

## **CHALLENGES IN HALAL CERTIFICATION AMONG TRADITIONAL FOOD VENDORS IN MELAKA: A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Dziela binti Muhammad Parid \***

Faculty of Business, Hospitality & Technology  
Universiti Islam Melaka

**Siti Mahera binti Ahmat Amin**

Faculty of Business, Hospitality & Technology  
Universiti Islam Melaka

*\*Corresponding Author's Email: dziela@unimel.edu.my*

---

### **Article History:**

Received : 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025  
Revised : 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025  
Published : 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025  
© Penerbit Universiti Islam Melaka

---

### **To cite this article:**

Dziela, M. P., & Siti Mahera, A. A. (2025). *CHALLENGES IN HALAL CERTIFICATION AMONG TRADITIONAL FOOD VENDORS IN MELAKA: A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE*. *Journal of Business Innovation*. , 10(1), 147-154.

### **ABSTRACT**

*Halal certification plays a crucial role in Malaysia's food ecosystem, enhancing consumer trust and ensuring regulatory compliance. While large and formal food enterprises benefit from institutional support and streamlined certification processes, traditional food vendors—particularly those in heritage destinations such as Melaka—continue to face unique challenges. This conceptual paper examines the institutional, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers affecting halal certification among traditional vendors. Drawing on regulatory compliance theory, institutional support theory, and heritage authenticity frameworks, the paper proposes a conceptual model linking vendor attributes, authenticity concerns, and perceived certification burden to certification behaviour. The contribution of the study lies in addressing an overlooked intersection between halal governance and heritage gastronomy, while offering policy insights to support traditional vendors within Malaysia's growing halal tourism landscape.*

**Keywords:** *Halal certification, traditional vendors, heritage gastronomy, authenticity, Melaka.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The global halal industry continues to expand rapidly, driven by increasing Muslim consumer demand, cross-border trade, and the rise of halal tourism (Alserhan, 2020). Malaysia positions itself as a worldwide leader in this industry, with halal certification functioning not only as a religious requirement but also as an indicator of quality, standards, traceability, and market competitiveness.

Within this national context, Melaka stands out as a UNESCO World Heritage City with a rich gastronomic identity. Traditional food vendors contribute significantly to cultural continuity and tourism attractiveness through heritage dishes rooted in Malay, Peranakan, Indian Muslim, and Chinese Muslim culinary traditions. Despite this importance, many of these vendors remain uncertified or struggle to meet the requirements of halal certification.

Although numerous studies have explored halal certification among SMEs, far fewer have examined the experiences of informal or heritage-based food vendors in historical urban settings such as Melaka (Mahyudin & Kamaruddin, 2020; Ishak & Omar, 2018). This gap is significant because heritage vendors operate within cultural practices, resource limitations, and informal business conditions that differ substantially from formal SMEs. Moreover, limited attention has been given to how authenticity concerns intersect with halal governance, affecting certification decisions.

Therefore, this conceptual paper seeks to synthesize existing knowledge, highlight the limitations of current halal governance structures, and develop a conceptual framework explaining certification behaviour among traditional food vendors in Melaka.

### Objectives

This conceptual paper aims to:

- i. Review and critically synthesise literature related to halal certification, traditional food vendors, and heritage gastronomy.
- ii. Identify key institutional, cultural, and economic factors influencing halal certification among traditional vendors in Melaka.
- iii. Develop a conceptual framework that links vendor characteristics, authenticity concerns, and institutional support to certification behaviour.
- iv. Propose policy recommendations to strengthen halal governance while preserving heritage culinary practices.

## 2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite national emphasis on halal governance, traditional food vendors in Melaka face persistent challenges in obtaining halal certification due to institutional barriers, cultural constraints, and economic limitations. There is limited conceptual understanding of how these factors interact to influence their compliance behaviour.

