



# Self-declare halal certification in Langsa city: Empowering MSMEs for quality consumption

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study investigates the implementation of self-declared halal certification among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Langsa city, Aceh, Indonesia. This research aimed to analyze the process and its impact on fostering dignified and quality consumption within the local community.

**Methodology** – Employing a qualitative field research approach, this study utilized observation, interviews, and documentation as primary data collection techniques. Data were gathered from MSME owners and relevant stakeholders in Langsa city to understand their experience with the self-declared halal certification process.

**Findings** – The findings revealed that implementing self-declared halal certification required educating MSMEs on its significance and procedures. Most MSMEs recognize the necessity for market acceptance and consumer trust. Challenges include limited understanding of processes, scarce resources, insufficient institutional support, and difficulties in documenting halal-compliant raw materials and production. Despite this, certification provided legal assurance of product safety, enhanced business competitiveness, and strengthened consumer trust and satisfaction.

**Implications** – This study highlights the potential of self-declared halal certification as an initial step for MSMEs towards broader halal compliance and their integration into the halal market. However, it also underscores the necessity for enhanced support mechanisms and simplified procedures to maximize its effectiveness in empowering MSMEs and promoting dignified and quality consumption.

**Originality** – This research contributes to the understanding of grassroots-level halal certification implementation and provides valuable insights for the development of more inclusive and harmonized halal standards, particularly for small-scale enterprises.

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## Introduction

The burgeoning global halal industry demands robust and accessible certifications to guarantee the integrity of halal products and services for an expanding consumer base. Indonesia, aiming to be a global halal hub, recognizes the sector's significant potential for its Sharia and national economies. Aceh Province, with its predominantly Muslim population (98.56%), presents a substantial opportunity to advance this vision (Anzaikhan et al., 2023; Yusaini, 2020). Realizing this potential

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requires a well-structured and effective halal ecosystem that integrates public education, human resources, R&D, fatwas, regulations, and governance (LNU, 2021; Qanun Aceh Nomor 11 Tahun 2018 Tentang Lembaga Keuangan Syariah, 2018). A crucial element of this ecosystem is a reliable halal certification system that ensures Islamic compliance, builds consumer trust, and supports market growth.

Prior research has examined the economic impacts, consumer perceptions, and implementation challenges of halal certification across various sectors and regions. Studies indicate that, while certification enhances economic growth through increased consumer trust and market competitiveness, MSMEs often face significant hurdles (Annisa et al., 2023; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). In Aceh, where MSMEs are central to the halal value chain, the government plays a crucial role in regulating and supervising the halal product assurance system (SPJH) to ensure halal integrity and quality of food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics from raw materials to the market (Adnan et al., 2022; Rizkhie & Farida, 2024). Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including the prevalence of non-certified products, inadequate hygiene standards leading to potential cross-contamination, and substandard quality, which contradicts local regulations (Qanun No. 8 of 2016) and mandates protection against non-halal goods (Djakfar & Isnaliana, 2021; Rizkhie & Farida, 2024). This highlights the ongoing need for stronger enforcement, greater awareness of certification processes, and stricter oversight by provincial and local authorities, particularly with advancements in food technology and increasing interest from foreign companies.

Although limited scholarly attention has been directed towards the specific implementation and impact of self-declared halal certification initiatives, particularly within the context of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in regions such as Langsa, Aceh, and their contribution to dignified and quality consumption, this gap is significant considering the broader challenges in Indonesia's halal industry. Despite having the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia remains a larger consumer than a producer of global halal products, indicating a disparity between potential and reality. In Aceh, persistent concerns about food cleanliness and quality arise from the slow adoption of the necessary hygiene standards by many MSMEs, leading to potential contamination and doubts regarding halal status. The implementation of Halal Product Assurance (JPH) by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) has been limited, especially among MSMEs in Langsa city, where low awareness has resulted in many businesses lacking halal certification. To address this gap, this study focuses on the self-declaration mechanism for halal certification among MSMEs, as implemented by the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), specifically in Langsa city, Aceh, given its predominantly Muslim population and substantial potential for halal industry development. This study aims to understand the implementation process of self-declared halal certification by MSMEs in Langsa city, identify the key challenges they encounter, and examine its impact on their business sustainability and assurance of halal products for consumers. The findings are expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on self-declared halal certification, serve as an academic reference in Sharia economics, provide valuable insights for students at IAIN Langsa, and inform future research on promoting dignified and high-quality consumption in the halal industry.

