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ARTICLE

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Perceived Impacts of Halal Certification on Trust, Market Access, and Revenue among Culinary MSMEs

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Abstract: *This study examines the perceived impacts of halal certification on consumer trust and business performance among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the culinary sector. In the context of increasing public awareness of halal products, halal certification is seen not only as a form of normative compliance but also as a strategic tool to boost business competitiveness. This research used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of business performance indicators with qualitative data from in-depth interviews with five MSMEs representing different product characteristics. Quantitatively, owners' perceived implementation of halal certification was positively associated with their perceived business income ($B = 0.676$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.562$). Because both measures are owner-reported, this indicates an association between perceptions rather than a causal effect on actual revenue. Qualitatively, all five informants perceived halal certification as enhancing consumer trust, improving business reputation, and facilitating access to modern and institutional markets, thereby expanding sales opportunities and distribution networks. Nevertheless, its impact on turnover and net profit appears indirect and contingent on the product's halal uncertainty, the target market channel, managerial capacity, marketing strategy, production efficiency, and distribution margin structures. This study concludes that halal certification is a foundation of legitimacy that strengthens trust and market access. At the same time, sustainable economic performance depends on the effective integration of halal standards with adaptive and professional business management.*

Keywords: *competitiveness, culinary MSMEs, halal certification, sales revenue*

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1. Introduction

The implementation of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance is crucial for strengthening the halal economy in Indonesia to ensure that all food and beverage products consumed by the public meet legitimate halal standards (Suhaimi, 2025; Waluyo, 2020). This regulation creates a new paradigm for businesses and culinary MSMEs face regulatory changes directly (Izzah & Irfany, 2023). Although the regulation has been enforced for almost a decade, its implementation faces many obstacles, mainly due to business actors' awareness and administrative readiness. A lack of technical assistance further widens the implementation gap. Meanwhile, consumer demand has undergone significant changes. National survey results show that 89% of Muslim consumers prefer halal-certified products because this guarantees product safety, hygiene, and quality (Ayuniyyah et al., 2017; Purnomo et al., 2024). Therefore, halal certification does not merely function as a legal obligation. It becomes a strategic instrument that helps MSMEs build market trust and strengthen business image amid increasingly fierce competition in the culinary industry (Azzahra & Putri, 2025; Ratnasari et al., 2019).

The role of MSMEs in the national economy is crucial (Safitri et al., 2025), including in Riau Province, whose economic structure is based on natural resource potential and diverse business sectors, especially culinary (Sitorus et al., 2025). Indragiri Hilir Regency occupies a strategic position due to its geographical characteristics, dominated by coastal and agricultural areas (Kinanda et al., 2022). This condition provides a unique characteristic compared to urban areas that tend to rely on industrial supply chains. MSMEs in this region face different challenges, especially as market competition expands due to the development of digital platforms and increased consumer mobility (Susanto et al., 2024). In this context, halal certification is a potential differentiation strategy, given that modern consumers prioritize not only taste or price but also the legitimacy of the production process, cleanliness, and Sharia compliance (Ab Talib et al., 2016; Tahliani & Renaldi, 2023). However, research on the effectiveness of halal certification in coastal areas of Sumatra is limited (Auliyah et al., 2024; Bulan, 2016; Hanif, 2024; Suhanah & Asnawati, 2022). This lack of scientific research and information suggests the need for studies that consider regional socio-economic conditions and the characteristics of seafood-based products. It is crucial to understand how halal policy implementation is translated at the local level and how MSMEs respond to certification demands in high competition.

Scientific studies on the relationship between halal certification and MSME performance show inconsistent findings, which lead to diverse conceptual interpretations. Harfin and Rialdy (2025) found that halal labeling increases MSME sales, while Bahrudin et al. (2025) examined the determinants of MSMEs' decisions to pursue halal certification. Meanwhile, other studies (Devianty & Mukhsin, 2024; Hakim et al., 2024; Maksudi et al., 2023) show that the halal label could influence purchasing behavior, especially among consumers who perceive it as a primary variable in their consumption decisions. International evidence points in a similar direction: among Malaysian food manufacturers, halal certification was positively related to operational performance, which partially mediated its relationship with financial performance (Ab Talib et al., 2017), and among Indonesian food-manufacturing SMEs, deeper implementation of halal standards improved operational performance and, through it, market and financial performance (Giyanti et al., 2021). Other studies have examined how halal certification and halal supply-chain practices relate to MSME success and sustainable performance (Harsanto et al., 2024; Hasanah et al., 2023; Jannah & Wijayanti, 2025). However, several studies have yielded conflicting results. Rahma & Riskayanto (2025) state that the impact of certification does not directly affect turnover, but rather increases consumer loyalty and perceptions of product quality. Another research report shows that the effect of certification is significant only when MSMEs have stable product quality and adequate marketing strategies (Astuti et al., 2023). From a different perspective, Yustia et al. (2026) argue that managerial readiness could define the effectiveness of halal certification implementation. These divergent results suggest that the impact of halal certification is inconsistent. Internal and external factors influence the relationships among variables, so further research is required to identify mediating and moderating variables that comprehensively explain the mechanisms of certification influence.

From the literature review, two gaps should be addressed in this research. First, a geographic gap, with few studies conducted in coastal areas of Sumatra, including Indragiri Hilir Regency, which has distinct socio-economic characteristics and consumption culture compared to other regions. This region is dominated by seafood-based culinary products, a strong affinity for local food culture, and a predominantly Muslim population (Ilhami et al., 2021), which can influence consumer perceptions and preferences. These conditions may lead to market dynamics that cannot be fully explained by research findings in urban or industrial areas. Second is a theoretical gap regarding the mechanism of the influence of halal certification on MSME income (Purnomo et al., 2024). These variables demonstrate

a direct influence in some studies, but in others, their effects come up through intermediary factors, such as consumer trust, market expansion, perceived value, marketing strategy, and management capacity. The lack of a theoretical framework that integrates these variables has fragmented scientific understanding. Two theoretical lenses guide this study. Signaling theory holds that a third-party certificate reduces information asymmetry about attributes that buyers cannot verify themselves, so its value should depend on how much uncertainty it resolves (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973). Legitimacy theory holds that certification confers recognition from authoritative institutions, which formal buyers may require of their suppliers (Suchman, 1995). Building on these lenses, this study explores qualitatively the potential mechanisms (consumer trust, producer confidence, and market expansion) and conditions (product characteristics, product quality, and marketing strategy) through which halal certification may relate to the financial performance of MSMEs, and synthesizes them into an exploratory conceptual model for future testing.

This study examines how halal certification is associated with the sales revenue of culinary MSMEs in Indragiri Hilir Regency and explores the factors shaping its effectiveness. It has two main objectives. First, it quantitatively examines the relationship between halal certification and sales revenue using bivariate regression analysis. Second, it qualitatively explores the mechanisms and contextual factors through which halal certification may contribute to business performance, including consumer trust, producer confidence, market expansion, product quality, marketing strategies, internal management, market conditions, and producers' halal literacy. Previous studies have identified these factors as relevant to certification and business performance (Fitri et al., 2023; Kwak & Kim, 2017). By integrating quantitative findings with qualitative insights from business actors, this mixed-methods approach provides a comprehensive understanding of halal certification's role in MSME performance without statistically testing mediation or moderation effects, while also capturing the contextual conditions that may explain variations in the observed certification–revenue relationship.

This research is designed to provide benefits in two main areas: theoretical and practical. From a theoretical perspective, it contributes to literature on halal economics and MSME marketing management by formulating a relationship model that integrates mediating and moderating variables in analyzing the impact of halal certification. This model can confirm the discrepancies in previous research findings that indicate inconsistencies in the effect of certification on income (Dewanti & Irwansyah, 2021). Furthermore, it enriches scientific understanding of how local contexts influence the effectiveness of halal policy implementation. From a practical perspective, this study is expected to provide an empirical basis for local governments and institutions such as the BPJPH (Halal Product Assurance Agency) to design more targeted mentoring programs for certification acceleration and halal literacy improvement among MSMEs. Also, it could be a guide for business actors that halal certification can be a profitable business strategy when integrated with quality improvement and strengthening marketing strategies. Thus, this research has the potential to drive the transformation of MSMEs toward competitive and sustainable business models.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach (Chandrakumar & Vivek, 2023), integrating quantitative and qualitative data sequentially to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of halal certification on culinary MSMEs. The research adopted an explanatory sequential design, in which the study was conducted in two consecutive stages (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The first stage involved the collection and analysis of quantitative data through a questionnaire survey aimed at measuring owners' perceptions of how halal certification relates to income, sales performance, and market expansion (Creswell & Creswell, 2009). This initial phase provided a general empirical overview of the relationship between halal certification and business performance among culinary MSMEs.