Melaka's traditional food sector is a key component of its cultural identity and tourism economy. However, despite the growing demand for halal-certified products among local consumers and international Muslim tourists, many traditional food vendors in Melaka remain uncertified. Existing literature indicates that halal certification in Malaysia is governed by stringent standards set by JAKIM and state religious authorities, which emphasize documentation, ingredient traceability, hygiene practices, and supply chain transparency.

While these requirements are suitable for formal and large-scale food businesses, they often present challenges for micro and traditional vendors operating in heritage zones.

Traditional food vendors typically rely on inherited recipes, informal business practices, and small-scale production methods that may not align with formal certification processes. As a result, they face barriers such as limited knowledge of halal requirements, financial constraints, lack of technical support, and difficulties adapting heritage-based preparation methods to meet modern compliance standards. The absence of halal certification may also reduce consumer trust and limit the market reach of these vendors, affecting both business sustainability and Melaka's halal tourism positioning.

Despite the significance of these issues, research examining the specific barriers faced by traditional food vendors in Melaka remains limited. Therefore, there is a need for a conceptual understanding of the challenges that hinder their participation in the halal certification system. This study aims to address this gap by identifying and analysing the key factors that affect halal certification uptake among traditional food vendors in Melaka.

### **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Halal Certification in Malaysia**

Halal certification, governed primarily by JAKIM and state agencies, functions as a quality assurance mechanism emphasising hygiene, ingredient traceability, and food safety (Tieman, 2011). Studies show that certification benefits include increased market access, consumer trust, and brand competitiveness (Shafii & Khadijah, 2015). However, for micro and informal vendors, the certification process remains challenging due to administrative complexity, inconsistent enforcement, and limited financial resources (Mahyudin & Kamaruddin, 2020). Scholars argue that current certification models disproportionately favour formal enterprises, leaving heritage-based vendors at a disadvantage.

#### **3.2 Traditional Food Vendors and the Informal Sector**

Traditional vendors—hawkers, pasar malam traders, home-based enterprises—play a vital role in Malaysia's culinary heritage (Ishak & Omar, 2018). Their operations often rely on inherited recipes, informal supply chains, and non-standardised preparation methods. Although these elements enhance authenticity (Zainal et al., 2019), they may conflict with halal certification requirements demanding documentation, standardisation, and modernised facilities.

#### **3.3 Barriers to Halal Certification**

Studies identify three major categories of challenges:

##### **i. Economic Constraints**

High costs of certification, renovations, and halal-compliant suppliers hinder small vendors (Rahman et al., 2019). Heritage vendors, often operating with narrow margins, struggle to justify the financial commitment.

##### **ii. Administrative and Procedural Burdens**

The certification process—perceived as bureaucratic, lengthy, and paperwork heavy discourages participation (Talib et al., 2017). Vendors lacking literacy or digital skills face additional hurdles.

### **iii. Cultural and Authenticity-Related Concerns**

Some vendors fear certification might require modifying traditional recipes, sourcing alternative ingredients, or altering cooking techniques (Nor et al., 2020). This threatens their sense of cultural identity and authenticity.

### **3.4 Heritage and Authenticity in Gastronomic Practices**

Heritage cuisine emphasises originality, ancestral knowledge, and symbolic value (Bessi re, 2013). Halal governance frameworks, however, prioritise traceability and standardisation. When these priorities clash, psychological resistance arises among traditional vendors.

### **3.5 Institutional Support and Governance Gaps**

Despite government initiatives, informal vendors are often excluded from structured training, subsidy programmes, or certification facilitation schemes (Abd Rahman et al., 2019). Compared with Penang’s hawker-heritage facilitation or Kelantan’s Islamic food entrepreneurship programmes, Melaka still lacks integrated halal–heritage governance models.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a conceptual methodology grounded in theory building rather than empirical observation. Several methodological strategies were employed to ensure depth, rigour, and analytical coherence.

