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AN OVERVIEW OF THE HALAL INDUSTRY IN THE GAMBIA WITH ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Kawsu Sanneh¹ and Betania Kartika²

Abstract: This study discusses an overview of the halal industry in The Gambia. The Halal Industry has emerged as a new sector in the global economy. The industry is worth 2.3 trillion USD. It is currently dominated by Southeast Asia, with Malaysia and Indonesia taking the lead, followed by other continents like the United States of America, Europe, and Africa. Islam is believed to have been practised in West Africa since the 7th Century amounting to over 12 centuries of Islamic influence in the region. The Gambia has a 95 % Muslim population, necessitating consumer awareness of halal products and services. There are no established halal education institutes in The Gambia, which has significantly impacted Muslim consumers' awareness of halal standards, spanning from local farmers to food vendors, local consumers, processing industries, and importers. The lack of formal halal educational institutions is the most noticeable challenge. However, the vibrant Muslim population offers the highest opportunity. The paper is compiled from primary and secondary sources, including government agencies, private firms, local consumers, journal articles, books, etc., to discover the awareness of halal products, opportunities, and challenges.

Keywords: *Halal Industry, Gambia, Challenges, Muslim Consumers, Shari'ah.*

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PRELUDE

Halal industry³ is gaining global attention as a better alternative and standard for safety, quality assurance and hygiene.⁴ The industry represents a symbol of hope for the Muslim *ummah*, as *halal* food is the only permissible food for consumption according to Islamic law. For non-Muslims, it represents a symbol of hygiene, quality and safety. The paper briefly relates the setting of the Gambia, the history of Islam in the Gambia, prospects, opportunities, benefits, and challenges of *halal* industry in the Gambia. The Gambia has a strong demand for *halal* products and services, and according to prior pilot surveys, more than 85% of the population supports the development of a *halal* business.⁵ The *halal* business is a diverse sector comprised of seven primary sectors: culinary services, consumer goods, financial services, pharmaceutical goods, cosmetics, *halal* logistics, and tourism. The seven significant sectors are subdivided into four major segments: food and drinks, pharmaceuticals and health goods, cosmetics, and tourism and travel services.

Additionally, *halal* refers to keeping away from impure items throughout manufacturing, preparation, and storage from a *Shari'ah* standpoint. In the case of food, *halal* means that no impure equipment or ingredients were used throughout the preparation and production procedure. As a result of the preceding statement, it can be concluded that all foods are *halal* except swine/pork and its by-products, animals that have died before being appropriately slaughtered, animals killed in the name of something or someone other than Allah, and intoxicants such as alcohol and liquids of similar characteristics. Predatory creatures, birds of prey, and land animals without external ears are forbidden, as are blood and its by-products, and meals tainted with any

³ A legal incorporated industry in Islam that is responsible for determining what is prescribed according to *Shari'ah* and what is prohibited.

⁴ Engy Abdelkader, "To Judge or Not to Judge: A Comparative Analysis of Islamic Jurisprudential Approaches to Female Judges in the Muslim World (Indonesia, Egypt and Iran)," *The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History*, 2014, <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/ilj/vol37/iss2/2>.

⁵ Shaikh Ibn Abbas, "*Awareness of Islamic Religious education and Integration: A case study on religious education awareness of Gambian People*," Gambia: Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah (MIRD, 2017).

of the above items.⁶ Foods containing gelatin, emulsifiers, flavours, and enzymes are deemed dubious (*Mašbūh*) since their ingredients or components may come from ḥaram sources. Cattle and poultry shall be slaughtered according to the *dabiḥah* (prescribed slaughtering in Islam) procedure, which Šharī'ah mandates in the case of animals and birds. As a result, it becomes evident that ḥalal is a comprehensive term, as it encompasses not only the ingredients of food but also the entire process of preparation, manufacturing, and processing. All Muslim nations are expected to strictly adhere to the principles of ḥalal and ḥaram in all their activities.

