

Halal certification strategies in minority Muslim regions: A Case study of Doloksanggul, Humbang Hasundutan

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Abstract

This study examines strategies for implementing halal certification for MSMEs in Doloksanggul, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, North Sumatra, where Muslims are a minority. Halal certification is vital for catering to Muslim consumers, but its adoption is low – only 0.5% of 288 culinary businesses are certified. Challenges include perceptions of unnecessary certification, limited information, and a lack of awareness about its economic benefits. Despite some government outreach improving awareness, more consistent education and collaboration are needed. The study recommends strategies that consider local cultural dynamics and emphasize enhancing infrastructure, access, and training to boost MSME competitiveness and market reach.

Public interest statement:

This study is significant for MSMEs in Doloksanggul as it raises awareness about halal certification in areas with minority Muslim populations. It enhances competitiveness, draws in Muslim customers, and offers suggestions for successful government initiatives, ultimately aiding local economic development and community well-being around the Lake Toba tourism area.

Keywords: Halal certification, muslim minority, certification strategy, MSMEs.

Paper type: Case Study

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ARTICLE INFO:

Received 5/30/2025
Revised: 6/18/2025
Accepted: 7/16/2025
Online First 7/31/2025



SERAMBI: Jurnal Ekonomi
Manajemen dan Bisnis Islam,
Vol 7, No. 3, 2025, 259-274
eISSN 2685-9904



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Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji strategi penerapan sertifikasi halal bagi UMKM di Doloksanggul, Kabupaten Humbang Hasundutan, Sumatera Utara, di mana Muslim merupakan minoritas. Sertifikasi halal sangat penting untuk melayani konsumen Muslim, tetapi penerapannya masih rendah – hanya 0,5% dari 288 usaha kuliner yang tersertifikasi. Tantangannya meliputi persepsi sertifikasi yang tidak diperlukan, keterbatasan informasi, dan kurangnya kesadaran tentang manfaat ekonominya. Meskipun terdapat beberapa upaya peningkatan kesadaran dari pemerintah, edukasi dan kolaborasi yang lebih konsisten masih diperlukan. Studi ini merekomendasikan strategi yang mempertimbangkan dinamika budaya lokal dan menekankan peningkatan infrastruktur, akses, dan pelatihan untuk meningkatkan daya saing dan jangkauan pasar UMKM.

Pernyataan untuk kepentingan publik:

Studi ini penting bagi UMKM di Doloksanggul karena meningkatkan kesadaran tentang sertifikasi halal di daerah dengan populasi Muslim minoritas. Studi ini meningkatkan daya saing, menarik pelanggan Muslim, dan menawarkan saran untuk inisiatif pemerintah yang sukses, yang pada akhirnya membantu pembangunan ekonomi lokal dan kesejahteraan masyarakat di sekitar kawasan wisata Danau Toba.

Keywords: Sertifikasi Halal, Minoritas Muslim, Strategi Sertifikasi, UMKM.

Introduction

Halal certification is a standard that complies with Islamic Sharia law and is very important for Muslims as a form of obedience to religious teachings. Muslim consumers naturally want the products they consume to be guaranteed halal and clean (Farida Ayu Saputri, 2023). In Indonesia, halal certification is managed by the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH). It works in collaboration with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Halal Examining Agency (LPH), which play important roles in ensuring the halal status of products.

Although halal certification has become an essential part of the culinary industry in Indonesia, its implementation in Muslim minority areas such as Doloksanggul still faces various challenges. This research is important because it aims to formulate effective strategies for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in adopting halal certification in such regions. Ineffective strategies may cause business actors to miss opportunities to improve competitiveness and access broader Muslim markets. Batubara and Harahap (2022) emphasized that the development of the halal industry in Indonesia requires a positive response from the Muslim community and the implementation of strategies aligned with sharia principles. Halal certification is not only a legal obligation in Indonesia, as stipulated in Government Regulation Number 39 of 2021, but also enhances consumer trust in product quality and hygiene (Warto & Samsuri, 2020).

Despite the Muslim population in Doloksanggul, awareness of the importance of halal certification is still low among MSMEs. MSME players feel that halal certification is not relevant to their target market, which is primarily non-Muslim, according to Nasori et al. (2022). In addition, another challenge faced is limited access to halal certification services, such as the lack of supporting infrastructure and trained human resources in the processing of halal products (Nugroho, 2023; Deviana et al., 2023).