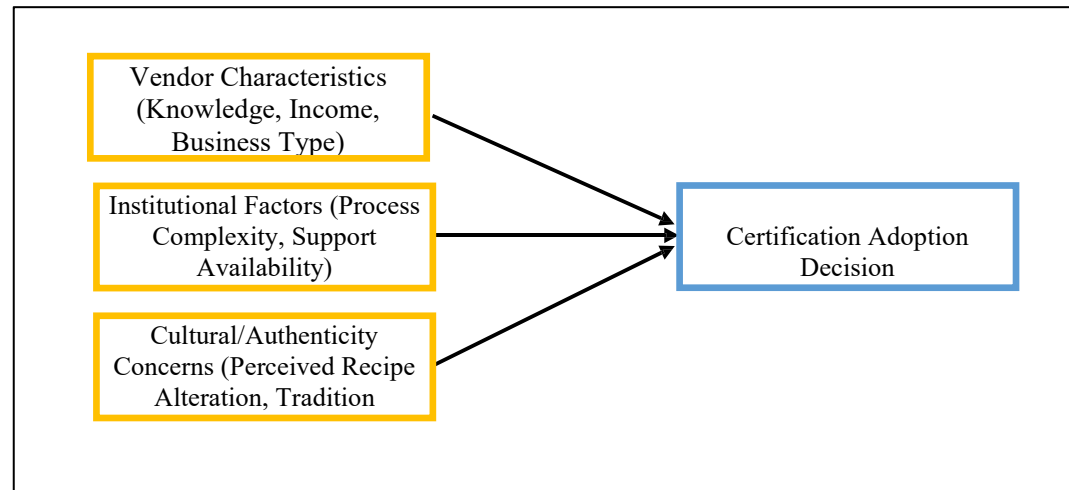
First, the study conducts a critical literature synthesis across domains such as halal governance, heritage gastronomy, informal food economies, SME development, and regulatory compliance. This synthesis goes beyond descriptive review by identifying theoretical tensions, recurring barriers, inconsistencies in past findings, and gaps concerning traditional vendors in heritage settings. The integration of cross-disciplinary sources strengthens the conceptual breadth of the study. Relevant studies highlight challenges such as complex procedures, limited regulatory literacy, and resource constraints among micro food enterprises (Mahyudin & Kamaruddin, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2018). Literature on heritage gastronomy further emphasizes the tension between traditional preparation methods and modern certification requirements (Nor et al., 2021; Karim & Chi, 2010).

Second, the study applies theoretical integration by combining three theoretical lenses—Regulatory Compliance Theory, Institutional Support Theory, and the Heritage Authenticity Framework. These theories are used collectively to interpret how administrative burden, support structures, and cultural identity shape halal certification decisions. The integration allows for a more holistic understanding of vendor behaviour, acknowledging that certification is not merely procedural but also cultural and psychological. Regulatory Compliance Theory illustrates how small businesses' compliance behaviors are influenced by perceived cost, clarity, and enforcement (Parker & Nielsen, 2017). The theory of institutional support emphasizes how official and informal institutional frameworks, like local councils, government agencies, and community networks, can either facilitate or impede corporate engagement (Scott, 2014; Welter, 2020). The Heritage Authenticity Framework (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Su, 2018) discusses how traditional vendors preserve identity, cultural value, and authenticity in food production in the face of governmental challenges.

Third, the study engages in model development, consolidating insights from prior research to propose a conceptual framework tailored to traditional food vendors operating in heritage contexts such as Melaka. Constructs such as financial readiness, procedural complexity, cultural authenticity concerns, and institutional facilitation are systematically linked to the mediating role of perceived cost–benefit. This conceptual model lays the groundwork for future empirical validation.

Finally, no empirical data were collected for this study. Instead, the methodological emphasis is on building a theoretical foundation that can guide future empirical investigations, particularly qualitative case studies or quantitative assessments involving traditional vendors in heritage zones.

## Conceptual Framework



The difficulties food vendor face in obtaining halal certification have been extensively studied, but the distinctive experiences of traditional and historical food vendors—particularly in historic cities like Melaka—have received less attention. It is still unclear how halal standards and heritage authenticity interact. Additionally, there aren't many conceptual models that explain how institutional, cognitive, and cultural elements combine to affect the uptake of certification in the unorganized sector.