The second stage consisted of qualitative data collection and analysis through in-depth interviews, intended to deepen, elaborate, and explain the findings obtained from the preceding quantitative phase. The study was conducted in Tembilahan, where the culinary MSME actors involved in this research are domiciled. The research was carried out from November 2025 to March 2026, during which questionnaires were distributed, data were collected, in-depth interviews were conducted, and the overall data analysis process was completed.

The respondents in this study consisted of 61 MSME owners who had obtained or were in the process of applying for halal certification. Respondents were identified through the Halal Certification Assistance database and through a snowball sampling technique based on referrals from fellow business

owners. This technique was selected because the population data of halal-certified MSMEs in Tembilahan, whether certified by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) or Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), has not yet been systematically and comprehensively documented, making it difficult for the researchers to determine the exact population size. Of the 61 respondents, 46 (75.4%) held a halal certificate and 15 (24.6%) were in the application process; the responses of the latter therefore reflect anticipated rather than experienced effects of certification.

Although the exact population size is unknown, the adequacy of the sample was evaluated with an a priori power analysis. For a linear regression with one predictor, a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), $\alpha = 0.05$, and a power of 0.80, the minimum required sample is 55 (Faul et al., 2009); the achieved sample of 61 therefore provides adequate statistical power. Because respondents were recruited through an assistance database and snowball referrals rather than random sampling, the findings are not statistically generalizable to all culinary MSMEs in Indragiri Hilir Regency; they describe the empirical conditions and dynamics of halal certification among the participating MSMEs in Tembilahan during the study period.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary data obtained directly from respondents, with data collection techniques adjusted to the type of approach employed. For quantitative data, collection was conducted using a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure the perceived impact of halal certification on indicators such as turnover growth, sales volume, and market reach (Taufique et al., 2026). Meanwhile, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews based on a prepared interview guideline. This combination of methods was expected to generate data that are not only statistically robust but also rich in contextual insights (Nadirah et al., 2022).

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. Internal consistency was assessed with Cronbach's alpha and corrected item–total correlations, and the hypothesis was tested with simple linear regression. Because both scales were completed by the same respondents at the same time, the results are interpreted as associations between perceptions that may be affected by common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Interview data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify how informants described changes in consumer trust, sales, turnover and profit, and market access after certification. The qualitative themes were then compared with the quantitative results to explain and qualify them.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. General Overview of the Research Object

This study involved 61 culinary MSME actors in Tembilahan. Data were collected through questionnaires covering business characteristics and perceptions of halal certification. The following section presents a summary of respondents' characteristics based on business type, business duration, and halal certification status.

3.1.1. Characteristics Based on Business Type

The majority of respondents were engaged in the ready-to-eat food sector, including rice-based meals, soto, meatballs, noodles, satay, chicken dishes, seafood, and processed food provision, accounting for 23 businesses (37.7%). The snacks/crackers/chips category ranked second, comprising 15 businesses (24.6%), followed by cakes, bread, and bakery products with 11 businesses (18.0%). The beverage category, including coffee, botanical drinks, and ice cream, was represented by 10 businesses (16.4%), while the remaining category, consisting of packaged chili sauce products, accounted for two businesses (3.3%). The distribution of respondents by business category is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of Respondents by Business Category

Business Category	Frequency	Percentage
Ready-to-eat foods (rice-based meals, soto, meatballs, noodles, satay, chicken, seafood, and processed dishes)	23	37.7%
Snacks / crackers / chips / fried foods	15	24.6%
Cakes, bread, and bakery products (including *dodol* and *jenang*)	11	18.0%
Beverages (coffee, botanical drinks, ice cream)	10	16.4%
Others (packaged chili sauce)	2	3.3%
Total	61	100%

3.1.2. Characteristics Based on Business Duration

The duration of business operations among respondents ranged from less than one year to more than 15 years. Based on the classification, most of the businesses had been operating for 5 to 10 years, accounting for 29 respondents (47.5%). Meanwhile, 25 respondents (41.0%) had operated for less than five years, while only seven respondents (11.5%) had maintained their businesses for more than ten years. These findings indicate that most of the MSMEs examined in this study can be categorized as established enterprises, although a substantial proportion of newly established businesses remains evident. The distribution of respondents according to business duration is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Distribution of Respondents According to Business Duration

Business Duration	Frequency	Percentage
< 5 years	25	41.0%
5–10 years	29	47.5%
> 10 years	7	11.5%
Total	61	100%

3.1.3. Recapitulation Analysis of Respondents' Scores Based on Question Themes

Based on data collected from 61 culinary MSME respondents in Tembilahan, statement items were grouped into thematic categories to provide a more in-depth understanding of respondents' perceptions of halal certification (Q1–Q19) and its impact on business income and performance (Q20–Q36). The mean score of each theme was interpreted using five equal class intervals. The interval width was calculated as the difference between the highest and lowest possible scores divided by the number of categories, $(5 - 1)/5 = 0.80$. Accordingly, mean scores of 1.00–1.80 were interpreted as very low, 1.81–2.60 as low, 2.61–3.40 as moderate, 3.41–4.20 as high, and 4.21–5.00 as very high. Because the Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), higher mean scores indicate stronger agreement among respondents that halal certification had been implemented and had produced the benefits described in each theme. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The following section presents the recapitulation of average scores for each theme along with their interpretations. The recapitulation of mean scores and interpretations for the five themes related to halal certification is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Recapitulation of Mean Scores and Interpretations for the Five Themes Related to Halal Certification

Theme	Constituent Items	Mean Score	Category
Raw Materials & Production Process	1, 2, 3, 4	4.07	High
Documentation & Compliance	5, 6, 7, 8	3.99	High
Owner Knowledge & Understanding	9, 10, 11, 12	3.99	High
Impact on Quality Perception	13, 14, 15	4.06	High
Impact on Internal Management	16, 17, 18, 19	4.05	High

All five themes within the halal certification aspect obtained mean scores above 3.99, which fall into the high category. The themes "Raw Materials & Production Process" (4.07) and "Impact on Quality Perception" (4.06) recorded the highest scores, indicating that respondents consistently implement halal standards in their production inputs and processes, while strongly believing that certification enhances product image in consumers' perceptions. Meanwhile, the themes "Documentation & Compliance" and "Owner Knowledge & Understanding" received slightly lower scores (3.99), suggesting there is room for improvement in administrative management and technical understanding of certification procedures, although these aspects remain at a satisfactory level overall. The recapitulation of mean scores for the themes related to income and business performance is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Recapitulation of Mean Scores for the Themes Related to Income and Business Performance

Theme	Constituent Items	Mean Score	Category
Sales Quantity	20, 21, 22	4.02	High
Income & Turnover	23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28	3.98	High
Market Expansion & Customer Growth	29, 30, 31, 32	4.10	High
Competitive Advantage	33, 34, 35, 36	4.06	High

All themes related to income and business performance achieved mean scores above 3.98, indicating a high category overall. The theme "Market Expansion & Customer Growth" recorded the highest score (4.10), suggesting that respondents experienced broader market reach, an increase in loyal

customers, and easier access to modern distribution channels after obtaining halal certification. The theme "Competitive Advantage" (4.06) also showed a high score, indicating that halal certification is perceived as a differentiating factor that strengthens reputation and customer trust. Meanwhile, the theme "Income & Turnover" (3.98) recorded the lowest score, although it remained within the high category, suggesting that increases in turnover and net income are evident but occur at a relatively more moderate level compared to market expansion.

Overall, the recapitulation of scores across themes demonstrates that respondents consistently perceived positive outcomes across all measured dimensions. Respondents gave the highest evaluations to aspects related to market expansion and customer growth, indicating that halal certification functions as a strong trust signal for consumers and facilitates access to broader market segments. On the other hand, improvements in income and turnover were also observed, although with slightly more moderate perceptions, suggesting that the financial benefits of certification may require time and complementary marketing strategies to become significant. These descriptive findings are consistent with the view that halal certification is perceived not only as a compliance matter but also as a potential catalyst for business growth among culinary MSMEs in Tembilahan, Indragiri Hilir Regency.