To gain an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon, this study employed a qualitative field research approach, utilizing observations, interviews, and documentation to examine the experiences of MSMEs in Langsa, Aceh, with the self-declared halal certification process. This qualitative approach was chosen to allow for a detailed exploration of the complex, context-specific experiences and perspectives of MSMEs. Data were collected through direct observation of the certification process at MSME locations, semi-structured interviews with owners and managers to understand their motivations and challenges, and analysis of relevant documentation, such as certification records and local policies. Conducted in Langsa, Aceh, a region with a predominantly Muslim population and a developing halal industry, this study specifically considers the unique sociocultural and economic factors influencing the self-declared halal certification process.

Therefore, this research offers valuable insights into the practicalities and effectiveness of self-declare halal certification for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Langsa, Aceh. These findings inform policymakers and certification bodies on how to design more inclusive and effective certification systems that support MSMEs, while ensuring the integrity of halal standards.

## Literature Review

The global halal industry has seen significant growth, driven by increasing consumer demand for Sharia-compliant products and services. Halal certification is central to this industry, ensuring adherence to religious and quality standards, especially for Muslim consumers (Aziz & Chok, 2013; Fitria et al., 2019). In Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, halal certification is a crucial cultural and economic factor, particularly for MSMEs that form the backbone of the national economy (Qadariyah & Sarkawi, 2023; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). However, traditional certification processes can be complex and costly for small businesses (Qadariyah & Sarkawi, 2023; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). Focusing on Langsa, Aceh, a region governed by Sharia law, this review explores both global and local perspectives to build an analytical foundation for investigating how self-declared systems improve MSME participation in the halal market, while maintaining consumer trust and product quality.

### Halal standards and certification systems

Halal certification is formally validated by an authorized body, confirming that a product meets the necessary halal requirements, according to Islamic law (Qadariyah & Sarkawi, 2023; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). This ensures that all aspects from raw materials and production processes to distribution are halal (permissible) and thayyib (pure and wholesome). The process involves inspections by qualified auditors who assess compliance, leading to the determination of the product's halal status (Alfarizi & Ngatindriatun, 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2023). Upon meeting these requirements, manufacturers receive a halal certificate, allowing them to display the halal label and registration number on their product packaging, which serves to inform Muslim consumers about halal status and demonstrates adherence to halal standards (Akbar et al., 2023; Rindrasih, 2021). For producers, halal certification fulfills a crucial responsibility towards Muslim consumers, upholding their right to consume in accordance with Islamic law. It also builds customer trust and satisfaction, enhances the business image and competitiveness, and acts as a valuable marketing tool.

The increasing complexity of processed foods, which often utilize cost-effective but potentially non-halal ingredients, creates ambiguity regarding their halal status, leading to consumer skepticism. Implementing halal certification provides manufacturers with a guarantee of their products' halal compliance, which involves verifying that raw materials, production methods, and the company's halal product assurance system meet established criteria (El-Gohary, 2016; Sulaiman et al., 2023; Sumaiya & Abdullah, 2022). This verification was conducted through inspections by qualified auditors, culminating in a fatwa, confirming the product's halal nature. There are two main types of halal certification: regular and self-declared (Arifin, 2023; Faizal & Saly, 2022; Utami et al., 2022). Typically, regular certification requires halal product testing by an accredited Halal Inspection Agency (LPH), whereas self-declared certification relies on the business owner's declaration, verified by a Halal Product Process (PPH) supervisor, without mandatory LPH involvement.

### MSMEs and self declare halal certification

Self-declared halal certification in Indonesia allows micro-business owners to affirm the halal status of their own produced goods, as outlined in Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021 and reinforced by Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance (UU-JPH) (Dawam et al., 2023; Ulfa, 2022). To qualify for self-declaration, the business owner must ensure and declare the halal transparency of all raw materials with clear origins, adhere to a halal production process that prevents cross-contamination, demonstrate honesty and trustworthiness in their declarations, maintain complete documentation for traceability, and comply with all relevant halal product regulations (Arifin, 2023; Ulfa, 2022; Utami et al., 2022). This initiative is promoted by the Indonesian government to achieve its goal of becoming the world's largest global halal market by 2024, prioritizing food products considered to be at a high risk of halal compliance, and offering an alternative to the regular certification process.

MSMEs are vital to Indonesia's economy, accounting for over 60% of the GDP and 97% of employment (Qadariyah & Sarkawi, 2023; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). In Aceh, a province with a strong Islamic identity, MSMEs in the food and beverage sector are particularly prominent. However, obtaining halal certification remains a significant challenge for such enterprises. It identifies key barriers, including high certification fees, limited technical knowledge, and inadequate access to certification bodies, especially in rural areas such as Langsa (Ananda et al., 2022; Pahlepy, 2022). These obstacles hinder MSMEs' ability to tap into the growing halal market both domestically and internationally. Conversely, halal certification offers MSMEs substantial opportunities. Certified products enhance market competitiveness, increase consumer trust, and open export opportunities, particularly in Muslim-majority regions. The self-declared system can address these barriers by simplifying the process, but its adoption and impact remain underexplored. For instance, while Indonesian policymakers view it as a game changer for MSMEs, empirical studies on its implementation, especially in specific locales such as Aceh, are scarce, highlighting a critical research gap.