Doloksanggul is the capital of Humbang Hasundutan Regency, North Sumatra, which is also the center of regional government and economy. As the district capital, Doloksanggul is the center of administration, public services, and economic activity, including MSMEs. The following table provides a clearer picture of the demographic conditions.

Table 1.*Demographic Data of Doloksanggul Sub-district (2023)*

Category	Number of souls	Percentage (%)
Muslim	2.016	3,74%
Non-Muslims	51.846	96,26%
Total	53.862	100%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of Humbang Hasundutan Regency, 2023

Doloksanggul is a sub-district in the Humbang Hasundutan district. With a Muslim population of 2,016, Doloksanggul also has a potential market from tourists heading to Lake Toba. Halal certification is a crucial aspect in improving product competitiveness in the market, especially for MSMEs in Indonesia. There are 288 out of 1281 MSMEs engaged in the culinary sector in Doloksanggul, but only 5 MSMEs have halal certificates. This number is minimal compared to the total MSMEs in this region, indicating that the participation of MSME players in halal certification is still minimal. Many do not understand the benefits of this certification (Nasori et al, 2022).

The dominance of the non-Muslim population in Doloksanggul creates special challenges in influencing the motivation of MSME players to adopt halal certificates. Business actors often feel that halal certification is not by their target market, so the understanding of the importance of halal certification is still low, Silalahi and Fattah (2024) also emphasize this by stating that the internal challenges of the halal industry include the low awareness of Muslims of information, knowledge, and utilization of halal-certified goods and services. Research shows that the participation of MSME players in halal certification is still minimal, and many do not understand the benefits of this certification (Nasori et al, 2022). Another challenge is limited access to halal certification services. The halal certification process is often constrained by the lack of supporting infrastructure, such as testing laboratories, and the availability of auditors is also a significant obstacle in the certification process (Nugroho, 2023). Many MSME players do not have access to experts in the field of certification, so they struggle to meet the standards required to obtain a certificate (Deviana et al., 2020). (2023) Another challenge is the difference in culture and perception in minority areas. In Muslim minority areas, the concept of halal is often poorly understood. It even causes resistance, and local people may not see the urgency of halal certification, so the participation of local MSMEs in certification is low (Nur Aini, 2024). Based on data from the Humbang Hasundutan PPID (2025) and certification data from the local Ministry of Religious Affairs, the following is the number of MSMEs in Doloksanggul.

Table 2.*Number of MSMEs in Doloksanggul (2023)*

Category	Number of MSMEs	Percentage (%)
Halal Certified	5	1,74%
Not yet Halal Certified	283	98,26%
Total	288	100%

Source: PPID Humbang Hasundutan District (2025) & Ministry of Religious Affairs Humbang Hasundutan District (2025)

Most previous studies have concentrated on Muslim-majority regions. For instance, Putri (2024) investigated the challenges of halal certification in Pamekasan Regency, East Java, an area predominantly inhabited by Muslims. Her research identified procedural complexity and high costs as significant barriers. However, it did not consider how the social and cultural contexts in Muslim-minority areas affect the adoption of halal certification. While studies focused on majority areas exist, Doloksanggul presents a different reality: only 5 out of 288 culinary MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) in the region have obtained halal certification. This stark contrast highlights a significant research gap regarding strategies to enhance MSME participation in halal certification within minority Muslim contexts. Additionally, existing research often overlooks the perspectives of non-Muslim business owners, which is essential for understanding the barriers and untapped opportunities. To address this gap, the present study aims to analyze effective strategies for promoting halal certification in minority areas like Doloksanggul. In doing so, it seeks to provide practical recommendations tailored to the unique socio-cultural dynamics of the region (Ningrum, 2022).

Literature Review

Halal certification as a product halal standard

Halal certification is the process of verifying that a product complies with Islamic law, covering aspects such as raw materials, production processes, hygiene, and safety. In Indonesia, mandatory halal certification is regulated by the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH) in collaboration with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Halal Examining Agency (LPH), as stipulated in Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021. This regulation requires halal certification for food, beverages, medicines, cosmetics, and certain used goods, except for those explicitly excluded.