Thus, industry is needed to promote ḥalal and discourage ḥaram in all societal activities. Ḥalal industry was invented by the *majlis* community in the Gambia, who passed on the Qur'an's teachings and implemented it at local community levels. Most of the past scholars had established great *majlis* schools, wherein children receive early training in Islamic principles, norms, and values. Community members in the past depend on these scholars to clarify the laws of Allah and rulings on what is ḥalal from what is ḥaram. The Gambia is a poor country whose people depend solely on subsistence farming, animal rearing, fishing, hunting, small-scale businesses, and other domestic work for survival. Thus there was a high need for teaching and clarification of *ḥalal* principles for public guidance and safety⁷.

For example, those involved in crop cultivation needed to know what types of crops, vegetables and fruits are legal for consumption and sale. The same applies to those in the fishing sector and those involved in various types of businesses, including professional and local hunters. Ḥalal consumption is not optional but compulsory for Mankind, which makes it an essential issue for Muslims. The teachings and setting established by these ancient scholars helped to shape the future of ḥalal industry in the Gambia. Even though colonial governance dramatically influenced the country, it did not change the people's beliefs, their respect for strict compliance with ḥalal principles

⁶ Muhammad M. Chaudry Mian N. Riaz, "Halal Awareness and Education Schemes," Taylor & Francis (Taylor & Francis, October 26, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315119564>.

⁷ The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) and ICF International. 2014. *The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013*. Banjul, The Gambia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: GBOS and ICF International.

and a need to avoid non-ḥalal food and services. The paper discusses the scope of the ḥalal industry in the Gambia.

MEANING AND DEFINITION

Ḥalal is an Arabic term that translates as acceptable and lawful. It denotes anything permissible under Islamic law, as no enforceable legal document prohibits it. It is something that Islamic law requires. Its antonym is *ḥaram*, meaning “illegal” or “prohibited”.⁸ *Ḥalal* and *ḥaram* are old and global principles. The two terms are two opposed words employed in principle since the first units of creation were formed to serve as a guiding principle in their worship and dealings, ensuring that ḥalal is upheld and ḥaram is avoided. They are ubiquitous because they include a vast range of human activities, from *Ibādah* (worship) through *Mu’amalāt* (transactions) and *Mu’āṣarāh* (social behaviours). According to *Wahab*, the term ḥalal refers to permissible items or foods/drinks used in commerce and trade or as part of a trade description. Ḥalal may also refer to any other term implying that something is permissible for eating or use under Islamic law.

SOURCES OF ḤALAL

Islamic law is derived from four primary sources: the *Qur’an*, *Sunnah*, *Ijma* (scholarly consensus) and *Qīas* (analogy). The core principles of ḥalal and ḥaram are primarily derived from the Primary sources of *Ṣharī’ah*, which are the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*, while the secondary principles of *ḥalal* and *ḥaram* obtain their sources from the secondary sources of *Ṣharī’ah* namely *Ijma* and *Qiyas*.

Qur’an as the first source of *Ṣharī’ah*:

The *Qur’an* is a divine revelation that provides complete information regarding the principles of life and death—the purpose of human creation and the reward for good

⁸ Hamid, Nor’Adha Ab, Farah Mohd Shahwahid, Norziah Othman and Wawarah Saidpudin. “Challenges And Ways Improving Malaysia Halal Food Industry.” (2017). ; Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf. *Contemporary Fatawa: Current Issues in Islamic Fiqh: Fatāwā Mu’āṣirah*. Newark, NJ: Islamic Book Service, 1999.

and punishment for evil. God almighty urged the believers to consume ḥalal and show gratitude for His bounties provided for them. Consider the verses below.

“Oh, ye who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith we have provided for you and render gratitude to Allah if it is (indeed) He who ye worship.”⁹

The verses above emphasise consuming that which is good and legal for human welfare. Islamic laws are universally applicable regardless of race, creed, and gender. God almighty similarly enjoined the Messengers to eat of his enormous provisions only ḥalal products.