### Quality consumption halal industry

Quality consumption in the halal context transcends religious compliance, encompassing safety, hygiene, and ethical production practices (Alfarizi & Ngatindriatun, 2022; Oktarina et al., 2011). For Muslim consumers, halal certification serves as a dual assurance of permissibility and quality, thus influencing purchasing decisions. In Aceh, where Sharia law shapes daily life, halal certification is a prerequisite for consumer acceptance (Rindrasih, 2021; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). Research suggests that certified products are perceived as safer and more trustworthy, contributing to improved consumption standards in Muslim-majority regions. However, the shift to self-declared systems raises questions regarding their ability to maintain these standards. The researcher notes that While traditional certification benefits from rigorous oversight, self-declaration relies heavily on producers' integrity and capacity for self-assessment (Noordin et al., 2009). By contrast, limited oversight in self-declared models may undermine trust, particularly if the verification mechanisms are weak. The tension between accessibility and credibility is a key issue for quality consumption, warranting further investigation in contexts such as Langsa.

### Global perspectives

A comparative analysis of global halal certification systems provides valuable insights into Indonesia's self-declared model. Malaysia is a global leader, with JAKIM offering subsidies and training to support MSMEs in obtaining certifications (Noordin et al., 2009; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). This integrated approach balances accessibility with quality control, and serves as a potential benchmark for Indonesia. In Turkey, a hybrid system allows self-declaration of certain products, supplemented by audits, offering flexibility while mitigating risks (Haslina et al., 2015; Pratikto et al., 2023). The United Arab Emirates has introduced a national halal mark that permits self-declaration under strict guidelines, reflecting a blend of innovation and regulation, highlighting the diversity of approaches to halal certification and their adaptability to local contexts (Kurnia et al., 2023; Vargas-Sanchez et al., 2020). However, few studies have explored how these systems apply to regions with unique sociocultural dynamics, such as Aceh. The literature also lacks detailed analyses of the long-term impact of self-declared systems on MSMEs and consumer perceptions, particularly outside major halal markets such as Malaysia and the Middle East.

The reviewed literature underscores the importance of halal certification for MSMEs and the potential of self-declared systems to address the traditional barriers. Traditional certification ensures credibility but limits accessibility, whereas self-declared models offer flexibility at the risk of reduced trust. MSMEs stand to benefit from simplified processes; however, their ability to meet quality consumption standards under self-declaration remains uncertain. Globally, countries such as Malaysia and Turkey provide useful frameworks; however, their applicability to Indonesia, particularly Aceh, requires contextual adaptation. A significant gap exists in the empirical research on the implementation and outcomes of self-declared halal certification, especially in Indonesia. Most studies focus on traditional systems or broad global trends, with little attention paid to region-



specific dynamics, such as those in Langsa and Aceh. This study addresses this gap by examining the practical experiences of MSMEs in adopting self-declared certification, its challenges, and its contribution to quality consumption in the Sharia-governed context.

## **Research Methods**

This study employed a qualitative field research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of self-declared halal certification among MSMEs in Langsa city, Aceh and its impact on achieving dignified and quality consumption. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate, as it allowed for a detailed exploration of the complex, context-specific experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by MSME owners and relevant stakeholders (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fischer & Miller, 2017; Khalis et al., 2018). This approach facilitates the capture of rich, nuanced data that may not be accessible through quantitative methods.

### **Research setting**

This research was conducted in Langsa city, Aceh Province, Indonesia. This location was specifically chosen because of its predominantly Muslim population and growing emphasis on developing the halal industry within the region, aligning with Indonesia's national ambition to become a global halal hub. Aceh's unique sociocultural and economic context, including the implementation of Sharia law, provided a relevant setting for examining the adoption and impact of self-declared halal certification.

### **Data collection methods**

Data were collected using three primary methods: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Elo et al., 2014; Ramadhani & Widodo, 2019; Wilson et al., 2016). Direct observations were conducted at various MSME locations in Langsa city, which had either undergone or were in the process of self-declared halal certification. These observations focus on production processes, hygiene practices, product displays, and interactions between business owners, employees, and customers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Pereira et al., 2014). Data were collected via semi-structured interviews in Bahasa Indonesia with 10 respondents: five MSME owners in the food, beverage, and cosmetics sectors actively involved in self-declared halal certification, and five Langsa halal assistants. Interviews, audio-recorded with consent, explored the participants' understanding of halal certification, motivations, challenges, benefits, and impacts on businesses and consumers. Field notes documented observations during data collection. Transcribed interviews were analyzed alongside the collected documents, certification applications, licenses, product labels, local halal regulations, and BPJPH guidelines to assess compliance, institutional frameworks, and the program's effectiveness.