## Theoretical Perspectives

This conceptual paper draws upon three theoretical perspectives:

1. **Regulatory Compliance Theory (Kagan & Scholz, 1984):**  
Suggests that compliance depends on perceived fairness, complexity, and benefit of regulations. Vendors may avoid certification if procedures are viewed as burdensome or irrelevant.
2. **Institutional Support Theory:**  
Highlights how access to information, training, and financial resources from supporting institutions (JAKIM, local councils) influences small business behavior.
3. **Heritage Authenticity Framework:**  
Considers how perceived threats to authenticity affect willingness to adopt modern standards. Vendors may resist certification if it's seen as altering traditional cooking or presentation methods.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Institutional Challenges

Procedural complexity, stringent requirements, and weak institutional support discourage traditional vendors. Lack of awareness programmes in heritage zones worsens compliance issues.

## 5.2 Economic Limitations

Small vendors operate on minimal margins. Fees for certification, equipment upgrades, and compliance with hygiene standards impose financial burdens.

## 5.3 Cultural and Heritage Norms

Vendors often prioritise preserving traditional taste and preparation techniques. Some fear that certification demands may alter long-standing recipes or business identity.

## 5.4 Comparison with Other Heritage States

Penang: Heritage vendors express similar concerns about standardization vs authenticity.

Kelantan: Informal food markets show lower certification uptake due to cultural cooking practices.

Comparing states strengthens understanding of how heritage identity influences halal compliance.

## Implications

A multi-stakeholder strategy that incorporates industry cooperation, regulatory reform, and scholarly research is needed to address the difficulties traditional food merchants encounter in getting halal certification. Designing a heritage-friendly halal certification program that respects cultural customs and traditional culinary techniques while guaranteeing adherence to Islamic dietary regulations is crucial for legislators. Understanding the cultural significance of Melaka's traditional food can support inclusivity within the halal framework while preserving authenticity. Additionally, simplifying documentation procedures and introducing mobile auditing services could make the certification process more accessible to small-scale and informal vendors who often lack the administrative capacity to navigate complex systems. Financial incentives, micro-grants, and tailored training programs for entrepreneurs operating within heritage zones would further encourage participation and ease economic burdens associated with certification costs.

From the perspective of industry practitioners, stronger collaboration between halal authorities, tourism boards, and heritage councils is crucial. Businesses should begin to view halal certification not merely as a regulatory requirement, but as a *strategic tool* to enhance brand credibility, build consumer trust, and attract both domestic and international tourists seeking authentic and ethically produced food experiences.

For researchers, there is sufficient chance to contribute to this expanding field. Future research should empirically test the suggested conceptual framework that links cultural legacy, economic capacity, and institutional support with halal certification outcomes. Comparative research across other heritage-rich cuisine destinations—such as Penang, Kelantan, and Sabah—would enhance understanding of regional distinctions and assist find best practices adaptable to Melaka's setting.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Traditional food vendors in Melaka face complex institutional, economic, and cultural challenges in obtaining halal certification. These barriers demonstrate a mismatch between formal certification requirements and informal heritage-based practices. This conceptual paper contributes theoretically by integrating institutional, economic, and cultural dimensions into a framework that explains certification barriers among traditional vendors.

Halal certification is crucial to Malaysia's food integrity system, however its implementation among traditional food vendors remains restricted. The conceptual framework described here indicates that vendor decisions are shaped by a combination of regulatory, cultural, and economic considerations. Understanding these interactions is crucial for establishing inclusive

policies that promote halal compliance without undermining heritage authenticity. As Malaysia enhances its position in the global halal economy, attention must be given to protecting the identity and livelihoods of small traditional vendors who symbolize the nation's gastronomic legacy.

#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Dziela, M. P., & Siti Mahera, A. A. contributed equally to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, writing, and final approval of the manuscript.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by other journals. All authors have approved the review, agree with its submission and declare no conflict of interest on the manuscript.