“Oh, ye Messengers! Eat good things and do righteous deeds, indeed! I am aware of what ye do.”¹⁰

Because it is part of the religion, the term ḥalal involves cleanliness and hygiene in food preparation. Allah only allows sanitary, safe, and ḥalal food or products for Muslim consumption. In the following *Qur’anic* verse, this is plainly stated.

“He has forbidden you only carrion, blood and swine flesh and that which has been immolated to (the name of) any other than Allah. But he who has been driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, is not sin for him. Indeed, Allah is forgiving, Merciful.”¹¹

Similarly, Allah says, “Forbidden unto you (for food) are carrion and blood and swine flesh, and that which hath been dedicated unto any other than Allah, and the strangled, and the dead through beating, and the dead through falling from height, and that which hath been killed by (goring of) horns, and the devoured of wild beasts save that which ye make lawful (by slaughtering) and that which has been immolated unto idols. And (forbidden) that ye should swear by the divining arrows.”¹²

God almighty addresses Mankind at large to only consume permissible food; “Oh, Mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and wholesome.”¹³

These verses clarify to Mankind what types of food are forbidden for consumption and which are permissible. The commentators of *Qur’anic* exegesis have substantiated

⁹ Al-Qur’an 2:172

¹⁰ Al-Qur’an 23:51

¹¹ Al-Qur’an 2:173

¹² Al-Qur’an 5:3

¹³ Al-Qur’an 2:168

the reasons for the prohibitions through clarifications of the Qur'anic exegesis. For instance, the reason carrion and dead animals are forbidden is because they are harmful to human wellbeing.

SUNNAH AS THE SECOND SOURCE OF ḤALAL

Sunnah comprises the sayings, actions, and explicit approvals of the prophet (Peace be upon him), serving as the second source of Ḥalal and Šharī'ah. Sunnah provides detailed rules about ḥalal and ḥaram. For example, the *ḥadīth*, the prophet's saying (peace be upon) while teaching the ummah of prescribed slaughtering methods, said, "Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill appropriately, and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters."¹⁴

The prophet (peace be upon him) instructs us in this *ḥadīth* on how ḥalal food should be prepared. As a result, believers should obey the prophet's (peace be upon him) instructions, particularly about killing. It is necessary to ensure that the animal suffers as little pain as possible during the slaughtering procedure and that the equipment utilized is sharp enough to prevent undue agony. According to *Rafi' Ibn Khadij*, the prophet (peace be upon him) spoke to a group of Muslims preparing to slaughter some animals. "Utilize whatever causes blood to flow and consume the animals provided the name of Allah is invoked when they are slaughtered."¹⁵ Therefore, Muslims should take extra vigilance regarding current killing techniques to ensure they adhere to Islamic teachings. Apart from that, the Islamic technique of animal killing takes place in a hygienic environment.

Ḥalal slaughtering¹⁶, for example, cannot occur near pig slaughtering grounds since pork is prohibited. Before slaughter, the animal must be fed routinely and given water to drink. These two related requirements must be observed to benefit the animal's

¹⁴ Abul-Husain Muslim, I., *Sahih Muslim*, Translated by Al-Khattab, N (Saudi: Dar-us-Salam Publications Inc, 2007), Hadith No: 1955.

¹⁵ Al-Bukhari, M. I. I., & Khan, M. M., *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari: Arabic-English (English and Arabic Edition)* (Saudi: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 1997), Book 22, Hadith No: 4846.