### **Data analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Haines, 2011; Thompson, 2022). The interview transcripts and field notes were carefully read and reread to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the implementation, challenges, and impact of self-declared halal certification. The initial coding process involves assigning labels to segments of data that represent key ideas or concepts. These codes are grouped into broader themes. The documentary data were analyzed to provide context and support the themes emerging from the interview and observation data. Triangulation of the data from these multiple sources was used to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

### **Ethical considerations**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. They were provided with clear information about the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, and their right

to withdraw from the study at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using pseudonyms to report the findings and store the data securely.

## Results and Discussion

The study illustrated the results of participant observations, interviews, and documentation in Langsa city, Aceh. Qualitative field research was conducted in Langsa city, Aceh, regarding the implementation of self-declared halal certification among MSMEs. Data collected through observations, in-depth interviews with business owners and managers, and document analysis provide key insights into the process, perceptions, challenges, and impacts of this certification pathway, which are detailed in the following subsections.

### The profile of MSMEs in Langsa city

Langsa is recognized for its education, trade, culinary scene, and tourism, notably as a center for trade and culinary businesses. This is largely attributed to the significant portion of its population engaged in commerce and vibrant innovation within its micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) sector (Andiny & Nurjannah, 2018; Ulya, 2021). The MSME sector in Langsa encompasses diverse industries, including the creative industry and seafood processing, including the production of dried fish, shrimp paste, and other processed food products (Ulya, 2021). This potential indicates that MSMEs in Langsa are not only vital to the local economy, but also possess the capacity to expand into regional and national markets. Data from the Langsa city Office of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and MSMEs revealed a dynamic increase in the number of MSME units from 649 in 2014 to 3,376 in 2016, and a significant surge to 24,044 units in both 2020 and 2021 (Ulya, 2021). The Langsa city Government actively fosters this growth through various initiatives, including organizing events such as the UMKM Fest 2023, which aimed to promote local products and enhance the competitiveness of micro and small businesses in broader markets (Budiman et al., 2019; Kismawadi & Al Muddatstsir, 2018). Furthermore, the establishment of the UMKM Partnership House (Rumah Mitra UMKM) by the Langsa city Government (Pemkot Langsa) is intended to support small and medium-sized enterprises to expand their businesses and improve their product quality.

### The practices of self claim in MSMEs of Langsa city

Recognizing the crucial role of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the economy, the Indonesian government actively encourages their participation in the halal industry through various policies, including facilitation of halal certification and the Indonesian Sharia Creative Industry Program (IKRA). A key initiative is halal certification via a self-declared mechanism, which aims to assure consumers, particularly in tourist destinations, of the halal status of MSME products. While small and medium-sized enterprises producing halal goods must meet specific requirements for official certification, the government offers this process free of charge through programs such as the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) Free Halal Certification Program (SEHATI) (Budiman et al., 2019; Kismawadi & Al Muddatstsir, 2018). This ease of access to halal certification provides significant benefits to MSMEs, adding value to their products, enhancing tourist trust, and creating opportunities for increased sales, thereby supporting the broader halal tourism program (Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2021). However, according to the Halal Product Assurance Law (UU JPH), self-declaration by small and micro enterprises is not arbitrary and requires guidance from experts and halal determination by the MUI Fatwa Commission.

In Langsa city, the self-declared halal certification registration process is electronic. Businesses applying for this certification must submit specific documentation. For individual registration, these documents include a halal certification application letter, Business Identification Number (NIB), halal supervisor documents (appointment letter, ID copy, CV), product name, ingredient list, halal production process description, distribution permit or SLHS, SJPH (Halal Product Assurance System) manual, and a contract or declaration confirming the halal status of the

product and its ingredients. Mrs. Rosita, the owner of Dendeng Bacirasa, whose business followed these procedures, shared her experiences in an interview:

“We obtained halal certification through the self-declare program provided by the government. We chose this program because it is more practical, easy, and does not require a large budget, making it suitable for small businesses such as ours. Our business operates as a group of five people, but all the paperwork was submitted under my name because the others were reluctant to handle the administrative process. So, from registration on the SiHalal account to the self-declared application, everything was in my name. During the application process, documents such as NIB and others were required, all under my name. I also received much assistance from a government-appointed facilitator, such as Ms. Ulfa, who provided direct guidance and support, making the certification process much easier.”