3.2. Instrument Reliability and Validity Test

3.2.1. Halal Certification Variables

Based on the results of SPSS analysis on the Reliability Statistics and Item-Total Statistics tables, the research instrument for the halal certification variable consisting of 19 statements (Q1-Q19) showed acceptable results. Cronbach's alpha value was recorded at 0.900, which far exceeded the minimum standard of 0.70, so this instrument was declared to have a very high level of internal consistency (reliability) and was suitable for use in research. Reliability Statistics of halal certification are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Reliability Statistics of Halal Certification

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.900	19

In terms of item discrimination, all 19 statements have a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value above the feasibility standard of 0.3. The lowest correlation value is Q14 (0.440) and the highest is Q5 (0.638), which indicates that all items have good discrimination against the total score of the variable. Furthermore, the alpha-if-item-deleted values ranged from 0.892 to 0.898. Since all these values are lower than the overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.900, this indicates that no item needed to be removed. Thus, 19 instrument items to measure halal certification variables were retained and were eligible to be used at the next stage of data analysis in researching the influence on MSME income in Tembilahan district.

3.2.2. Income Variables

Statistical analysis for the income variable also showed excellent results. Using a total of 17 statements (Q20-Q36), Cronbach's alpha value was recorded at 0.897. This figure highly exceeds the minimum standard of 0.70, indicating a strong internal consistency of the income instrument. Reliability statistics of the income variable are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Reliability Statistics of the Income Variable

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.897	17

In terms of item discrimination, all statement items have a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value above the standard of 0.3. The lowest correlation value is Q27 (0.485) and the highest is Q34 (0.661), indicating that all items correlate well with the total score. In addition, based on the Cronbach's alpha If Item Deleted column, the values ranged from 0.888 to 0.894. Because all these values are lower than the overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.897, removing any item would not increase the reliability. Thus, all 17 income items were retained for the regression analysis of the association between halal certification and MSME income in Tembilahan City.

3.3. Hypothesis Test

3.3.1. Classical Assumption Tests

Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the validity of the regression model. The normality test was performed by examining the histogram of standardized residuals and the Normal P-P Plot. As shown in Figure 1, the histogram displayed a bell-shaped curve, and the points on the P-P Plot (Figure 2) followed the diagonal line closely, indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. Furthermore, the homoscedasticity test was conducted by examining the scatterplot of standardized residuals (ZRESID) against standardized predicted values (ZPRED). The scatterplot (Figure 3) showed that the points were randomly dispersed without forming any specific pattern, confirming the absence of heteroscedasticity. Therefore, the regression model meets the classical assumptions and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

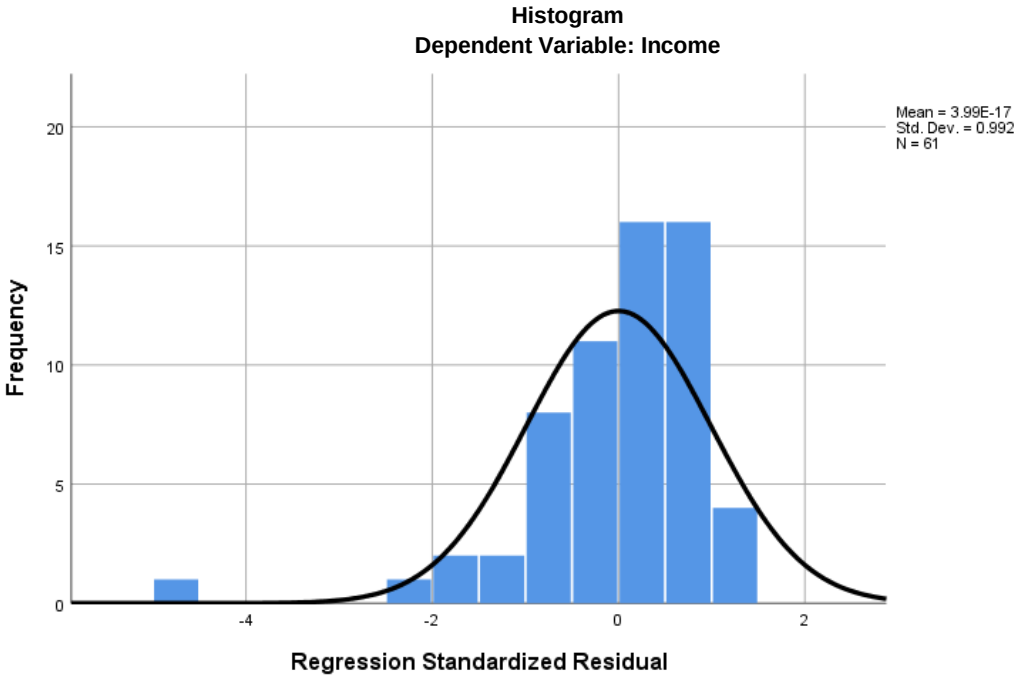


Figure 1. Histogram of standardized residuals

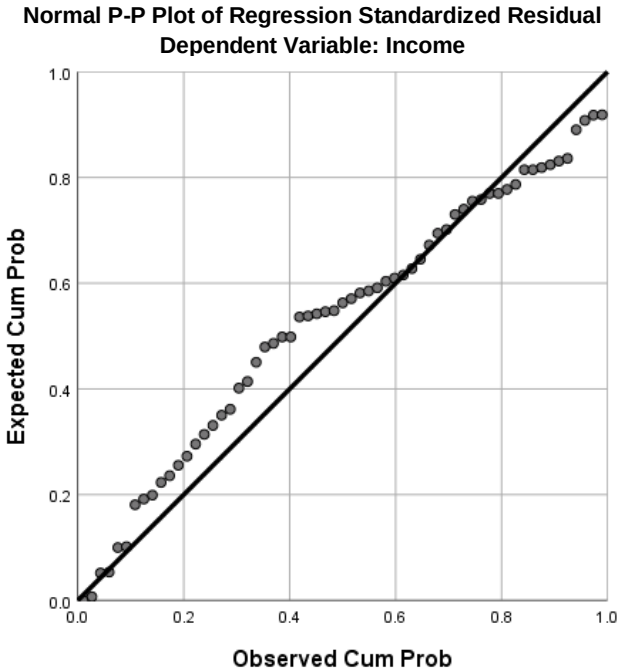


Figure 2. Normal P-P Plot of regression standardized residuals

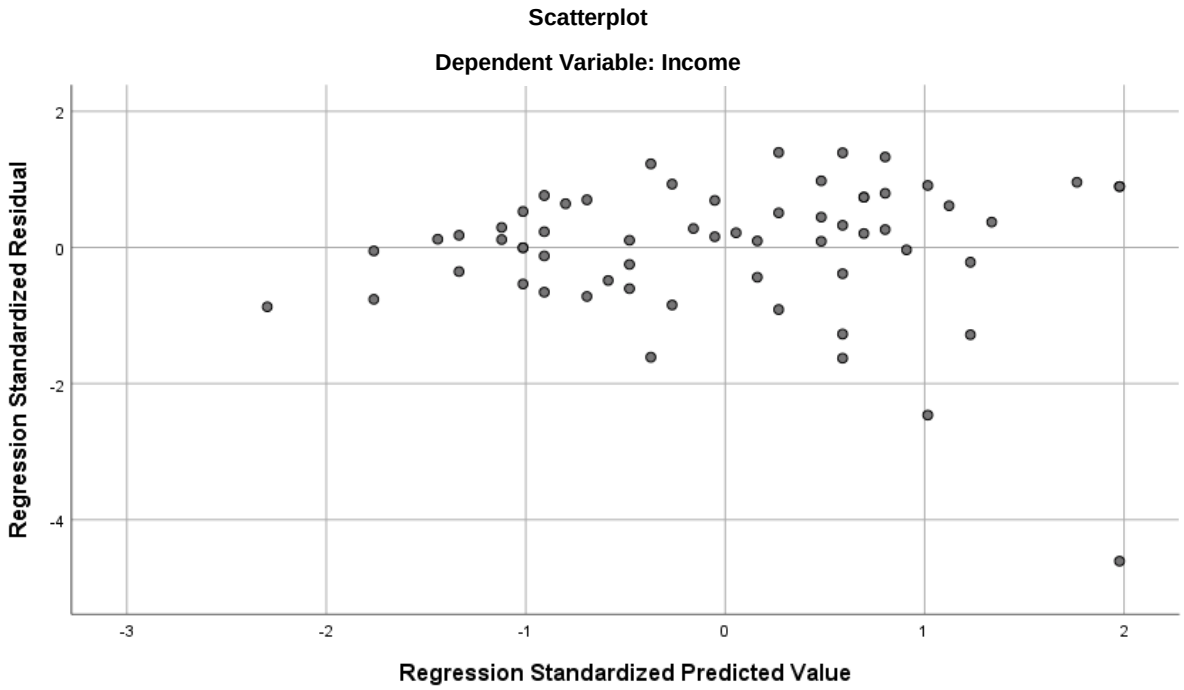


Figure 3. Scatterplot of homoscedasticity

3.3.2. Common Method Bias Test

To address potential common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted. The results showed that the first unrotated factor accounted for 17.968% of the total variance. Since this percentage is well below the recommended threshold of 50%, it can be concluded that common method bias does not pose a significant threat to the validity of this study's findings