The government has set October 17, 2024, as the deadline for mandatory halal certification for food and beverage products, with other categories to follow in phases. Beyond legal compliance, halal certification also offers significant business advantages. According to Farida Ayu Saputri (2023), it serves as an effective marketing tool to enhance product competitiveness in both domestic and international markets. Wardo and Samsuri (2020) note that halal-certified products are perceived as more hygienic and higher in quality, boosting consumer trust, especially among Muslim consumers. Moreover, Soemitra et al., (2022) argue that empowering MSMEs through Islamic financial institutions, such as micro waqf banks, can strengthen their readiness to obtain halal certification. In the globalized economy, halal certification has become essential for entering export markets, particularly in Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe.

Cultural and social influences on halal certification

Local cultural values and community perceptions play a crucial role in the implementation of halal certification among businesses. Nur Aini (2024) found that in some regions, the concept of halal certification is either misunderstood or deemed irrelevant, particularly by non-Muslim communities who may not recognize its significance. This lack of understanding often leads to passive resistance, stemming from limited awareness of the religious and economic benefits that certification can offer.

In Doloksanggul, where Muslims are a minority, social dynamics further influence perceptions. Muslim communities often adapt to the dominant non-Muslim culture, which frequently does not prioritize halal concerns. As a result, support for halal-certified products is limited both socially and commercially. The prevailing cultural environment, shaped by

non-Muslim traditions, creates additional barriers to promoting halal practices. Moreover, many owners of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) perceive halal certification as an unnecessary burden, particularly since their customer base is predominantly non-Muslim. This perception discourages them from pursuing certification, despite its potential to provide access to broader markets and build consumer trust.

Minority theory and its implications in religious practice

In the study of social religion, minority groups are defined as those with fewer members than the dominant population in a given region. These groups often face limitations in accessing social, economic, and political resources (Nasori et al., 2022). Theories on minority groups suggest that they frequently experience exclusion in various aspects of life, including the fulfillment of their religious needs.

Gordon Allport, in his work on prejudice, explains that minority groups often attempt to conform to the dominant culture to gain social acceptance. However, the specific needs of these minorities, such as access to halal products for Muslims, are often overlooked or inadequately addressed by the broader community. Research by Yakub et al. (2023) demonstrates that local cultural contexts shape the understanding and practice of Islamic law in Mandar Muslim minority communities. This leads to the adaptation of Sharia principles within the local social framework. Similarly, Marpaung and Nurhayati (2019) found that Muslim minority communities often align their religious practices, such as the commencement of the Qamariyah month, with government decisions to maintain social harmony. This reflects a degree of flexibility in the application of Islamic law. In the context of halal certification, being part of a religious minority can influence awareness, motivation, and access to religious services. This aligns with Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), which emphasizes that group identity plays a crucial role in shaping collective behavior, including consumer choices based on religious values.

Methods

Research design

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. This design was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of the strategies, challenges, and contextual dynamics surrounding the implementation of halal certification among MSMEs in a Muslim-minority region. The study aims to uncover local perspectives and practices to formulate context-specific strategies.

Data collection

Primary data in this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including MSME owners, both those who already possess halal certification and those who do not, halal certification facilitators, officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and representatives from the local community. These interviews were designed to explore diverse perspectives regarding the implementation of halal certification. In addition to interviews, participant observations were conducted to directly observe MSME business operations and the socio-cultural environment in Doloksanggul that may influence the adoption of halal practices. Secondary data were collected from various credible sources, including statistical reports published by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the Information and Documentation Management Officer (PPID) of Humbang Hasundutan Regency. Policy documents, such as Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021 concerning mandatory halal certification, were also reviewed. Furthermore, relevant academic literature

on halal certification practices and policies provided theoretical support and contextual depth for the analysis.

Data Analysis

A two-phase analytical approach was employed in this study. The first phase involved thematic analysis following the method of Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview transcripts and observation notes were coded inductively to allow patterns and insights to emerge naturally from the data. From this process, key themes related to perceptions, barriers, and motivations surrounding halal certification among MSMEs were identified and refined. The second phase consisted of a strategic analysis using the SWOT framework to examine the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, related to the adoption of halal certification. The findings from the SWOT analysis were then structured into IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary) and EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary) matrices. Each factor was systematically assigned weights and scores to evaluate its strategic significance. Finally, a cross-matrix comparison was conducted to formulate actionable strategies that are most relevant and applicable to the specific socio-economic and cultural conditions of MSMEs in Doloksanggul.