Based on the explanation above, every business seeking halal certification through self-declaration must have a facilitator who guides and educates them on the registration process. After completing training with a Halal Product Facilitator (PPH), businesses that possess a Business Identification Number (NIB) are immediately directed by the facilitator to proceed with the registration process. As business owners, companies are responsible for ensuring that their products are halal. This commitment is demonstrated through the contract or declaration (*akad/ikrar*) submitted by business owners during the self-declared halal certification registration process.

The self-declared halal certification process begins with business owners creating and logging into an account of the SiHalal electronic system (Faizal & Saly, 2022). Registration involves two main sections: business owner information and self-declare application. In the business menu, applicants must update their personal data, business owner details, factory and outlet information, and halal supervisors' details. The responsible party for the business, the owner or another individual, will have a Halal Supervisor Appointment Letter (SK *Penyelia Halal*) automatically generated by SiHalal upon completing these details. The halal supervisor should be a business owner or another qualified Muslim individual (e.g., spouse, child, employee). Once the application is submitted to the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) via SiHalal, a Halal Product Facilitator (PPH) oversees the halal production process until the MUI issues a halal fatwa. Guidance during this stage is crucial to ensure product halalness and quality. Obtaining the halal certificate typically takes between one and seven days post-submission to MUI. Upon issuance, the business owner downloads the certificate from their SiHalal account and is required to display the halal logo on their product packaging to build consumer trust and guarantee the product's halal status for distribution and consumption.

This study indicates that the self-declared halal certification practice in Langsa city aligns with government regulations and procedures, enabling local businesses to meet the required criteria. Entrepreneurs in Langsa favor the self-declared scheme primarily because of its cost-free nature and the time-saving convenience of the online system, making it more efficient than conventional, fee-based halal certification. This self-declared halal certification scheme is a pragmatic policy response to the unique challenges faced by MSMEs. By eliminating costs and simplifying procedures, it democratizes access to the halal market, while balancing compliance through expert oversight. This approach not only strengthens Indonesia's economy but also advances its global halal industry leadership, aligning with the national development priorities outlined in the National Halal Industry Master Plan (2020–2024) (Komite Nasional Ekonomi dan Keuangan Syariah, 2023; Nurrahma, 2020; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). Mrs. Rosita of Dendeng Bacirasa echoed this preference.

“We obtained halal certification through the government's self-declare program because it is practical, easy, and cost-free, perfect for small businesses like ours”

Similarly, Mrs. Putri Sapriyana from UMKM Food Myput chose it because

“it is free, which strongly motivates many MSMEs to register their products.”

These experiences highlight the significant benefits of self-declared halal certification for small businesses, ensuring that their products meet halal standards without a financial burden, while the online system offers a faster and more convenient process, allowing them to concentrate on business growth. Interviews with MSME owners in Langsa city revealed several challenges to the self-declared halal certification process. A primary obstacle is the lack of clear information and an understanding of specific requirements and procedures. For instance, Mrs. Rosita (Dendeng Bacirasa) noted the time-consuming registration process, often requiring multiple document submissions due to missing information, and confusion around ensuring that all ingredients met halal standards without adequate guidance. Similarly, Mrs. Putri Sapriyana (Food MyPut) highlighted the difficulty in aligning production processes with halal standards, such as specific raw material washing procedures, and pointed out that despite government support, the lack of readily available education and direct guidance forced business owners to seek information independently from halal facilitators. Beyond informational hurdles, limited resources, including labor, time, and finances, pose significant barriers, as expressed by Mrs. Enurriza (Riza Juice), who has yet to register because of these constraints and the perceived complexity of the requirements. Technical issues with online systems, such as periodic maintenance disruptions, also impede the process. MSME owners expressed a need for increased socialization efforts and direct outreach from halal facilitators, including more training sessions, to improve their understanding of the importance and benefits of halal certification for product competitiveness and consumer assurance.

This self-declared halal certification scheme serves as a practical and effective policy solution to address the distinct challenges faced by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) entering and thriving within the halal market. Recognizing that MSMEs often grapple with limited financial resources and the complexities of traditional certification processes, this scheme removes barriers by offering cost-free certification and streamlined procedures (Rizkhie & Farida, 2024; Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). The self-declaration enables smaller businesses to compete more effectively in both local and global markets, aligning seamlessly with Indonesia's broader economic aspirations. Simultaneously, the government ensures the integrity of the halal certification process through expert oversight provided by the MUI Fatwa Commission and regular monitoring conducted by the BPJPH (Sakti & Ramadhani, 2023). This approach successfully balanced the accessibility of MSMEs with strict adherence to halal standards. Consequently, the self-declared mechanism not only strengthens the capacity of MSMEs, but also bolsters the growth of Indonesia's halal industry, solidifying the country's reputation as a leader in this burgeoning sector.