3.3.3. Hypothesis Testing (Simple Linear Regression)

After confirming that the data met all classical assumptions and were free from common method bias, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis. The regression model explains 56.2% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.562$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.555$; $F(1, 59) = 75.773$, $p < 0.001$). The regression coefficient was significant ($t = 8.705$, $p < 0.001$), with $B = 0.676$, meaning that a one-unit higher score on the halal certification variable was associated with a 0.676-unit higher score on the perceived income variable. Therefore, H1 is supported. The detailed regression results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Simple Linear Regression Results

Coefficients[a]						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	15.722	5.985		2.627	.011
	Halal Certification	.676	.078	.750	8.705	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Income

Note: $R^2 = 0.562$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.555$; $F(1, 59) = 75.773$; $N = 61$

These results indicate that MSME owners perceive halal certification as closely associated with their income. Because both variables are owner-reported and were measured at a single point in time, the relationship should be read as an association between perceptions rather than as evidence that certification causes higher revenue; more capable owners may also be both more likely to implement certification thoroughly and more likely to perform well. Income is also likely to depend on other factors, such as product quality, marketing strategy, innovation, business location, and customer service. Halal certification should therefore be seen as one important pillar of business competitiveness that needs to be complemented by other managerial factors. The qualitative phase explores how, and under which conditions, these factors interact.

3.4. Qualitative Findings

The qualitative stage was designed to explore the meaning, motivation, and contextual dynamics behind the statistical findings. The five informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to represent contrasting experiences (high, medium, and low impact categories) regarding halal certification. All five informants were part of the 61 survey respondents. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian, with each session lasting between 45 and 60 minutes. The sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Prior to the interviews, verbal informed consent was obtained from all informants after explaining the study's objectives and ensuring their anonymity.

It is important to note that the largest share of the quantitative survey sample consisted of ready-to-eat food businesses (37.7%). However, none of the five qualitative informants represented this specific category. The selection was deliberately based on the criterion of contrasting experiences rather than proportional representation. Therefore, the perspectives of ready-to-eat food MSMEs remain a limitation of this qualitative phase and are recommended for exploration in future studies.

Whereas the quantitative data show what owners perceived, the qualitative data help explain how and why these perceptions arose. The interviews focused on three issues: the strategies and challenges faced by MSMEs in using halal certification as a marketing instrument; non-halal factors, such as taste, location, price, and digital promotion, that contribute to revenue; and the gap between market expansion and profitability, including whether increases in turnover were accompanied by cost efficiency or constrained by price pressures and distribution costs. This qualitative approach is intended to enrich the understanding of the impact of halal certification and to provide contextual recommendations for MSME actors, local governments, and halal product assurance providers

3.4.1. The Impact of Halal Certification on Consumer Confidence

The results of interviews with five informants showed that halal certification had a generally positive impact on increasing consumer confidence, although the influence level differed for each business type. For Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business), halal certification has proven to increase consumer confidence, especially as a main requirement to enter supermarkets. The existence of a halal logo on the packaging makes the product more acceptable to the modern market and strengthens the business' legitimacy in consumers' eyes. Meanwhile, for Informant 2 (botanical beverage business), halal certification increases consumer confidence in the safety and halalness of products consumed regularly. However, this increase in trust does not automatically have a significant impact on increasing sales, as non-optimal marketing factors are the main obstacles to expanding market reach.

In contrast, for Informant 3 (bakery business), the impact of halal certification on consumer trust is significant. Clarity of halal status is an important factor in obtaining orders from agencies, schools, and formal activities that require halal-certified products. This shows that, in the bakery sector, halal certification not only increases individual trust, but also expands institutional trust. For Informant 4 (various chips business), halal certification increases consumer confidence, but the impact is more moderate. This is because chip products in general are assumed to be halal by the public, so certification functions more as a legitimacy booster than the main differentiating factor in purchasing decisions.

As for Informant 5 (a business for various processed sago), halal certification has a significant impact on increasing trust, especially because some products, such as sago rendang, use spices and additional ingredients that require halal certainty. The existence of halal certificates is an important factor in convincing consumers, especially for large quantity purchases and distribution to supermarkets. Overall, these findings suggest that halal certification consistently increases consumer confidence in different business types, although the urgency level varies depending on product characteristics and market segmentation.

3.4.2. The Impact of Halal Certification on Sales

The results of the interviews show that the impact of halal certification on sales is diverse for each informant. For Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business), sales increased by around 30-40% after the product successfully entered the supermarket. This shows that halal certification is an entry to the modern market, which then has a direct impact on increasing sales volume. For Informant 2 (a botanical beverage business), the increase in sales is not too significant even though it has halal certification. This is due to a marketing strategy that has not been optimal, so the existence of halal labels has not been maximized to reach a wider market. In other words, halal certification has not been accompanied by strengthened promotion and distribution. In contrast, Informant 3 (bakery business) experienced a significant increase in sales and was relatively stable after obtaining halal certification. Bakery products that are widely used for formal events and agencies are in greater demand due to the halal guarantee. A

similar condition also occurs for Informant 5 (a diversified sago processing business), where sales increased significantly after products could enter supermarkets and expand the distribution network.

Meanwhile, Informant 4 (a various chips business) showed that sales were relatively fixed or stagnant even though they were halal certified. This is due to the characteristics of products that have been generally considered halal by consumers since the beginning, so halal certification is not the main distinguishing factor in encouraging increased purchases. In general, these findings show that the impact of halal certification on sales is varied. The increase in sales is not solely determined by the existence of halal certificates, but is greatly influenced by marketing strategies, distribution access, and the ability of businesses to penetrate the modern market.

3.4.3. The Impact of Halal Certification on Turnover/Profit

The results of the interviews show that the impact of halal certification on turnover and profit also varies. For Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business), turnover increased after the product entered the supermarket. However, the profit increase is not large due to the margin or discount for supermarkets, so the net profit is not proportional to the increase in sales volume. For Informant 2 (botanical beverage business), turnover increased slightly, but the profit was not significant. This is influenced by suboptimal marketing and additional costs on packaging and raw materials, so the increase in revenue is not felt cleanly.

In contrast, Informant 3 (bakery business) experienced a significant increase in turnover and profit. Higher numbers of orders from modern agencies and markets encourage an increase in production volumes, which ultimately creates cost efficiencies and increases profits. A similar condition was also experienced by Informant 5 (diversified sago processing business), where the increase in production volume after entering supermarkets directly contributed to the increase in turnover and business profits.

Meanwhile, Informant 4 (miscellaneous chips business) showed that turnover and profit were relatively fixed even though they had halal certification. This is due to a stable sales pattern and high price competition in the market, so halal certification has not driven significant revenue growth. In general, these findings show that the increase in turnover and profit is strongly influenced by distribution volume and production efficiency. Halal certification can be a trigger for an increase in revenue if it is followed by market expansion and improved production scale. In contrast, without good distribution support and cost management, the impact on profits tends to be limited.

3.4.4. The Impact of Halal Certification Access to Supermartkets/Modern Markets

The results of the interviews show that halal certification has a fairly important role in access to supermarkets and modern markets, although the level of utilization varies. For Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business), a halal certificate is the main requirement so the product can be accepted by supermarkets. Without this certification, supermarkets are not willing to cooperate. Thus, halal certification is a ticket to the modern market.

For Informant 2 (botanical beverage business), access to supermarkets has not been maximized even though it has halal certification. This is not due to the absence of certificates, but because of non-optimal marketing strategies and distribution network expansion. In other words, halal certification has become basic capital, but has not been used to the fullest for modern market penetration.

Meanwhile, Informant 3 (bakery business) managed to take advantage of halal certification to enter modern stores and obtain orders from various agencies. Clarity of halal status is an important consideration for formal institutions that have product procurement standards. Almost the same thing is experienced by Informant 5 (a diversified sago processing business), where halal certification makes it easier for products to enter supermarkets and establish cooperation with distributors, so the market reach is wider.