Results and discussion

Profile of MSMEs in Doloksanggul and the context of halal certification

Doloksanggul, which is the capital of Humbang Hasundutan Regency in North Sumatra, has unique characteristics as an area with a minority Muslim population. According to the report of the Information Management and Documentation Officer (PPDI) of Humbang Hasundutan district (2025), there are 288 culinary MSMEs in Doloksanggul, but there are only 5 MSMEs that have halal certificates.

Table 3.

Products that have been Halal Certified in Doloksanggul

No.	Name of MSME actor	Halal certified products
1.	Tri Tuspa Rahmiati	Submarine Pempek
2.	Tri Tuspa Rahmiati	Pempek Lenjer
3.	Nurhasanah Siregar	Tempeh
4.	Suyanti	Chips
5.	Subandi	Tempeh

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs of Humbang Hasundutan Regency (2025)

The level of utilization of halal certificates indicates significant challenges in implementing halal policies in Muslim-minority regions. Most businesses consider that halal certification is less relevant to their non-Muslim majority target market. The findings of Tarigan et al. (2024) reinforce this argument by stating that in a plural society, interfaith interactions shape perceptions of religious practices such as halal consumption. Doloksanggul has a market opportunity from Muslim tourists who come to Lake Toba. Halal certification can be an added value for local MSME products in attracting Muslim consumers from outside the region. Research by Faruida Ayu Saputri (2023) shows that halal-certified products are considered cleaner and of better quality, which can strengthen competitiveness in domestic and foreign markets.

Halal certification process in Doloksanggul

The halal certification process is currently being intensified by the Indonesian government, particularly through the active involvement of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In Doloksanggul, a region with a Muslim-minority population, several initiatives have been implemented to encourage MSME participation in the certification process. Although BPJPH has formally regulated halal certification in collaboration with MUI and LPH, its application in Doloksanggul still encounters numerous challenges that hinder MSME engagement.

To address this, the local Ministry of Religious Affairs has conducted direct outreach to MSMEs, primarily through door-to-door education efforts. This method has proven effective in reaching business actors who were previously unaware of the certification process or perceived it as overly complicated. One halal certification facilitator explained, "We have gone door to door to educate MSME owners, and many of them initially did not know what a halal certificate was." Despite these efforts, some business owners remain hesitant. As one MSME owner noted, "So far, no buyers have asked about halal certificates for my products, and most of my customers are non-Muslim." Such responses suggest that market perception plays a significant role in shaping business decisions, often weakening motivation to pursue halal certification despite its long-term benefits.

A significant barrier to halal certification among MSMEs in Doloksanggul is the limited awareness and understanding of its benefits. Many business owners are unaware of the economic value, market opportunities, and legal assurance that halal certification can provide. As one MSME owner, Mrs. HS, remarked, "*I do not know what the benefits of halal certification are for my sales. Besides, I have not had time to take care of it.*" This sentiment is echoed by Mrs. AS, another business owner, who stated, "*There is no need to obtain halal certification for my business. From what I know, it is only for large businesses. Since my business is still small, I do not see the need.*"

These responses highlight a common perception that halal certification is not essential for micro-enterprises, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted education and outreach. The lack of information has led to low motivation among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to begin the certification process. Additionally, the transition to an online certification system adds another challenge. The digital application process, which requires filling out forms and uploading documents via the BPJPH platform, has proven difficult, especially for MSME owners who may be unfamiliar with digital technology. Mrs. MH, an MSME owner, remarked, "During the halal certification process, we had to fill in the data online, and it was difficult. We are not used to using technology; it is very complicated." Likewise, Mr. S, a halal certification facilitator, confirmed the challenges, stating, "The online submission process is complicated. We have to assist MSME owners one by one to ensure that the data is entered correctly."

