

Exploring Muslim Bumiputra Entrepreneurs' Reluctances Toward Halal Certification in Malaysia's Hotel and Tourism Sector

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ABSTRACT

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Halal certification contributes to shaping Malaysia's hotel and tourism industries, particularly by catering to the needs of Muslim travellers and furthering the country's global reputation as a centre of Islamic tourism. However, while Malaysia leads the world in the halal-tourism business, a degree of resistance has been observed among Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs toward halal certification in the hotel and tourism industry. This review aims to explore the reluctances of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs toward halal certification in Malaysia's hotel and tourism sector. A qualitative review analysis was conducted to understand the cultural and behavioural factors influencing this reluctance. The review analysis revealed several Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs' reluctances toward halal certification in Malaysia's hotel and tourism sector, namely: (a) assumption of presumed halal status; (b) limited awareness of certification standards; (c) resource and operational constraints; and (d) lack of perceived market pressure. In conclusion, the reluctance of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs in Malaysia's hotel and tourism sector to pursue halal certification is driven by interrelated factors such as presumed halal status, limited awareness of certification standards, operational and resource limitations, and low perceived market pressure. Future studies should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of targeted education campaigns and financial incentives.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature on halal certification by exploring the reluctances of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs in Malaysia's hotel and tourism sector. This study offers valuable insights into how cultural apprehensions, regulatory burdens, and limited economic incentives influence their certification decisions and engagement within the halal tourism ecosystem.

1. Introduction

In most advanced democratic countries, the conduct of by-elections is an integral part in Halal certification contributes to shaping Malaysia's hotel and tourism industries, particularly by catering to the needs of Muslim travellers and furthering the country's global reputation as a centre of Islamic tourism. There is a need for many hotels to transform their operations to meet the halal standard, such as providing prayer facilities and adopting halal food guidelines (Abdul Karim et al., 2022). The authorities and stamp of halal by JAKIM and certifying organisations will enforce Islamic guidelines and enforcement, and at the same time, the enforcement of regulations is complicated due to overlapping court jurisdictions (Nazim & Md Yusof, 2023). It is also known that customers have a positive perception of the service quality possessed by halal-certified hotels and have high loyalty to Shariah-compliant hospitality concepts (Othman & Mohd Isa, 2022). To fully realise the potential of halal tourism in Malaysia, it is crucial to enhance transparency, regulatory consistency, and industry knowledge. A more unified national strategy can also help harmonise halal hospitality practices and engage a wider cross-section of the global Muslim travel market.

However, while Malaysia leads the world in the halal-tourism business, a degree of resistance has been observed among Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs toward halal certification in the hotel and tourism industry. They behave with some hesitation due to the inconsistency of certification level, unclear certification regulations and limited awareness of the benefits of certificates by local entrepreneurs (Md Ithnan et al., 2022). Studies also confirm that many Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs of hoteliers locate the halal certification to be rigid and complicated, requiring high operational costs and not guaranteeing any return on investment (Amir & Abdul Rahman, 2024). In addition, the absence of stable support interventions and directed outreach to Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs of hoteliers prevents the significant adoption of certification and, in turn, hampers the complete assimilation of halal standards in the tourism sector in Malaysia (Hashim & Mohd Nor, 2022).

This review can offer significant input on how to increase engagement, policy reforms, and industry growth. Understanding the socio-cultural, economic, and administrative barriers encountered by these entrepreneurs will help in crafting interventions that could be focused on trust, procedural ease, and awareness about the benefits of halal certification (Setapa et al., 2020). This is an area where research can also aid in the development of harmonised eco-labels and encourage communication between regulatory bodies and small business owners to introduce more transparent certification systems (Muda et al., 2020). Finally, the empowerment of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs in the adoption of Halal-certified tourism can strengthen the positioning of Malaysia as the world's leading halal hub and also lead to equitable industry development (Ulfy et al., 2021). Greater involvement might also foster consumer confidence and long-term viability of the Muslim-friendly tourism industry.

1.1. Research Objectives

This review aims to explore the reluctances of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs toward halal certification in Malaysia's hotel and tourism sector.

