their products to obtain halal certification. This shows a gap between normative understanding and the technical realities they face in the field. In this case, the *halal certification theory* as explained by Wanto & Samsuri (2020) emphasizes that halal certification is not only a sharia obligation, but also an instrument in building the competitiveness of MSME products. However, this theory is still not evenly implemented in areas that have limited access to information such as Sidikalang. This means that although theoretically halal certification can improve product quality and market confidence, in reality there are still structural barriers that hinder its comprehensive implementation.

When compared to previous research, this pattern of barriers is not new. Batubara & Harahap (2022) in their research emphasized that Indonesia is lagging behind in the development of the halal industry due to weak regulatory support and human resources. This research supports this view, because the condition of MSMEs in Sidikalang is still less than optimal, with a lack of education and a lack of synergy between stakeholders. Arif et al. (2023) also found similar things in Langkat, North Sumatra, that the lack of collaboration between academics, businesses, communities and government slowed the growth of halal MSMEs. This is very relevant to Sidikalang, which does not have a strong enough supporting ecosystem. Meanwhile, research Imsar et al. (2024) shows that the halal industry contributes significantly to national economic growth, but MSMEs as the spearhead have not yet obtained optimal

access to certification. This underscores the importance of local attention to micro and small actors, so that their role in the national halal industry is not only potential, but also real.

In terms of the role of halal certification in encouraging the growth of MSMEs, some business actors in Sidikalang believe that the halal label can be an added value that has an impact on increasing turnover and expanding market share. This shows that consumer trust in halal products is very strong, and halal certification is an important factor in building and maintaining that trust (Rosadi et al., 2023). Awareness of the importance of halal certification is not only owned by consumers, but also by MSME business actors who strive to meet market demands and build strong relationships with consumers through quality and halal-certified products (Camelia et al., 2024).

Research in Sidikalang also contributes to the literature on halal certification, especially in the context of MSMEs in areas that have not been optimally reached by the national halal industry infrastructure. This research is different from the studies of Kristiana et al. (2020) and Djakasaputra et al. (2023) which focuses a lot on the effectiveness of systems and institutions at the central level. This study instead highlights the field implementation aspects of the halal industry, where MSME players face complex administrative realities without adequate assistance. This shows that although regulations and certification programs are formally available, their implementation has not been fully adaptive to factual conditions in the field. The lack of halal literacy, technical and financial limitations, and the absence of a sustainable mentoring mechanism mean that most MSMEs are unable to access the certification process optimally. Thus, the main challenge no longer lies in the availability of policies, but rather in the effectiveness of implementation and the suitability of the program approach to the real capacity of micro and small business actors, especially in non-urban areas (Huda et al., 2024). Therefore, policies that are closer to the field conditions are needed, such as simple technical training, direct assistance, and support from local governments and related institutions. If there is no concrete solution, then halal certification will only be an additional burden for MSMEs, not as an opportunity to grow (Hasanah et al., 2023; Wimala Pastika et al., 2023; Yuwana & Hasanah, 2021).

The implications of these findings are very important to be of concern to local governments and related institutions such as BPJPH, MUI, and the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs. A policy approach is needed that is not only formal and administrative, but also more responsive to the conditions of MSMEs in the field. The halal certification program needs to be designed inclusively, by providing direct assistance, easy-to-understand training, and equal access to information to remote areas. Collaboration between institutions and local stakeholders is also key to effectively accelerate the certification process. Without concrete support, MSMEs will continue to face technical and bureaucratic barriers that hinder their growth in the halal industry (Ansyah et al., 2024; Kristiana et al., 2020; Siagian et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that halal certification plays a crucial role in supporting the growth of halal MSMEs, as illustrated by the Sidikalang coffee industry case study. Although MSME players in Sidikalang generally have a basic understanding of the meaning and purpose of halal certification as a guarantee of product quality that

increases consumer confidence, many have not implemented it. The main obstacles faced by MSMEs in the certification process include low halal literacy, the assumption that natural products such as coffee are halal by themselves, the perception that the application process is complicated, long, and expensive, and the lack of adequate socialization and assistance from the government and related institutions.

In contrast, coffee MSMEs in Sidikalang that already have halal certification experience significant positive impacts, including increased sales, expanded market share, and increased consumer confidence. Halal certification not only increases product credibility and expands domestic and international market access, but also enables MSMEs to enter the modern market and open up collaboration opportunities with various parties. This shows that halal certification is not just a religious formality, but a strategic necessity to compete and thrive in Muslim-majority markets.

The gap between normative understanding and technical reality in the field, especially in areas that are less accessible to the national halal industry infrastructure, is a major challenge. The implementation of halal certification policies and programs has not been fully adaptive to the capabilities of micro and small MSME actors, especially in non-urban areas. Therefore, more responsive and inclusive policies are needed, including simple technical training, continuous direct assistance, and equitable access to information to remote areas. Active collaboration between local governments, cooperative agencies, educational institutions, and local communities is also crucial to effectively accelerate the certification process. Without this concrete support, halal certification has the potential to become an additional burden rather than an opportunity for MSME growth.

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