These findings highlight that both digital literacy barriers and misconceptions about the relevance of halal certification remain key challenges in its broader adoption among small business actors in Doloksanggul. In addition to challenges from the internal side of MSME actors, the limited supporting infrastructure is also a barrier to the implementation of halal certification. The facilities in the Doloksanggul area are still minimal, such as the absence of a halal testing laboratory and the minimal number of auditors, causing the verification process and field audits to run slowly. "The extension workers who are smart in using applications or who understand the file upload process (auditors) in Doloksanggul are still very few; it also has an impact on the halal certification process," said the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Of course, this lack of experts makes it difficult for business actors to meet the certification standards applied. The concept of halal is also often poorly understood by the local non-Muslim community. Both Muslim and non-Muslim communities generally do not see the urgency of halal certification, which will have an impact on MSME players who are not encouraged to follow the certification process. Despite being faced with various obstacles,

MSME players who have successfully obtained halal certificates also feel the real benefits. An MSME player, Mrs. NS, who has been certified, said, "At first I was hesitant because people said the process was complicated. However, after the assistance, it became possible. Now I feel more confident selling my products to consumers."

The stages of halal certification in Doloksanggul include initial socialization and assistance, online registration, document verification, field audit by the Halal Examining Agency (LPH), fatwa hearing by MUI, and finally certificate issuance by BPJPH. Each stage has its challenges, including limited understanding of MSME actors, less supportive market perceptions, technical constraints in using online systems, limited infrastructure, and the influence of the local socio-cultural context. Therefore, the success of the halal certification program is highly dependent on the continuous collaboration between the government, assistants, and MSME players in overcoming various obstacles.

SWOT Analysis of Halal Certification in Doloksanggul

SWOT analysis is used to identify the main factors that influence the implementation of halal certification among Doloksanggul MSMEs. Through this approach, strategy development to encourage halal certification can be done more focused and with local conditions.

Table 4.

SWOT analysis of halal certification in Doloksanggul

Factor	Description
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Halal certification improves competitiveness of MSME products - Added value to attract Muslim tourists
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government support through socialization and mentoring - Low understanding of MSME actors about the importance of halal certification - Limited access to information and supporting infrastructure - Assumption that halal certification is not relevant to the local non-Muslim majority market
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market potential of Muslim tourists to Lake Toba - Growing demand for halal products nationally and internationally - Halal certification as an export requirement and market expansion - The trend of halal lifestyle and digitalization is starting to enter the younger generation, including in minority areas
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-Muslim cultural dominance that causes social resistance - Lack of neighborhood support for halal products - Limited halal experts and auditors in the regions

Source: Processed by researchers (2025)

To get more measurable and systematic results, the SWOT factors are then analyzed through the IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary) and EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary) matrices. These two matrices serve to map internal and external factors based on their level of importance and real conditions in the field, so that the strategies developed become more relevant and practical.

IFAS Matrix (Internal Factor Analysis Summary)

The following IFAS Matrix presents the main strengths and weaknesses affecting the implementation of halal certification in Doloksanggul. The following is the result of processing internal factors into the IFAS Matrix, which includes strengths and weaknesses.

Table 5.

IFAS matrix analysis

No.	Internal factors	Weight	Rating	Score (weight x rating)
		Power		
1.	Halal certification improves competitiveness of MSME products	0,10	3	0,30
2.	Added value to attract Muslim tourists	0,15	3	0,45
3.	Government support through socialization and mentoring	0,15	4	0,60
	Weaknesses			
4.	Low understanding of MSME actors about the importance of halal certification	0,25	2	0,50
5.	Limited access to information and supporting infrastructure	0,15	2	0,30
6.	Assumption that halal certification is not relevant to the local non-Muslim majority market	0,20	1	0,20
	Total	1,00		2,35

Source: Processed by researchers (2025)

Based on the results of the IFAS matrix analysis, the total score obtained is 2.35. This figure reflects that internally, MSMEs in Doloksanggul have several significant advantages, such as support from the government through socialization and mentoring activities, as well as opportunities to increase product competitiveness through halal certification. However, the weakness score is also relatively high, which is mainly due to the low understanding of MSME players regarding the importance of halal certification, limited access to information and infrastructure, and the view that halal certification is less relevant in the local market where the majority of the population is non-Muslim. This situation shows that internal strengthening, especially in terms of education and mentoring, is still urgently needed so that MSME players are better prepared and encouraged to undergo the halal certification process.

EFAS Matrix (External Factor Analysis Summary)

The following EFAS Matrix summarizes the external opportunity and threat factors that affect the halal certification strategy in Doloksanggul. The following are the results of the identification of external factors analyzed in the EFAS Matrix.