On the other hand, for Informant 4 (various chips business), halal certification does not have much impact on market expansion. The product is still marketed locally and has not penetrated much of the modern market, so the existence of halal certificates is more a legitimacy booster than a driver of distribution expansion. In general, these findings suggest that halal certification is a gatekeeper or gateway to the modern market. However, success in taking advantage of these opportunities still depends on distribution strategies, negotiation skills with business partners, and production readiness to meet broader market demand. Thematic comparison of halal certification impacts across informants is shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Thematic Comparison of Halal Certification Impacts across Informants

Code	Type of Business	Trust	Sales	Turnover/Profit	Self-Service Access	Dominant Factors
I1	Amplang Shrimp	↑	↑↑	↑	Yes	Certificates + Distribution
I2	Botanical Drink	↑	→	→	Not yet maximum	Marketing
I3	Bakery	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	Yes	Certificate + Production Scale
I4	Miscellaneous Chips	↑	→	→	Limited	Price & Taste
I5	Processed Sago	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	Yes	Certificate + Innovation

Remarks:
↑ = increase ↑↑ = significant increase → = constant

3.4.5. Qualitative Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis from the five informants, informants consistently perceived halal certification as having a positive impact. All five informants stated that the existence of halal certificates strengthens buyers' confidence in the products they consume. This trust is an important form of social capital in building long-term relationships between business actors and consumers, as well as improving the business' image in the eyes of the public.

However, the impact of halal certification on sales and turnover is not automatic. The increase in revenue is not only determined by the ownership of halal certificates but is greatly influenced by other factors such as the marketing strategy applied, access to and expansion of distribution, production scale, and product innovations carried out by each business actor. In businesses that can integrate halal certification with a broad distribution strategy and efficient production management, the impact on sales and profits tends to be more significant. On the other hand, in businesses that have not been optimal in terms of marketing and distribution, the turnover increase is relatively limited even though they have halal certification.

Conceptually, halal certification can be understood as a form of business legitimacy that strengthens the product's market position. In addition, halal certification is also an entry point to modern markets, such as supermarkets, modern stores, and formal institutions that require clarity of halal status. Furthermore, halal certification is an instrument of reputation enhancement that supports business competitiveness, especially in the context of a Muslim-majority society that is increasingly aware of the importance of ensuring halal products.

Based on the analysis of the five informants' responses, the impact of halal certification on business development is categorized at three levels: high, medium, and low. The first category is high impact, as experienced by Informant 3 (bakery business) and Informant 5 (various processed sago businesses). In this category, halal certification not only significantly increases consumer trust, but also has a direct impact on a considerable increase in sales and turnover. In addition, the two businesses have succeeded in penetrating modern markets such as supermarkets and collaborating with distributors or agencies, so that halal certification functions optimally as a driver of business expansion.

The second category is medium impact, as experienced by Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business). In this category, halal certification increases consumer confidence and drives an increase in sales, especially after successfully entering supermarkets. However, the increase in turnover and profit was not large due to distribution margins and other cost factors. Thus, halal certification has a positive impact, but it has not been maximized in increasing net profits.

The third category is low impact, as experienced by Informant 2 (botanical beverage business) and Informant 4 (various chips business). In this group, halal certification increases consumer confidence, but does not have a significant impact on sales or turnover. This is due to more dominant external factors, such as marketing strategies that are not optimal, price competition, and product characteristics that have been assumed to be halal by consumers from the beginning. Thus, halal certification in this category is more a formal legitimacy than a major driver of revenue growth. Categorization of halal certification impacts on business development is shown in Table 9

Table 9. Categorization of Halal Certification Impacts on Business Development

Impact Categories	Informant Code	Trust	Sales	Turnover/Profit	Self-Service Access	Impact Characteristics
High	I3 (Bakery), I5 (Processed Sago)	Significant increase	Significant increase	Significant increase	Enter supermarkets and agencies	Halal certification is a driver of business expansion
Medium	I1 (Amplang Shrimp)	Increase	Increase	Moderate increase	Enter the supermarket	Positive impact, but profit is affected by distribution margin
Low	I2 (Botanical Drinks), I4 (Miscellaneous Chips)	Increase	Insignificant	Relatively fixed	Limited	External factors (marketing/price) are more dominant

3.5. Theoretical Synthesis and Conceptual Models

Based on the synthesis of research findings, it can be understood that halal certification is an important factor in building consumer trust while opening access to a wider market, especially modern markets such as supermarkets and formal institutions. The existence of halal certificates provides formal legitimacy to products and businesses, thereby increasing consumer confidence in making purchases. In this context, halal certification can be positioned as a necessary condition or important condition that business actors must have to compete and be accepted in a more structured and selective market.

However, the study results also show that ownership of halal certificates is not the sole factor in increasing income. The increase in sales and turnover is greatly influenced by other managerial factors, such as effective marketing strategies, continuous product innovation, and efficiency in the distribution system. Therefore, the marketing and distribution aspect can be understood as a sufficient condition or determining factor that strengthens and optimizes the benefits of halal certification in encouraging business revenue growth.

Conceptually, the model of the results of this research can be explained as a relationship flow that starts from halal certification as the foundation of business legitimacy. The certification then increases consumer confidence, which opens access to the modern market. However, the final impact in the form of increased sales and turnover is greatly influenced by the ability of business actors to manage marketing and distribution strategies. Thus, halal certification is an entry point and reputation booster, while business economy success is determined by the integration between halal legitimacy and professional business management.

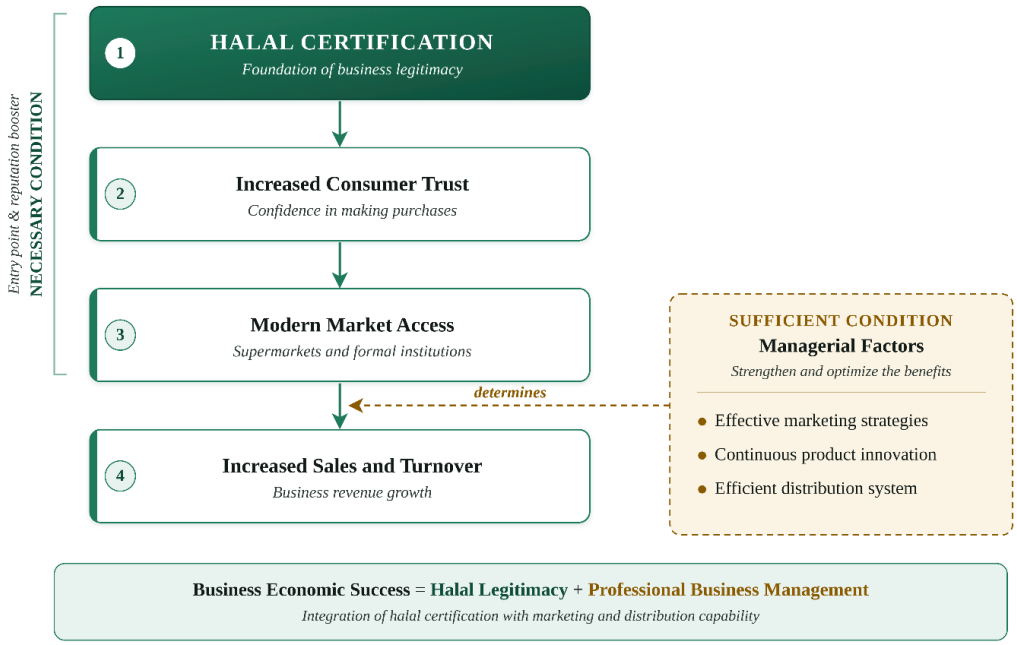


Figure 4. Conceptual model based on qualitative research findings.

3.6. Discussion:Data Integration

3.6.1. The Impact of Halal Certification on Consumer Trust

From the results of the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, owners consistently perceived halal certification as strengthening consumer trust in culinary MSMEs in Tembilahan district. Quantitatively, the theme "Impact on Quality Perception," which reflects owners' perceptions of consumer confidence, obtained the second-highest average score (4.06 out of a scale of 5) in the halal certification aspect. This shows that most respondents (61 MSME actors) believe the existence of halal certificates significantly improves the product's image in the eyes of consumers and strengthens buyers' confidence in the safety and halalness of the products consumed. These quantitative findings are consistently reinforced by the results of the in-depth interviews with five informants, where all five informants stated that halal certification has a positive impact on increasing consumer confidence, although the degree of influence varies based on product characteristics and market segmentation.