¹⁶ Prescribed as Islamic slaughtering.

welfare.¹⁷ Compliance with these rules and regulations ensures the slaughtering process runs well, minimizing discomfort to the animal, which is an approved act based on the prophet's *ḥadīth* (peace be upon him). Certain prohibited or non-ḥalal food products are also mentioned in the prophet's *ḥadīth* (peace be upon him). For instance, *Az-Zuhri* said, "Allah's Messenger prohibited the consumption of flesh from beasts with fangs."¹⁸

As a result, ḥalal meals include all animals and birds not mentioned on the ḥaram food list according to Islamic law, all plants that are not detrimental to human health, and foods and beverages that are pure, clean, nutritious, and palatable. On the other hand, ḥaram or banned items that believers should abstain from include pork flesh, meat from a dead animal that has not been slaughtered according to the appropriate Islamic manner, food that contains invocations other than Allah's name, blood, and alcohol. Additionally, the meat of clawed birds is listed on the list of ḥaram foods. The secondary sources of Ḥalal are only applied when there is no evidence in the primary sources. For example, modern technology has made certain types of food, like chocolates, possible to be processed. Muslim jurists in such circumstances observe the By-products and the production conditions to reach a sound conclusion regarding the permissibility of such food or service based on scholarly consensus or analogy.

PROSPECTS AND BENEFITS OF ḤALAL INDUSTRY IN THE GAMBIA

Three fundamental causes have led to the ḥalal industry's rise as one of the world's most profitable and vital sectors. The first is the rising Muslim population on a global scale. This is demonstrated by the United Nations figures, which show that the Muslim population globally is growing at a pace of 6.4 % per year, while the Christian population is growing at a rate of 1.4 %, much less than the Muslim population growth rate.¹⁹ Thus, based on this data, Muslims represent a sizable consumer market for ḥalal items. The

¹⁷ Albattat, Ahmad, Ahmad Pitra, Jumli, Mahendran, Peyandi Paraman & Azmi, Azila "Shariah Compliant Hotel: Identifying its Service Quality on Muslim Customers". International Conference on Economy, Tourism and Technology. 2018.

¹⁸ Al-Bukhari, "The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari: Arabic-English (English and Arabic Edition)", Book 21, Hadith No: 4751.

¹⁹ Azis Jakfar Soraji, Mohd Daud Awang, and Ahmad Nasir Mohd Yusoff, "Malaysia Halal Trust: Between Reality and Challenges," IJASOS- International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences, April 30, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.18769/ijasos.309676>.

second factor is the Muslim community's improved economic level due to the recent growth in affluent Muslims. This has resulted in a shift in the mindsets of Muslim and ethical customers, propelling the *halal* business to grow further into lifestyle items, *halal* travel and hospitality services, and *halal* fashion. Third is the anticipated rise in food demand of more than 70% by 2050. This demonstrates the future endurance of high demand for *halal* cuisine. This is feasible given the global *halal* food sector trend, which has risen to \$667 billion over the last decade, accounting for up to 20% of the global food industry.

Food economists predict that the *halal* food sector will soon become a more powerful market force. Four prevailing tendencies can explain this. The first is the rapid growth of Islam worldwide, which has increased demand for *halal* products. The anticipated 16 percent yearly rise sees this in the use of *halal* products. Second, is the growing tendency of non-Muslims to use *halal* food and products for ethical and safety reasons. The United Kingdom is an example of this growing tendency among non-Muslims, where the Muslim population exceeds 2 million while the number of *halal* meat eaters exceeds 6 million. A similar upward trend in the number of non-Muslim Dutch customers of *halal* cuisine is reflected in the annual total spending of \$3 billion.²⁰ Two reasons have boosted the appeal of *halal* items, elevating them to mainstream consumer goods. The third element contributing to the rise of *Halal* consumers as a market force is the growing Muslim population and their increasing purchasing power. The fourth element is that Muslims are more conscious about the need to eat only *halal* food. A sign of Muslim customers' more excellent knowledge is the rapid increase in yearly sales of *halal* cuisine throughout Russia, with demand for *halal* items growing by 30% to 40% yearly.