## REFERENCES

- Abu Bakar, M., Mohammed Noor, A., Ismail @ Mat Yusoff, S., Shahrom, N. F., Mohd Talib, N., & Hashim, N. Halal Food Industry in Malaysia: Key Challenges and the Path Forward. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management Practices (IJEMP)*. Gaexcellence+2ResearchGate+2
- Ahmad Fauzi, F., Karia, N., Wan Hayati Wan Bujang, W., Mohd Ali Tan, Z., & Mazlan, N. Unveiling Barriers: A Qualitative Study on Halal Certification for SMFES in Penang. *Information Management and Business Review. AMH International*
- Ahmad, A. M., Prabowo, H., Nordin, A., & Marzuki, A. Challenges in Halal Certification for SMEs: Evidence from Perlis, Malaysia. (Discussed in context of certification cost, documentation, and delays.)
- Asiah Alkharib Shah, Elistina Abu Bakar & Deviana Yuanitasari / UMRAN –*Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies*. vol. 12, no.2 (2025) pp. 15- 34 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2025.12n2.718>
- Asadi, M., Hashemkhani Zolfani, S., Pamucar, D., Salimi, J., & Saberi, S. (2023). The appropriation of blockchain implementation in the supply chain of SMES based on fuzzy LMAW. *Engineering Applications of Artificial Intelligence*, 123. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.engappai.2023.106169>
- Azmi, F. R., Abdullah, A., Yahaya, S. H., Woźniak, M., & Purnomo, M. R. A. Adoption of Halal Standard in Malaysian Food Industry: A Case of Small and Medium Enterprises. *Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Technology. JAMT*
- Chemah Tamby Chik, Mohd Amri Abdullah, Sabaianah Bachok, A. A. dan N. Z. Y. (2018). Halal Crisis Management in Small Medium Food Enterprises. *International Journal of Administration and Governance*, 4(2), 4–10. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329980407>
- Hashim, N. S., & Mohd Nor, A. R. (2022). The Benefit of Halal Certificate Application From Small and Medium Industries Perspective. *Journal of Islamic Philanthropy and Social Finance*, 4(2), 102–112. [https://doi.org/10.24191/jipsf/v4n22022\\_102-112](https://doi.org/10.24191/jipsf/v4n22022_102-112)
- Hasan, H., Sulong, R. S., & Tanakinjal, G. H. Halal Certification Among the SMEs in Kinabalu, Sabah. *Journal of Consumer Sciences*.
- Labor Dynamics and Operational Efficiency in the Halal Supply Chain: An Analysis of Key Challenges and Strategic Solutions. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*.
- Mohd Fauzi, N., Hashim, N. I., Ab Rahman, M. F., Wan Hassin, W. S., & Shah Shahar, W. S. (2020). Halal Economic: Challenges and Emerging Opportunities in Malaysia. *Journal of Islamic Philanthropy & Social Finance (JIPSF)*, 1(1), 29-37.
- Marina Abu Bakar, Afiffudin Mohammed Noor, Syaimak Ismail @ Mat Yusoff, Nur Fatin Nabilah Shahrom, Nurliyana Mohd Talib, Nadiyah Hashim (2025).Halal Food Industry In Malaysia: Key Challenges And The Path Forward,Volume 8 Issue 29 (March 2025) Pp. 400-414
- Mohd Adib, M. F. M., et al. Taking Advantage of the Halal Market for Prospective Halalpreneurs: Perspectives from Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia. In: *Islamic Finance and Halal Economy* (Springer).
- Purnomo, I. A. (2023). The impact of halal certification for MSME business: A systematic literature review. *Asian Journal of Economics and Business Management*, 2(2), 273–277. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53402/ajebm.v2i2.344>
- Syed Zuraidah S. A. J., Hashim, H., & Abdul Wahab, Y. A. Assessing MSMEs' Readiness Towards Halal Certification: A Case of Selangor, Malaysia. *Quantum Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*.