2. Literature Review

A study into the reluctances among Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs in the hotel industry and tourism sector in Malaysia to be halal certified should take into account several dimensions around the subject matter, such as culture, psychology, and market. The fear regarding halal certification among Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs can be framed within the broader realisation and acceptance of the fact that halal is not just a religious prescription but is endowed with ethical consumption and social values that appeal to the sentiments of even non-Muslims ([Saleh & Rajandran, 2025](#)). The debate begins by questioning why Muslim entrepreneurs have not readily embraced halal certification, despite the strong market and ethical rationale supporting it. Although Malaysia holds itself out as a world leader in the halal industry, there are still gaps in the industry's adoption by local stakeholders. This discrepancy underscores the urgent need to pinpoint the values guiding Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs' micro-level halal certification decision-making.

Understanding and the level of awareness of what halal certification is are significant factors in these concerns. The studies suggest that there are differences in the perception of halal among different population groups, resulting in different attitudes towards certification ([Ibrahim & Nordin, 2021](#)). To some Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs, this halal certification appears to be a regulatory imposition that adds unnecessary cost and complexity and has no clear avenue to revenue. This intricacy may result in one seeing that the halal certification is not merely an issue of financing but also an obstacle to getting into the market in the tourism sector ([Anggriani et al., 2024](#)). The psychological impacts of adopting the halal standard may induce fear of compliance and doubts about the genuineness of the certification process, which could further dissuade commitment ([Ag Majid et al., 2021](#)). Fearing non-compliance or public scrutiny, some businesses hesitate to begin the certification process. Lack of support groups and unclear regulations exacerbate this mental block. Applying for certification can seem daunting and cloudy without a clear direction, particularly for novice aspirants from the hospitality industry.

However, the situation is further complicated by generational differences in attitudes and behaviours towards halal products. Youths or those who are more modern (i.e., generation Z) tend to have lower concerns about halal logos, suggesting that non-certification factor affect their product purchase ([Sukesti et al., 2024](#)). Such consumer behaviour tendencies may lead to resistance among older Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs, as the traditional approach of simply asserting halal certification fails to attract younger customers, which contributes to their hesitancy in adapting to market realities. Furthermore, as lifestyle branding and socially responsible marketing become more prominent, the focus of certification has shifted towards brand narratives. Therefore, some entrepreneurs may value marketing appeal over formal certification, thinking it is more in line with youth preferences. This generation gap could also contribute to further degradation of halal certification as a strategic business priority and be viewed as a mere business strategy or a value-added branding for industries that are more inclined to brand and care about how something looks, like those kinds of

industries. A lack of a compelling narrative that articulates the relevance of halal to contemporary morality may deter entrepreneurs from investing on the premise that the dominant storytelling is over-regulatory conformance.

In terms of socio-economic factors, the willingness to pay for halal-certified products varies based on religion, demographics, and psychographics (Ngah et al., 2021). As such, the perceived importance and worth of adopting halal certifications are important factors in triggering consumers' intentions to support halal programs. Non-Muslims tend to accept halal-certified products in the light of ethical purchases, but this attitude is not perfectly reflected in the Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs' context, as it still holds a conservative outlook and reluctance (Katuk et al., 2021). Such a situation emphasises the role of a robust but provisional plan, which catches the attention of the public to understand the significant impact that long-term halal branding could have on the tourism industry. Another reason for low penetration is that many Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs may have little awareness of the increasing demand for halal-certified products and services among international Muslim travellers and tourism companies, and may be overlooking the growing potential of the global consumer market for halal tourism. To bridge this gap, joint efforts between government bodies and halal authorities are needed to extend personalised business support and disseminate information about the economic opportunities associated with halal compliance.

Furthermore, the non-integrated education on the process of obtaining halal certification among the Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs revealed the existence of a knowledge gap (Ghazali et al., 2020). Emphasising that halal certification is more than just a bunch of red tape to jump through but reflects a commitment to quality, product safety, and ethical standards may change the mindset of the approach to certification, which is simply a bureaucratic exercise. In the tourism industry, it is important to note that hotels and restaurants failing to meet halal requirements may lose a significant number of customers due to the increasing awareness of halal integrity and related campaigns (Akhsanty et al., 2023). Hence, the educational strategy should include workshops and digital education and collaborate with local authorities to raise awareness and build capacity. The allocation of knowledge and technical assistance to Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs will lead to better certification adoption practices.