The variation in the impact on consumer confidence revealed in the qualitative findings provides a contextual explanation for the high quantitative score while revealing nuances that are not captured by statistical data alone. In the high-impact category, experienced by Informant 3 (bakery business) and Informant 5 (various processed sago businesses), halal certification has been proven to increase consumer confidence significantly. Clarity of halal status is an important factor in obtaining orders from agencies, schools, and formal activities that require halal-certified products, as well as convincing consumers to purchase in large quantities and distribute them to supermarkets. Meanwhile, in the medium-impact category experienced by Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business), halal certification increases consumer trust, especially as the main requirement to be able to enter supermarkets, where the existence of a halal logo on the packaging makes the product more acceptable to the modern market and strengthens the business' legitimacy in the eyes of consumers. As for the low-impact category experienced by Informant 2 (botanical beverage business) and Informant 4 (various chips business), halal certification still increases consumer confidence, but the impact is more moderate because chip products in general have been assumed to be halal by the public, so halal certification functions more as a legitimacy booster than the main differentiating factor in purchasing decisions. Categorization of the impact of halal certification on consumer trust is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Categorization of the Impact of Halal Certification on Consumer Trust

Impact Categories	Informant (Type of Business)	Key Findings
High	I3 (Bakery) & I5 (Processed Sago)	Consumer confidence increased significantly; certification became an absolute requirement for agency orders, schools, and bulk purchases.
Medium	I1 (Amplang Shrimp)	Consumer confidence is increasing mainly as a key requirement for self-service entry; halal logos reinforce legitimacy in the modern market.
Low	I2 (Botanical Drink) & I4 (Miscellaneous Chips)	Consumer confidence continues to increase, but the impact is moderate; chip products are assumed to be culturally halal, so certification is a validator of legitimacy, not a major differentiating factor.

The integration of these two types of data strengthens the understanding that the influence of halal certification on consumer trust is multidimensional and contextual. Statistically, owners' perceptions were consistently positive across all confidence indicators. However, the qualitative findings enrich this understanding by showing that consumer trust built through halal certification does not stand alone, but interacts with factors such as product characteristics (whether the product is culturally already considered halal or requires additional certainty), market segmentation (individual consumers versus institutional consumers), and distribution channels (traditional markets versus modern/self-service markets). Thus, halal certification functions as a fundamental form of social capital and formal legitimacy in building consumer trust, but its effectiveness in transforming trust into purchasing decisions is largely determined by the contexts of the product, market, and communication strategies implemented by business actors. These findings suggest that consumer trust may be a key mediating mechanism, to be tested formally in future studies, that explains how halal certification, through improving the reputation and legitimacy of the business, ultimately contributes to the economic performance of MSMEs, as shown by the conceptual model of the research results.

3.6.2. The Effect of Halal Certification on Sales and Market Expansion

Owners perceived halal certification as positively related to the sales and market expansion of culinary MSMEs in Tembilahan district, even with varying levels of impact between business groups. Quantitatively, the theme "Market Expansion & Customer Growth" recorded the highest average score among all themes in terms of revenue, which was 4.10 out of a scale of 5 (High category), indicating that respondents collectively felt an expansion of market share, an increase in the number of repeat customers, and ease of access to modern distribution channels after having a halal certificate. The theme "Sales Quantity" also obtained a high score of 4.02, while the theme "Competitive Advantage" reached 4.06, which shows that halal certification is considered a differentiator that improves the reputation and competitiveness of products in the market. This pattern is consistent with the regression result (R^2 = 0.562).

However, qualitative data through in-depth interviews with five informants revealed that the influence of halal certification on sales and market expansion is not automatic and uniform, but is highly determined by contextual factors that are not fully captured by quantitative data. In the high-impact category, Informant 3 (bakery business) and Informant 5 (various processed sago businesses) experienced a significant increase in sales and were relatively stable after obtaining halal certification. These two businesses have succeeded in using halal certificates as an entry point to modern markets and formal institutions; Informant 3 obtained an increase in orders from schools and formal activities that required certified products, while Informant 5 managed to penetrate supermarkets and establish cooperation with distributors, which directly expanded the market reach and drove sales volume. In the medium impact category, Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business) experienced an increase in sales of around 30-40% after the product successfully entered the supermarket, where halal certification functions as an absolute condition (necessary condition) for the supermarket to be willing to cooperate. This confirms the quantitative finding that market expansion is the most perceived benefit, as halal certification opens access to previously unaffordable market segments.

On the other hand, in the low-impact category experienced by Informant 2 (botanical beverage business) and Informant 4 (various chips business), the increase in sales and market expansion was relatively limited even though they had halal certification. For Informant 2, the increase in sales is not too significant due to a marketing strategy that is not optimal, so the existence of halal labels has not been maximized to reach a wider market. Halal certification has become the basic capital, but it has not been accompanied by strengthened promotion and distribution. Meanwhile, for Informant 4, sales are relatively fixed or stagnant due to the characteristics of chip products that have been generally considered halal by consumers since the beginning, so halal certification is not the main differentiating factor in purchase decisions and does not encourage significant market expansion. These qualitative findings explain why quantitatively the theme "Income & Turnover" is at the lowest position (3.98) compared to the theme of market expansion, because the increase in sales that occurs for some businesses is not always accompanied by an increase in net profit due to distribution margins and additional operating costs, as well as the existence of business groups that do not experience a significant sales surge.

The integration of these two types of data results in an understanding that halal certification functions as a "gatekeeper" to the modern and institutional market, as evidenced by the highest scores on the theme of market expansion (4.10) and qualitative confirmation from Informants 1, 3, and 5 who successfully entered supermarkets thanks to halal certificates. However, success in transforming market access into a sustainable increase in sales depends heavily on sufficient conditions such as effective marketing strategies, product innovation, negotiation skills with business partners, and production readiness to meet broader market demands. The qualitative findings also point to non-halal factors, such as taste, price, location, digital promotion, and distribution management, that are likely to shape revenue beyond certification. Thus, halal certification is an important foundation of legitimacy for market expansion, but its impact on sales will be optimal only when integrated with professional marketing and business management capabilities.

3.6.3. The Effect of Halal Certification on Revenue (Turnover and Profit)

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data reveals interesting dynamics regarding the influence of halal certification on the income of culinary MSMEs in Tembilahan district, where the perceived benefits are statistically significant, but a qualitative gap is identified between increasing turnover and net profit. Statistically, the results of a simple linear regression analysis show that perceived halal certification implementation accounts for 56.2% of the variance (R-square = 0.562) in perceived income, with a regression coefficient (B) of 0.676, meaning that a one-unit higher score on the halal certification

variable is associated with a 0.676-unit higher score on perceived income (significance value 0.000; t-count 8.705). However, if examined more deeply through the grouping of themes, the "Income & Turnover" aspect, which includes indicators of increased turnover, net income, and operating profit, actually recorded the lowest average score among all themes in the revenue aspect, which was 3.98 out of a scale of 5 (High category), under the themes of Market Expansion (4.10) and Competitive Advantage (4.06). These quantitative findings indicate that, although respondents generally felt an increase in revenue, the rate of increase in turnover and profit was not as high or as massive as the market expansion they obtained, suggesting that other factors may condition the effectiveness of halal certification in boosting net profits. Categorization of the impact of halal certification on sales and market expansion is shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Categorization of the Impact of Halal Certification on Sales and Market Expansion

Impact Categories	Type of Business (Informant)	Impact on Sales	Impact on Market Expansion
High	Bakery (I3) & Processed Sago (I5)	Significant and stable increase	Successfully penetrated supermarkets, distributors, and formal agencies
Medium	Amplang Shrimp (I1)	Increase 30-40%	Self-service entry as an absolute requirement
Low	Botanical Drink (I2) & Miscellaneous Chips (I4)	Relatively stagnant / insignificant	Limited (local marketing)

Qualitative data from the in-depth interviews with five informants provide a substantive explanation for the quantitative findings by clearly revealing the difference in impact between turnover and profit, as well as identifying cost factors that often "erode" profits even when sales volume increases. In high-impact informants, such as Informant 3 (bakery business) and Informant 5 (various processed sago businesses), halal certification has succeeded in driving a significant increase in turnover and profit because the increase in orders from agencies and the entry of products into supermarkets encourage an increase in production volume, which creates cost efficiency (economies of scale), so net profit also increases. On the other hand, for the informant with a moderate impact, Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business), turnover increased by around 30-40% after the product entered the supermarket, but the increase in profit was not large due to the price discount or distribution margin that must be given to the supermarket, so the net profit obtained was not proportional to the increase in sales volume. This condition shows that access to the modern market opens turnover opportunities, but also brings consequences of distribution costs and price pressures that limit profitability. The same thing was also experienced by Informant 2 (botanical beverage business) in the low-impact category, where even though turnover increased slightly, the profit obtained was insignificant due to additional costs on packaging and raw materials that burdened the production cost structure, coupled with a marketing strategy that was not optimal. Meanwhile, Informant 4 (various chips business) showed that turnover and profit were relatively stable due to constant sales patterns and high price competition in the market, so halal certification has not been able to drive significant revenue growth.