The impact of self-declare certification has been widely experienced by MSME owners, particularly in Langsa city. This impact is positive, and can be used as an approach to business development. The impacts of implementing the self-declared system on MSMEs are as follows.

### **1. Guarantee and legal protection for product safety**

The self-declared halal certification scheme, in line with the Consumer Protection Act, provides assurance and legal protection to consumers. Mrs. Rosita, owner of Dendeng Bacirasa, stated the following.

“Consumers tend to trust products with halal certification, especially those abroad who buy them as souvenirs. This certification guarantees that our products are made according to halal standards, leading to positive consumer feedback and increased confidence in them. It also enhances perceived value.”

The owner of Dendeng Bacirasa, Mrs. Rosita, encapsulates several crucial aspects of the impact of halal certification, particularly within the context of your research on self-declared certification for MSMEs in Langsa, Aceh. Self-declaration is a fundamental benefit of any form of certification, but it holds a particular weight for halal products due to the religious significance of Muslim consumers. This statement highlights that consumers, both local and international, rely on halal certification as a reliable indicator of compliance with Islamic dietary laws. Trust is essential to market acceptance and growth. The mention of consumers abroad



buying products as souvenirs underscores the potential for halal-certified MSMEs in Langsa to tap into international markets. Souvenirs often carry cultural and religious significance, and for Muslim travelers or those purchasing for Muslim recipients, halal status is a key consideration. This suggests that even self-declared certification can open doors to a broader customer base, beyond the local market. Mrs. Rosita emphasizes that certification serves as a guarantee. While self-declared certification relies heavily on the business owner's integrity and adherence to guidelines, this statement indicates that consumers perceive certification as a form of assurance. This perception is crucial for the success of a self-declared scheme. Positive feedback and increased confidence reported by consumers are direct outcomes of trust instilled by halal certification. This suggests that, even with the self-declared model, if implemented effectively and transparently, it resonates positively with consumers and encourages consumption. The statement that halal certification adds value to a product is significant. This added value can translate into greater customer loyalty, the potential for premium pricing, and an overall stronger brand image for MSME. Small businesses play a crucial role in achieving sustainability and growth.

The self-declared halal certification scheme serves as a practical and effective policy solution to address the needs of food and beverage businesses in Islamic Shariah-applied provinces such as Aceh, Indonesia. In regions where adherence to Islamic principles is deeply ingrained in daily life and commerce, ensuring that products meet halal standards is not just a market requirement, but also a cultural and religious necessity (Susilowati et al., 2023). For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in these areas, traditional certification processes can be prohibitively expensive and time-consuming, potentially hindering their ability to comply with local regulations and effectively serve their communities (Annisa et al., 2023; Novadinastia & Azizah, 2023). The self-declared mechanism alleviates these challenges by offering a cost-free and streamlined approach to obtaining halal certification, allowing businesses to focus on production and service delivery (Arifin, 2023; Ulfa, 2022). Furthermore, this scheme aligns with the provincial government's commitment to upholding the Shariah principles while fostering economic development. Through expert guidance from local fatwa councils and oversight by relevant authorities, the scheme ensures that halal integrity is maintained, enabling businesses in Aceh to thrive in both local and broader halal markets.

Building on this foundation, the self-declared halal certification scheme also plays a crucial role in enhancing consumer trust and promoting inclusivity within Shariah-applied provinces, such as Aceh. the certification process for SMEs, the scheme ensures that a wider range of products, from local street food vendors to small-scale manufacturers, are certified as halal, providing consumers with greater confidence in their purchasing decisions. This is particularly important in regions where adherence to halal standards is not only expected but also mandated by law, as it minimizes the risk of non-compliance and protects consumer rights. Additionally, the scheme fosters inclusivity by enabling even the smallest enterprises, such as family owned restaurants or traditional snack producers, to participate in the formal halal economy. This inclusivity contributes to economic empowerment at the grassroots level, reducing disparities and encouraging entrepreneurship among local communities. Moreover, the scheme aligns with broader national objectives such as the *National Halal Industry Master Plan*, by positioning Aceh as a model province for integrating Shariah principles with modern business practices. Through collaboration between government agencies, religious bodies, and private stakeholders, the self-declared mechanism not only strengthens the local economy, but also reinforces Aceh's identity as a leader in Shariah-compliant commerce.