Due to the use of social media and internet platforms by consumers to source information on halal products and certification, halal certifying authorities must have greater communication and transparency. The importance of reliable and accurate information has been highlighted in some of the research, with misinformation about and a deficit of such information contributing to perceptions and trust issues of the system and those responsible for it (Rahim et al., 2024). Efforts to engage should work to destigmatise the celebrityship process, thus reducing the reluctance felt by Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs (Boğan, 2020). This is where halal authorities will need to use digital tools and interactive content to provide accurate information in an easy-to-understand format. Strategic partnering with travel influencers and social media marketers might also help spread positive information directly or group the negative. In the end, establishing a credible online presence can be an important driver in reframing perceptions and creating confidence in the online marketplace for halal certification.

Additionally, the legal implications related to halal tourism highlight the need for strong standards that assure the market of the industry's commitment to halal principles. Recent laws focus on relaxing procedures for halal certification in hospitality businesses

while providing for the observance of Islamic law ([Kirihaara, 2021](#)). A robust regulatory regime may motivate more Muslim Bumiputera entrepreneurs to apply for the halal certification when they discover that there is someone to protect their interests and not simply turn them away. Moreover, a coherent legal framework can contribute to the harmonisation of approaches within this sector, ensuring clarity and transparency in halal service provision. Government-led incentives like tax cuts or certification subsidies can also encourage a larger number of entrepreneurs to participate in the certification. At the end of the day, efficient legal support means a higher level of faith, which equates to more added value in Malaysia as the best halal tourist destination.

In terms of culture, insouciance about halal issues may be less about Muslims' lack of knowledge or ignorance and more about deeply ingrained ideas about possessing an entrepreneurial spirit that is linked to the essence of Islam and cultural heritage ([Ahmadova & Aliyev, 2020](#)). Many Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs also struggle with the idea of halal certification, drawing attention away from existing values, such as traditional business values that carry religious connotations. For instance, [Masyhuri and Risdiyanti \(2022\)](#) found that small and medium Muslim entrepreneurs in Indonesia often face dilemmas around halal certification due to high costs, bureaucracy, and limited awareness, which reduces their willingness to engage with certification despite its religious and market benefits. Similarly, [Basarud-din et al. \(2022\)](#) note that in Malaysia, many Muslim entrepreneurs still show low compliance with halal certification, with social influences, attitudes, and awareness playing key roles in shaping compliance behavior. Therefore, understanding this complex intersection is essential to creating frameworks that stimulate business advancement within the boundaries of cultural and religious tenets, inspiring trust in the halal certification process among Muslim entrepreneurs. These cultural constraints might be reinforced by business traditions that are handed down by generation, which put an emphasis on a trust-based informal system rather than on a codified one. Thus, the perceived impact of third-party certification on the family business tradition and independence observed in logging businesses has fostered synergy within those enterprises. Promotion of halal certification programs via culturally sensitive communications and community participation may help reconcile traditional values with modern trade requirements.

In summary, the lack of receptiveness among Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs towards halal certification in the Malaysian hotel and tourism industry stems from overlapping cultural fears, modern consumption patterns, and perceptions regarding the benefits and regulations associated with halal ventures. These dimensions can be used to cultivate specific strategies to improve acceptance and understanding, which will pave the way for wider adoption of halal certification, benefiting not only individuals (i.e., entrepreneurs) but also the whole tourism sector to progress collectively. Governments, religious leaders, and industry must work together to develop confidence and standardise certifications. Steps should also be taken to overcome myths and share success stories about certified premises so that others will be encouraged to be part of the system. In the end, promoting a flourishing halal-friendly tourism ecosystem will place Malaysia as a global frontrunner in ethical and inclusive hospitality.