Integratively, these findings confirm that halal certification has a positive influence on revenue, but this influence is not linear and appears to be conditioned by the managerial ability of business actors to manage costs and production efficiency. Quantitative data show a strong association ($R^2 = 0.562$), while the qualitative data indicate that factors such as price, taste, location, and promotional strategies are important in preventing profit erosion. Meanwhile, qualitative data make it clear that the increase in new turnover will have an optimal impact on profit if accompanied by an expansion of production scale that lowers average costs (as in Informant 3 and Informant 5), as well as careful management of distribution and packaging cost structures. Conversely, if halal certification is only used as an "entrance" without being followed by operational efficiency and marketing strengthening, then the increase in turnover tends to only "flow" to cover additional costs and margins of business partners, so net profit does not increase proportionally. Thus, halal certification plays an important role as basic capital to increase gross revenue, but its transformation into a sustainable increase in net profit requires the integration of halal legitimacy with a professional business strategy, especially in terms of production cost efficiency, distribution negotiation, and operational cost control. These findings provide important implications that post-certification MSME assistance should not stop at halal administrative matters, but must include strengthening financial and operational management capacity so that economic benefits can be fully felt by business actors.

This pattern is consistent with evidence from larger firms. Among Malaysian food manufacturers, the relationship between halal certification and financial performance was partially mediated by operational performance (Ab Talib et al., 2017), and among Indonesian food-manufacturing SMEs, the implementation of halal standards improved market and financial performance through operational performance (Giyanti et al., 2021). The present findings extend this evidence to culinary micro and small enterprises by showing that access to modern retail can also bring distribution margins and packaging costs that absorb much of the gain in turnover.

3.6.4. Mapping the Impact Level of Halal Certification Based on Business Characteristics

Based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, the mapping of the impact level of halal certification on culinary MSMEs in Tembilahan district shows that the number of benefits obtained is not evenly distributed, but is highly determined by the business' characteristics, especially the type of product, market segmentation, and operational capacity owned. Quantitatively, the general overview of respondents revealed that most businesses are engaged in ready-to-eat food (37.7%) and snacks/crackers (24.6%), with the dominance of businesses that have been operating for 5-10 years (47.5%) and already have halal certificates (75.4%). These figures indicate that most of the research subjects are established businesses and have passed the early stages of certification, so the potential to feel the economic impact is theoretically open. However, when this descriptive quantitative data is paired with the qualitative findings of the five informants divided into three impact categories high, medium, and low it is revealed that the main determining factor is not solely the status of certificate ownership, but the alignment between product characteristics and the needs of the market served, as well as the internal readiness of the business to capture emerging opportunities.

A more in-depth mapping shows that high-impact businesses, represented by Informant 3 (bakery business) and Informant 5 (various processed sago businesses), have product characteristics that substantively require halal assurance because they use complex ingredients or spices (such as in sago rendang), as well as serve institutional and modern market segments that make halal certification an absolute requirement for procurement. Quantitatively, this group is in the cake/bread/bakery sector (18% of the total respondents) and a small part of the processed food category, where the highest scores on the themes "Market Expansion" (4.10) and "Competitive Advantage" (4.06) indicate that the formal market is very responsive to halal legitimacy. Their success is also underpinned by a mature operational capacity reflected in the average length of business for the majority of respondents, which allows for efficient scaling up production when demand soars, so the increase in turnover truly transforms into significant net profit. In other words, in this group, halal certification is a catalyst for growth that triggers business expansion because it is supported by a controlled cost structure and wide distribution access.

On the other hand, in medium- and low-impact businesses, product characteristics and managerial limitations are inhibiting factors that limit the effectiveness of halal certification. Informant 1 (shrimp amplang business), which is categorized as medium impact, has the characteristics of seafood-based snack products that require certification to penetrate supermarkets, in line with the high quantitative score on market access, but the impact on profits is limited due to the distribution cost structure (self-service margin) that burdens profits, which indicates that businesses with production scale are not optimal (the majority of respondents with a period of <5 years of business at 41% are in the growth phase) still have difficulty reducing average costs. Meanwhile, in the low-impact category represented by Informant 2 (botanical beverage business) and Informant 4 (miscellaneous chip business), product characteristics play the most dominant role. Chip products that are culturally assumed to be halal by the public (representing 24.6% of the snack category) cause halal certification to lose its function as the main differentiating factor, so that although the quantitative score on the aspect of consumer trust remains high (4.06), the impact on sales and turnover becomes dull because consumers do not make the halal logo a priority consideration in purchases. For Informant 2, the constraint shifted to the non-optimal marketing aspect, a non-halal factor outside the certification variable, which showed that the characteristics of contemporary beverage-based businesses require stronger promotion strategies and flavor differentiation, not just halal legitimacy, to be able to compete in the market. Variation in the Impact of halal certification by product characteristics and market segmentation is shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Variation in the Impact of Halal Certification by Product Characteristics and Market Segmentation

Impact Categories	Product Characteristics	Market Segmentation	Impact Results
High: Bakery (I3) & Processed Sago (I5)	High-risk raw materials (complex mixtures); require substantive halal assurance	Modern & institutional markets (self-service, agencies, schools) – certification as *an absolute requirement*	Turnover increases significantly and transforms into profit due to cost efficiency; wide distribution access
Medium: Amplang Shrimp (I1)	Seafood products made from raw materials that need halal verification	Modern market (self-service) – certification as a *necessary condition*	Sales increased by 30-40%, but profit was limited due to the margin of self-service distribution
Low: Botanical Drink (I2) & Miscellaneous	The product is assumed to be culturally halal (chips); or the need for taste differentiation is more dominant (botanical)	Traditional/local market – certification is not the main differentiator	Sales are stagnant/ insignificant; certification only serves as a legitimacy booster, not a growth driver

More systematically, this mapping confirms there are three characteristic determinant patterns that moderate the influence of halal certification. ***First***, the level of urgency of halal products: businesses with high-risk raw materials (processed sago, baked goods with filling) feel a greater impact than products that are traditionally halal (chips). ***Second***, target market segmentation: businesses that target the modern and institutional market (bakery, processed sago) benefit more clearly than businesses that survive in the traditional local market (chips, botanical drinks), because certification is a necessary condition for the formal market. ***Third***, production scale capacity and cost management: businesses that are established (5–10 years) and able to scale up production post-certification successfully convert increased turnover into profits, while businesses that have not yet reached efficient scale tend to lose profits due to additional distribution and packaging costs. These findings enrich the conceptual model of the research results by confirming that halal certification is universally important, reflected in the 75.4% of respondents who have been certified and a high average score across all indicators, but the level of impact is strongly related to the business' internal readiness and external characteristics. Thus, MSME assistance policy interventions in the future cannot be one-size-fits-all, but must be differentiated based on business profiles: for businesses with high-risk products and modern market orientation, assistance is focused on access to distribution and cost efficiency. Meanwhile, for businesses with low-risk products and traditional markets, mentoring needs to be directed at product innovation and brand strengthening so halal certification is not just a "dead stamp," but becomes a competitiveness instrument that is integrated with the overall business strategy.

3.6.5. Theoretical Synthesis and Conceptual Models

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data in this study resulted in a theoretical synthesis that places halal certification as a multidimensional construct that has three strategic roles that are multi-level and interact in encouraging the performance of culinary MSMEs in Tembilahan district. These three roles as business legitimacy, market access, and economic growth factors form a conceptual model that explains why the influence of halal certification on revenue is statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.562$), but the impact level varies greatly between business groups, as revealed in the mapping of high, medium, and low impact categorization. These findings enrich the initial model depicted in Figure 4 by showing that the effectiveness of halal certification in encouraging economic growth is largely determined by the ability of business actors to integrate these three functions simultaneously and sustainably.

First, halal certification serves as business legitimacy that builds consumer trust and a positive image in the eyes of stakeholders. Quantitatively, this role of legitimacy is reflected in the high average scores on the themes "Impact on Quality Perception" (4.06) and "Competitive Advantage" (4.06), which show that respondents collectively believe halal certification improves product reputation and differentiates it from competitors. This finding is qualitatively strengthened by the statements from all five informants, who stated that halal certificates strengthen buyers' confidence in the safety and halalness of products, even in products that are culturally considered halal (such as Informant 4's chip business). Within the framework of legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995), halal certification provides formal recognition from religious and state authorities (MUI/BPJPH) that transforms subjective halal claims into verified objective guarantees. This transformation is crucial for products with high-risk raw materials or complex production processes, such as Informant 3 (bakery) and Informant 5 (processed

sago), where halal legitimacy is the foundation that allows the product to be accepted in a wider market. However, qualitative data also reveal that the strength of legitimacy is contextual: in products that have traditionally been assumed to be halal (such as chips), certification serves more as a validator of legitimacy than a key differentiator, which explains why the quantitative score on the revenue and turnover aspect (3.98) is slightly lower than on the quality perception aspect. Thus, halal certification as legitimacy is a fundamental necessary condition, but its added value is highly dependent on the level of halal uncertainty inherent in the product and the expectations of the target market. This pattern is consistent with signaling theory, which predicts that a certificate is most valuable where it resolves the greatest uncertainty about attributes that buyers cannot verify (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973).