## 2. Self-declare as business image and competitive advantage

The self-declared mechanism in Indonesia's halal industry serves as a powerful tool for enhancing the business image and creating a competitive advantage for enterprises, particularly MSMEs. In a market where halal certification is becoming a prerequisite for participation, especially in tourist destinations and export markets, self-declaration provides businesses with a distinct edge. This allows them to enter the market more quickly and cost-effectively than

traditional certification methods, enabling them to seize opportunities in the rapidly growing global halal industry. Thus, the self-declared scheme not only enhances the visibility and credibility of Indonesian products but also positions businesses favorably against competitors who lack halal certification, thereby boosting their market share and profitability. MSME owners in Langsa city use the halal label obtained through self-declared certification to enhance their business image and gain a competitive edge. This label serves as a clear indicator of halal compliance, acting as a marketing strategy to attract more consumers and expand market reach. As Abdul Hamid Mahmud Thihmaz noted, product labeling informs the public and expands the market, which is particularly crucial given the Islamic emphasis on distinguishing between halal and haram. Mrs. Putri Sapryana from Food MyPut

“With halal certification, I feel more confident promoting my products in my marketing efforts to attract more consumers. It is often a mandatory requirement for participating in events, making it easier to join competitions and stand out with a certified product.”

Putri Sapryana of Food MyPut highlights the significant business advantages that self-declared halal certification can offer to MSMEs in Langsa, Aceh. She increased confidence in promoting her products, which is a direct benefit of having halal certification. This suggests that certification provides a tangible selling point, allowing her to market her products with greater assurance and appeal to a wider audience, especially Muslim consumers who prioritize halal status. This confidence translates into more effective marketing strategies and stronger brand presence. The desire to attract more consumers is a primary driver for many businesses seeking halal certifications. Ms. Putri's statement confirms that she views halal certification as a key strategy to expand her customer base. In a region like Langsa, with a predominantly Muslim population, halal certification significantly increases a product's marketability and appeals to a large segment of potential customers. Halal certification is a mandatory requirement for participating in events, underscoring its importance in accessing various business opportunities. Many trade shows, exhibitions, and competitions related to food and beverages, especially in Muslim-majority regions or those targeting the halal market, often require participants to have halal certification. Ms. Putri's response clearly illustrates the practical business advantages of self-declared halal certification for MSMEs in Langsa, particularly in terms of enhancing marketing efforts, accessing new opportunities, and achieving a competitive edge in the market. This quote provides strong evidence of the positive impact of this certification scheme on the growth and visibility of small businesses.

Through this streamlined process, halal certification effectively communicates their commitment to quality, authenticity, and adherence to Islamic principles, which are increasingly valued by consumers both domestically and internationally. Certification acts as a trust-building measure because it provides tangible assurance to consumers that the products they purchase comply with halal standards that are deeply rooted in religious and cultural values for Muslim consumers (Annisa et al., 2023; Djakfar & Isnaliana, 2021; Sumaiya & Abdullah, 2022). In the context of the halal industry, trust is paramount as customers rely on certifications to verify that products meet specific requirements regarding ingredients, production processes, and ethical considerations aligned with Islamic law. Without certification, consumers may doubt the authenticity of a product's halal status, leading to hesitation.

Halal certification, particularly through mechanisms such as self-declaration, bridges this gap by offering a recognized and regulated seal of approval. This reassurance fosters confidence among consumers, encourages repeat purchases, and strengthens brand loyalty (Sulaiman et al., 2023). For instance, in Indonesia, a country with the world's largest Muslim population, halal certification is not only a religious expectation, but also a growing market norm. Consumers are increasingly informed and selective about the products they buy, making halal certification a critical factor in their purchasing decisions. When businesses prominently display their halal certification, they signal transparency, accountability, and respect for consumer values, which enhances the brand's reputation and builds long-term relationships with its customer base. Furthermore, in competitive markets, such as tourism and international

trade, where halal-conscious travelers and importers demand certified products, halal certification becomes a non-negotiable advantage. Self-claim compliance: businesses tap into broader markets, including those outside Indonesia, where halal-certified goods are in high demand. Thus, halal certification serves more than just a regulatory requirement; it is a strategic tool for building trust, differentiating from competitors, and securing sustained consumer engagement.

### 3. Building consumer trust and satisfaction

This self-declared scheme fosters peace of mind within the Muslim community, where there is a growing awareness of the importance of halal products. The halal label ensures consumers of a product's guaranteed halal status, eliminating concerns about its permissibility. In Langsa, businesses such as Dendeng Bacirasa strive to ensure consumer safety through self-declared halal certification, guaranteeing halal-compliant production processes. Mrs. Rosita noted,

“Since obtaining halal certification, we have seen increased demand, especially from international consumers in countries like Germany and Australia who want our products as souvenirs. The consumer response has been very positive, with many feeling more comfortable and confident consuming our products because of the halal label, which also adds to our product value.”