3. Research Methods

A qualitative review analysis was conducted to understand the cultural and behavioural factors influencing this reluctance. It involved the systematic identification and review of relevant academic research, journal articles, and government reports. These sources

were then synthesised to highlight key challenges and perceptions related to halal certification among Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs. Major databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar and MyJurnal, were employed to search for related peer-reviewed articles published from 2020 to 2025. The keyword search terms consisted of “halal certification,” “Bumiputra entrepreneurs,” “halal tourism,” “Muslim-friendly hotels,” and “Malaysia” and served as a guide to conduct a specific literature review based on research objectives.

To provide comprehensive data coverage, the included literature was screened with specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only papers focusing on the hotel and tourism industry related to halal certification, especially those related to the Muslim Bumiputera perspective in Malaysia and similar Islamic or shari’ah-based societies, were applied. Papers focusing on food production or addressing international halal standards irrelevant to tourism were not included. Thematic analysis was followed to unravel the core factors that have led to the factors contributing to disinterest in halal certification, including social-cultural, operational, economic, and psychological aspects. Patterns, themes, and findings concerning several sources were classified and analysed in the results and discussion.

The credibility and trustworthiness of this review were strengthened by the convergence of results gleaned through the triangulation of results across a wide variety of sources, as well as through the consistency of themes reported. Articles from both local and international journals were included to offer a balanced and comparative insight, particularly in terms of similarities and differences with regard to the halal certification ecosystem of Malaysia with those of other Muslim-majority nations. All references were reviewed for scientific quality, peer-reviewed status, and relevance to the context. This methodological process allowed the study to generate an integrated understanding of the multidimensionality of the reluctance of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs towards the uptake of halal certification before proposing a set of practical recommendations for future policy and research interventions to boost halal certification adoption within Malaysia’s tourism sector.

4. Results and Discussion

The review analysis revealed several Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs’ reluctances toward halal certification in Malaysia’s hotel and tourism sector, namely: (a) assumption of presumed halal status; (b) limited awareness of certification standards; (c) resource and operational constraints; and (d) lack of perceived market pressure.

4.1. Assumption of Presumed Halal Status

Many Muslim Bumiputra hoteliers tend to assume that their Islam and Malay culture automatically make them Halal. Because they already refrain from using non-Halal foods such as pork and alcohol in their personal and business activities, they tend to view certification as superfluous. This kind of perception would translate into a low priority of obtaining official Halal certification from institutions such as JAKIM or the state religious departments. This presumed halal status, supported by shared culture and religious identity, in turn, results in a nonchalant attitude with respect to halal certification processes by Muslim consumers and businesses ([Hasan et al., 2020](#)). Although Malaysia has developed a strong halal certification system to protect consumers' interests ([Aziz & Moniruzzaman, 2022](#)), its common dependency on intuitive decision-making processes

to categorise halal foods over formal verification has led to inconsistencies in their execution (Muhammad et al., 2020). Moreover, despite government intervention efforts to adopt halal and its practices, producers feel that the processes for halal certification are complex and not time-efficient, which may affect their adherence to the (Sariah et al., 2023). This lack of knowledge on the benefits of halal certification may have an impact on consumer preference and market competitiveness, and the industry should be better educated on the benefits of attaining halal certification (Mohd Daud et al., 2023). Therefore, while the potential for economic growth from halal tourism is significant, it is essential to establish mechanisms that address cultural stereotyping and bureaucratic barriers preventing Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs from accepting the certification, as these factors influence shared values (Jalaluddin et al., 2024; Musthofa et al., 2023).

4.2. Limited Awareness of Certification Standards

Although there is awareness of the culture and religion of Halal, the level of technical expertise in Halal certification criteria, documentation, and procedures could be limited. This discussion focuses on smaller hotels and homestays of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs. The distinction between 'Halal-compliant' and being 'Halal-certified' often becomes lost, especially in rural or semi-urban tourist localities. Studies have revealed that government support develops halal certification awareness and adoption in business (Md. Rodzi et al., 2023). Moreover, the current challenges of unclear criteria, poor training, and low staff ratio hinder the certification process, which also leads to hesitancy (Wannasupchue et al., 2023; Syakirah et al., 2024). Entrepreneurs are often unaware of the true meaning of halal certification, which reinforces their reluctance to pursue that certification (Hasan & Latif, 2024). Furthermore, bearing in mind that the demand for halal assurance is also growing in the tourism industry, a stronger commitment from its stakeholders and defined halal standard communication can also contribute to mitigating these issues (Akmal, 2021; Md Nawi et al., 2023). Ultimately, these complexities highlight the need for enhanced educational campaigns and supportive government policies to build trust in the halal certification process (Sudarmiatin et al., 2020).