Second, halal certification functions as access to previously unaffordable market segments, especially modern (supermarkets, modern retail stores) and institutional (government agencies, schools, companies) markets. Quantitatively, this role gained the highest recognition from respondents, as shown by the average score of the theme "Market & Customer Expansion," which reached 4.10, the highest number among all themes in terms of revenue. These findings indicate that the most tangible and fastest benefits felt by post-certification MSME actors are the opening of new distribution opportunities and an increase in the number of repeat customers. Qualitative data confirm this clearly: Informant 1 (amplang prawns), Informant 3 (bakery), and Informant 5 (processed sago) expressly stated that halal certificates are a requirement (sine qua non) set by supermarkets and formal agencies before they are willing to collaborate. Without certification, their products will never be able to enter the shelves of modern markets that promise greater sales volumes and consumers with higher purchasing power. In this context, halal certification acts as a gatekeeper or gateway that connects MSMEs with a more structured business ecosystem. However, the qualitative findings also provide an important caveat: open market access is only potential, not automatic. Informant 2 (botanical beverage business) already has a halal certificate, but due to the marketing strategy and expansion of the distribution network that are not yet optimal, the benefits of such access cannot be maximized. This shows that halal certification as market access is an enabling condition that opens opportunities, but capitalizing on these opportunities requires adequate managerial and marketing capabilities, a finding that points to the importance of non-halal factors such as promotional strategies, product innovation, and negotiations with business partners.

Third, halal certification functions as an economic growth factor that encourages increased turnover, expansion of production scale, and ultimately business profit growth. Quantitatively, this role is evidenced by the results of regression analysis, which show that the determination coefficient of R^2 is 0.562 and the regression coefficient of B is 0.676 (significance of 0.000), which indicates a strong positive association between perceived certification implementation and perceived revenue. However, when this quantitative data is integrated with qualitative findings, it is revealed that the resulting economic growth is not uniform and is conditioned by operational efficiency and cost management. In the high-impact group (Informants 3 and 5), an increase in turnover followed by an increase in production scale creates cost efficiencies (economies of scale), so net profit also rises proportionally. In the medium-impact group (Informant 1), the increase in turnover was eroded by the margin of self-service distribution, so profits did not increase proportionally. Meanwhile, in the low-impact group (Informants 2 and 4), the increase in turnover almost did not even occur because external factors (such as price competition and products that are already considered halal) were more dominant than the certification effect. Thus, halal certification as an economic growth factor acts as a catalyst that triggers growth dynamics, but the intensity and quality of this growth are largely determined by the business' internal readiness in managing costs, increasing productivity, and strategically capturing market opportunities. These findings confirm that halal certification is not a "magic cure" that automatically doubles revenue, but is a capital base that needs to be integrated with business capabilities to generate sustainable economic growth.

Overall, the conceptual model of the results of this research can be formulated as a flow of hierarchical and tiered relationships: Halal Certification → Business Legitimacy (building trust) → Market Access (opening distribution opportunities) → Economic Growth (increasing turnover and profit), where each stage is moderated by contextual factors such as product characteristics, market segmentation, marketing strategies, and cost management efficiency. The categorization of high, medium, and low impacts revealed in the qualitative findings basically reflects the success level of business actors in optimizing the three halal certification functions simultaneously. At high impact (I3 and I5), all three functions run in harmony: strong legitimacy, wide open market access, and optimal economic growth because it is supported by economies of scale. At medium impact (I1), legitimacy and market access have been realized, but economic growth is hampered by a distribution cost structure that

weighs on profits. At low impact (I2 and I4), legitimacy is still built, but market access is not maximized (I2) or irrelevant (I4), so economic growth does not occur significantly. This model contributes to legitimacy- and signaling-based explanations of halal certification by showing that halal certification is not just a religious label, but a socio-economic institution whose effectiveness depends heavily on the ability of business actors to translate formal legitimacy into a competitive advantage that is integrated with the overall business strategy. The policy implication of this model is the need for holistic and differentiated assistance for MSMEs, where intervention should not stop at completing certification administration, but must include strengthening managerial capacity, distribution access, and production efficiency so the economic potential of halal certification can be optimally realized by all levels of business actors, not only those who already have established capital and networks.

Integratively, this study concludes that halal certification is perceived as positively and significantly associated with the performance of culinary MSMEs ($R^2 = 0.562$), but the relationship is non-deterministic because its effectiveness is highly determined by the interaction between three strategic functions of certification as business legitimacy (building trust and reputation), market access (entrance to supermarkets and formal institutions), and economic growth factors (catalysts increase in turnover and profit) with a series of moderation factors, from the internal side (cost management capacity, production scale efficiency, marketing strategy, and product innovation) and external (product characteristics in the eyes of consumers, market segmentation, as well as competition structure and distribution margins). These findings explain why the impact of certification is divided into three levels (high, medium, low): businesses that successfully integrate halal legitimacy with internal capacity building and adaptation to external dynamics experience optimal profit growth, while businesses that rely solely on certificates without adequate operational efficiency and promotion experience stagnation or erosion of profits due to additional costs. Thus, halal certification is positioned as a fundamental necessary condition to compete in a market, but to be a sufficient condition that ensures sustainable economic growth, it must be integrated with holistic business capacity strengthening an implication that post-certification MSME assistance should not be purely administrative, but should include improving financial management, access to distribution, and product competitiveness so the economic potential of halal assurance can be realized equally by all levels of business actors.

This study has several limitations. First, both variables were reported by MSME owners at a single point in time, so the regression estimates an association between perceptions that may be inflated by common method variance and cannot establish causality; reverse causality and self-selection are plausible. Second, consumer trust was inferred from owners' accounts rather than measured among consumers. Third, the sample was non-probabilistic, drawn from one regency, and included firms that were still applying for certification. Fourth, the qualitative phase involved only five informants, none from the ready-to-eat category that formed the largest share of the survey sample. Future studies should compare certified and non-certified firms using objective sales and cost records before and after certification, survey consumers directly, and formally test the mediating and moderating mechanisms proposed in this study.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that halal certification is perceived as positively and significantly associated with the performance of culinary MSMEs in Tembilahan district, with perceived certification implementation accounting for 56.2% of the variance in perceived income. Quantitatively, respondents perceived halal certification as increasing consumer confidence, expanding market access, and driving turnover growth, as demonstrated by a high average score on all indicators (3.98-4.10) and significant regression test results ($p < 0.001$). However, these influences are non-deterministic and vary between business groups based on product characteristics, market segmentation, and managerial capacity.

Through the integration of qualitative data, the study revealed that halal certification has three strategic functions: (1) as a business legitimacy that builds consumer trust, (2) as market access that opens the entrance to supermarkets and formal institutions, and (3) as an economic growth factor that encourages increased turnover and profits. The effectiveness of these three functions appears to depend strongly on businesses' ability to manage production costs, marketing strategies, distribution, and product innovation – factors that the qualitative data identify as shaping outcomes beyond certification. The impact of certification is divided into three levels: high (bakery and processed sago) that successfully integrates legitimacy with efficiency of scale; medium (shrimp amplang) that experiences an increase in turnover but is constrained by distribution margins; and low (botanical drinks and chips) that does not feel significant growth due to marketing factors and product perception that are considered

culturally halal. Thus, halal certification is a necessary condition to compete in certain markets, but to be a sufficient condition that ensures sustainable growth, it must be integrated with strengthening business capacity holistically, so post-certification MSME assistance should not be purely administrative, but include improving financial management, distribution access, and product competitiveness.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Ridhoul Wahidi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing–original draft, Review, Editing. **Najamuddin**: Writing –review & Editing. **Sofyan Sulaiman:** Validation, Review. **Fiddian Khairudin:** Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing –review. **Siti Sarah Maidin**: Formal analysis, Writing –review & Editing. **Dadang Darmawan**: Investigation, Resources, Formal analysis, Supervision, Writing –review.

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