Table 6.
EFAS Matrix Analysis

No.	External Factors	Weight	Rating	Score (weight x rating)
Opportunities				
1.	Market potential of Muslim tourists to Lake Toba	0,25	3	0,75
2.	Growing demand for halal products nationally and internationally	0,10	3	0,30
3.	Halal certification as an export requirement and market expansion	0,10	2	0,20
4.	The trend of halal lifestyle and digitalization is starting to enter the younger generation, including in minority areas	0,15	3	0,45
Threat				
5.	Non-Muslim cultural dominance that causes social resistance	0,15	2	0,30
6.	Lack of neighborhood support for halal products	0,25	1	0,25
Total		1,00		2,25

Source: Processed by researchers (2025)

The results of the EFAS matrix indicate a total score of 2.25. This score suggests that there are significant external opportunities for the development of halal certification in Doloksanggul. These opportunities include the potential market for Muslim tourists visiting Lake Toba, an increasing demand for halal products, export opportunities, and the digitalization of halal lifestyles among the younger generation. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the external threats, particularly the dominance of non-Muslim cultures that may lead to social resistance, as well as the lack of environmental support for halal products. Based on the analyses conducted through the IFAS and EFAS matrices, we can identify the main external factors influencing the halal certification process for MSMEs in Doloksanggul. Effective strategies can be developed by integrating the insights from both internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) analyses into a SWOT matrix. The table below presents the strategic recommendations derived from the combination of these four aspects of SWOT. These strategies are intended to serve as a reference for decision-making and policy development regarding halal certification for MSMEs in Doloksanggul.

In the context of MSME halal certification in Doloksanggul, the internal weakness factor is the most dominant obstacle, particularly in terms of low awareness, participation, access, and understanding among business actors of the benefits of halal certification. Therefore, the most optimal strategy is to focus efforts on enhancing education and socialization for MSME actors, strengthening cooperation between institutions, and facilitating access and certification procedures.

Table 7.*Strategies based on SWOT matrix*

Strategy Type	Strategy Formulation	Implementation in Doloksanggul
S-O	Utilize internal strengths to seize external opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimizing the quality of MSME products and government support to attract Muslim tourists - Using halal certification as added value and branding to expand the market outside the region - Conduct intensive education, training, and socialization on the importance of halal certification for MSMEs, utilizing government programs
W-O	Capitalize on external opportunities to overcome internal weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplify access and certification procedures through collaboration with assisting agencies and local governments - Using government regulations and product quality to increase local consumer confidence, despite the non-Muslim majority
S-T	Using internal strengths to counter external threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance promotion of halal products to reduce local social and cultural resistance - Overcoming social resistance and low awareness through cross-community education and institutional collaboration
W-T	Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage simplification of procedures and subsidization of certification costs for small MSMEs so that access barriers can be minimized.

Source: Processed by researchers (2025)

Discussion

Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, the following strategies can be implemented to increase MSME participation in halal certification in Doloksanggul:

Increased educational understanding of halal certification

One of the main obstacles to increasing the adoption rate of halal certification in the Doloksanggul region is the lack of knowledge and socialization efforts that reach MSME players, especially in peripheral and rural areas. Many businesses do not understand the importance, benefits, and procedures of halal certification, so they often view it as an administrative burden. Ririn Tri Puspita Ningrum (2022) highlights that the lack of proper information dissemination contributes to the low understanding of business actors in remote

areas. Therefore, the right strategy is to expand the scope of education, training, and direct assistance programs in MSME activity centers. Local governments, BPJPH, and related agencies are expected to be actively involved through direct approaches in the field, such as face-to-face training, discussion forums, and halal certification clinics. This method is more effective than relying solely on information through social media or official announcements, which are often less interactive. Increased literacy about halal certification is believed to encourage awareness and motivation of MSME players to immediately obtain certification, while strengthening the credibility and consumer confidence in their products.

Change in the mindset and motivation of business actors.

One of the main barriers to increasing the adoption of halal certification among MSMEs is the mindset that such certificates are only relevant for those with large-scale businesses. Many small businesses feel that the certification process is beyond their capacity or is too burdensome. According to Ningrum (2022), this lack of enthusiasm and apathy stems from a lack of understanding of the direct benefits that can be obtained from halal certification, such as increased consumer confidence, market expansion, and legal protection. To overcome this problem, a more effective communication approach is needed that emphasizes the concrete benefits of halal certification. The government, together with the relevant institutions, can use a more personalized approach, for example, through the delivery of testimonials from MSME players who have successfully obtained certification, or other things. With this step, it is hoped that it can motivate other business actors to follow similar steps and change the perception that halal certification is only an administrative burden.