4.3. Resource and Operational Constraints

Many of the Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs of tourism accommodations, particularly budget hotels, homestays, or family chalets, are operating at low profit margins. Obtaining and keeping Halal certification requires financial expenditure, periodic auditing, infrastructure changes (e.g. dedicated kitchen areas) and staff training. Where there is no explicit customer-driven certification requirement, SMEs view this step as costly and irrelevant. The gap between government-driven outreach and education, which is inadequate in promoting initiatives, has led many businesses to lose sight of obtaining halal certification (Mohd Fauzi et al., 2020). The lack of budget leads to limited socialisation of the halal policy, with the result that misunderstandings remain prevalent (Herlina, 2023). The financial capability of SMEs makes them unable to fulfil the requirements of certification, which in turn impairs their performance (Rafiuddin et al., 2024). Procedures for applying for halal certification have been criticised as bureaucratic, and obtaining labour for implementing halal requirements is difficult (Ahmad Nor Komar et al., 2024). Additionally, competition from other local and international halal markets exerts coercive and mimetic pressures on firms to pursue a certification mechanism; however, this may be ineffective due to resource constraints acting as a barrier (Siska et al., 2020; Susanty et al., 2024). Hence, these operational

barriers contribute to the reluctance encountered by Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs towards embracing halal certification in the hospitality industry.

4.4. Lack of Perceived Market Pressure

In most domestic tourist areas, and particularly in Malay-owned states, it is mainly Muslims who patronise such businesses because they have faith in the Bumiputra identity of their owners. Therefore, there is not as much pressure for gaining Halal certification, which is not as highly incentivised, as people tend to assume that products and services are Shariah compliant until they are proven otherwise. [Oemar et al. \(2022\)](#) indicate that there are many companies that can succeed without halal certification because there isn't enough pressure from consumers, and companies have no incentive to be certified. [Robbani \(2021\)](#) also states that hoteliers have a negative perception of halal certification as a barrier rather than a value-added feature, as they do not have any driving factor to motivate them to adopt it. Moreover, [Usman et al. \(2022\)](#) suggest an increase in public education about the existence of halal products and certification, to stimulate potential demand and see an increase in trust and advice on products, because little pressure is in the market owing to a low level of awareness. Further, government policies, although important to increase certification participation, are not the main driver for business adaptation; that lies in the market attractiveness and consumers' requirements ([Abu Bakar et al., 2023](#)). Therefore, in the absence of strong consumer demand and a lack of regulatory compliance, the discriminatory practice of seeking halal certification among Muslim Bumiputra in the hospitality industry is probably low.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the reluctance of Muslim Bumiputra entrepreneurs in Malaysia's hotel and tourism sector to pursue halal certification is driven by interrelated factors such as presumed halal status, limited awareness of certification standards, operational and resource limitations, and low perceived market pressure. These challenges highlight the need for more inclusive and tailored strategies from policymakers and certifying bodies to bridge the knowledge and resource gaps. Future studies should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of targeted education campaigns and financial incentives. Additionally, they should examine how streamlined certification processes can encourage wider adoption among small and medium Bumiputra enterprises. Research should also explore the evolving preferences of younger Muslim travellers and assess how digital engagement and consumer advocacy can reshape perceptions and demands for certified halal services. Building collaborative platforms between industry players, government agencies, and local communities could foster shared understanding and mutual trust in halal certification practices. Furthermore, longitudinal studies assessing the economic impact of halal-certified tourism establishments may provide compelling evidence to support broader certification uptake.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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