The halal logo on self-declared products provides Muslim consumers with legal protection and certainty against non-halal items, thus ensuring compliance with Islamic dietary laws. Dendeng Bacirasa's owner highlights the tangible positive impact of obtaining halal certification, even through a self-declared mechanism, on their business, particularly in expanding their market reach and enhancing consumer perception. The specific mention of increased demand from international consumers in Germany and Australia is particularly noteworthy. This suggests that even with self-declared certification, MSMEs in Langsa tap into global markets, especially those with significant Muslim populations, or those catering to tourists seeking authentic halal products. The fact that these consumers purchase products as souvenirs further emphasizes the cultural and religious significance of halal certification in international trade and tourism. This response strongly supports the argument that halal certification has a positive impact on the business of MSMEs in Langsa, Aceh, demonstrating its ability to attract international customers, increase consumer confidence, and enhance product value, even when achieved through a self-declared mechanism, as a key indicator of the potential benefits of this simplified certification pathway.

### Dignified and quality consumption in Langsa city through the implementation of self-declare halal certification for MSMEs

Self-declared halal product certification benefits producers by enhancing consumer trust and confirming adherence to halal requirements, which are fundamental for Muslim consumers seeking lawful products. Understanding halal and haram principles is key to determining a product's halal status, and establishing a comprehensive halal-food ecosystem is vital. The self-declared process in Langsa city involves various stakeholders in registration, documentation, mentorship, and display of the halal logo, all aimed at protecting consumers' religious choices (Dawam et al., 2023; Ulfa, 2022). In line with the principles of *halalan thayyiban*, MSME products with self-declared halal certification in Langsa must meet criteria such as the use of halal and permissible raw materials, ethical sourcing, proper processing methods adhering to Islamic guidelines, and clean presentation and storage to prevent contamination (Andiny & Nurjannah, 2018; Ulya, 2021). Furthermore, this certification aligns with dignified consumption by promoting worker welfare, fair wages, and ethical production practices, ensuring equal access to quality halal products for all social groups in Langsa city. As Mrs. Rosita stated,

“With halal certification, our product quality is better maintained, and consumers feel reassured about its cleanliness and halal compliance. This motivates us to consistently uphold

quality standards in our production, ensuring every ingredient is thoroughly checked and the production process follows established halal criteria.

Mrs. Rosita explicitly states that halal certification leads to better maintained product quality. This suggests that the process of seeking and adhering to halal standards prompts businesses to implement stricter quality control measures throughout their production. It is not just about meeting religious requirements, but also about ensuring the overall quality and safety of the product. This quote emphasizes the dual reassurance that halal certification is provided to consumers. It not only confirms that the product is permissible under Islamic law but also that it meets certain standards of cleanliness and hygiene. This is particularly important in the food industry, where consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about both the religious and health aspects of their consumption. The statement that the production process follows established halal criteria indicates that the business has implemented specific procedures and protocols to ensure that every stage of production aligns with the Islamic guidelines. This involves changes in cleaning practices, equipment handling, and segregation of halal and non-halal materials, all of which can positively impact the overall quality of the product. The adoption of self-declared halal certification by businesses in Langsa city demonstrates a significant effort towards achieving dignified and high-quality consumption by enabling informed consumer choices and providing benefits through ethically produced safe products.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the study addressed its objectives by examining the implementation process and impacts of self-declare halal certification for MSMEs in Langsa city, Aceh. These findings confirm that this certification mechanism serves as a viable pathway for local businesses to enter the halal market, fostering dignified consumption by ensuring product safety and quality. By prioritizing accessibility and cost-effectiveness, self-declared certification empowers MSMEs to compete domestically and internationally, as evidenced by the increased demand from overseas consumers and heightened producer accountability. However, the study also identifies critical challenges, including gaps in procedural understanding, limited resources, and insufficient institutional support, which hinder the full realization of certification's potential. These findings align with the research aim of analyzing both the process and outcomes of self-declaration, demonstrating its dual role as an opportunity and barrier for MSMEs. These results highlight the need for a balanced approach to certification frameworks. For policymakers, self-declared halal certification represents a pragmatic tool to expand halal market participation, but requires structured support to address systemic challenges. For MSMEs, certification's legal and reputational benefits underscore its value in building consumer trust, particularly in regions with growing halal demand. This study underscores self-declared halal certification as a transformative, yet evolving mechanism for MSMEs. Its success hinges on collaborative efforts to bridge knowledge gaps, optimize processes, and ensure equitable access to halal market opportunities. Therefore, the study suggests that the effectiveness of certification, the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), and local governments should prioritize (1). Clarify certification procedures and halal compliance standards (2). To reduce administrative burdens, streamlined documentation and technology integration (i.e., digital platforms for real-time verification), and (3). To address resource constraints, i.e. financial, and technical assistance.

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