Economic facilitation and access to certification

Many MSME players in Doloksanggul face challenges in obtaining halal certification due to limited economic conditions, inadequate production facilities, and limited technology utilization. Ningrum (2022) noted that the low and unstable income of business actors is the main reason why they are reluctant to allocate funds for the certification process. As a solution, local governments can provide subsidies, incentives, or affordable financing schemes for businesses seeking halal certification. Providing shared production facilities that meet halal standards can also be an effective alternative for MSMEs that lack adequate production facilities. On the other hand, constraints in using technology can be overcome through technical training and mentoring services at the village or sub-district level, so that businesses that are less familiar with digital systems can still access the certification process. This recommendation is in line with the findings of Agustina, Nazla, and Nur'aini (2024), which emphasize the importance of the government's role and the use of technology to expand the reach of halal certification among MSMEs nationally.

Procedure simplification and digitization

Halal certification procedures are considered complex, bureaucratic, and time-consuming, which is a significant obstacle for MSMEs in Doloksanggul. Many businesses experience difficulties in preparing documents, understanding the stages of the process, and accessing online-based services. In this context, digitizing the halal certification service system is an urgent strategic step. The development of easy-to-use digital applications or platforms, the simplification of administrative requirements, and direct assistance will greatly facilitate business actors in undergoing the certification process. Local governments and BPJPH are also expected to provide assistance services or information centers at the sub-district and village levels to guide MSME players at every stage. Agustina, Nazla, and Nur'aini (2024) also

highlighted that the use of technology and service efficiency is an important part of the national strategy to accelerate the growth of the halal sector in Indonesia. With this approach, the certification process is no longer considered burdensome, and MSME participation in halal certification is expected to increase significantly.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of halal certification in Doloksanggul, an area with a minority Muslim community, still faces various obstacles, both from within MSMEs themselves and from external factors such as local social and cultural conditions. The participation of MSMEs in the certification process is still low, which is due to the assumption that halal certification is less relevant to local market needs, limited information and services, and a lack of understanding of the benefits that can be obtained from the certification. Although the socialization program conducted by the government through a direct approach has given positive results, the impact has not been significant enough to increase widespread participation. Therefore, a more comprehensive strategy is needed, including continuous education, cooperation between stakeholders, and strengthening facilities and assistance for businesses.

Data processing using SWOT analysis as outlined in the IFAS and EFAS matrices identified the main factors influencing the low participation of MSMEs in halal certification, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this matrix form the basis for formulating a development strategy that emphasizes the importance of education, mentoring, cross-sector collaboration, and optimizing opportunities for the Muslim tourist market and national halal trends. Even so, the most significant obstacle is the lack of awareness and limited access of MSME players, coupled with the resistance of local culture that has not prioritized the importance of halal certification. Therefore, strategies that need to be prioritized include continuous education, consistent mentoring, and inter-sectoral cooperation to enhance MSMEs' understanding and involvement in the halal certification process. With this approach, halal certification has the potential to be an effective tool in expanding market reach and building consumer confidence, both domestically and among Muslim travelers.

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Ethics declarations

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Availability of data and materials

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Competing interests

No potential competing interest was reported by the authors

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Cite this paper:

Sihite, M., Syahriza, R., & Nasution, J. (2025). Halal certification strategies in minority Muslim regions: A Case study of Doloksanggul, Humbang Hasundutan. *SERAMBI: Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Dan Bisnis Islam*, 7(3), 259-274. <https://doi.org/10.36407/serambi.v7i3.1697>



SERAMBI: Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen dan Bisnis Islam

Publisher : LPMP Imperium.
Frequency : 3 issues per year (April, August & December).
ISSN (online) : [2685-9904](https://doi.org/10.36407/serambi.v7i3.1697).
DOI : Prefix 10.36407.
Accredited : SINTA 3
Editor-in-chief : Prof. Dr. Suryani
Indexed by : [Google Scholar](https://scholar.google.com/), [Garuda](https://garuda.rui.com/), [Master List Copernicus](https://www.masterlistcopernicus.com/)