HALAL INDUSTRY'S SCOPE, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

Some Reflections suggest that the *halal* market is experiencing particular difficulties. Among its apparent obstacles is the ongoing battle for *halal* food standards and

²⁰ Hassan, Elasarag. "Halal Economics Opportunities and Challenges." SSRN Electronic Journal, 2016.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323618631_Halal_Economics_Opportunities_and_Challenges.

accreditation, which need further education among OIC nations. Other obstacles facing the *halal* sector include Denmark's recent prohibition on *halal* and kosher slaughter and media scare tales regarding *halal* food. Despite the *halal* market's rising worldwide potential, Western media's concerted efforts in this area have affected public opinion. Ill will against Muslims and their culture was fostered, resulting in a slowdown of the *halal* market's growth. This created a significant obstacle for the *halal* sector. To address this issue, *halal* industry stakeholders should create suitable ways to combat misconceptions and biases regarding Muslim culture, ensuring the *halal* sector's growth and development.

Food economists predict that the *halal* food sector will soon become a more robust market force. Four prevailing tendencies can explain this. The first is the rapid growth of Islam worldwide, which has increased demand for *halal* products. The anticipated 16% yearly rise sees this in the use of *halal* products. Second, is the growing tendency of non-Muslims to use *halal* food and products for ethical and safety reasons. The United Kingdom is an example of this growing tendency among non-Muslims, where the Muslim population exceeds 2 million while the number of *halal* meat eaters exceeds 6 million. A similar upward trend in the number of non-Muslim Dutch customers of *halal* cuisine is reflected in the annual total spending of \$3 billion²¹. Several reasons have boosted the appeal of *halal* items, elevating them to mainstream consumer goods. The third element contributing to the rise of *halal* consumers as a market force is the growing Muslim population and their increasing purchasing power. The fourth factor is that Muslims are more aware of the need to consume only *halal* food. The rapid increase in annual sales of *halal* cuisine throughout Russia, with demand for *halal* items expanding by 30 % to 40 % each year, is a symptom of Muslim customers' increased awareness.

The continuous battle for *halal* food standards and accreditation, both of which require more outstanding education among OIC states on the subject, is one of the apparent roadblocks to Denmark's recent prohibitions on *halal* and Kosher slaughter, as well as media, scare stories about *halal* food, are among the other challenges facing the *halal* business. Despite the global potential of the *halal* market, Western media's persistent

²¹ Farah Adilla. *Global Halal index Encyclopaedia Britannica: HDC Export Analysis*. Halal Development Corporation Berhad. 2020.

efforts in this sector have had a negative impact on public opinion. The spread of hatred for Muslims and their culture has slowed the expansion of the halal business. This posed a big challenge for the halal industry. To address this issue, stakeholders in the halal business should develop effective strategies for addressing misconceptions and biases regarding Muslim culture, ensuring the halal sector's continuous growth and development. More than 95% of Gambians are Muslims. This increases the opportunity for the rapid growth of the halal industry in the Gambia. However, the Gambia is yet to have a systematic halal industry with assigned regulatory bodies and inspectors. For example, certificate issuance bodies, etc. Based on the foundations established by previous Islamic entities, there are currently several strong Islamic institutions who are working hard to introduce a systematic body that will promote the growth of halal industry in the Gambia through a partnership with solid entities that precede the Gambia in the field as well as introducing measures to increase the awareness of halal products and services amongst Gambian consumers. Food and beverages, cosmetics, and hotel industry are all booming industries in the Gambia, including pharmaceuticals²². The Gambia Association of Traditional Healers has recently started introducing measures to partner with the *Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah* (MIRD)²³ to promote halal pharmaceuticals in the Gambia. Halal industry is excellent potential and hopes for economic development in the Gambia through employment generation, provision, and assurance of halal products and services, representing a symbol of religious endowment, safety and hygiene. Most Muslims are also concerned about the hotel industry in the Gambia, as sex tourism has increased alarmingly. Halal industry also provides hope in that area as Muslim-friendly hotel services may help mitigate sex tourism and other related problems. Halal industry is highly embraced and upheld in the Gambia due to the people's religious beliefs. Even though it is yet to be coordinated and systemized. Gambians keenly await the integration of systematic halal industry to start reaping the fruits of this lucrative but promising industry.

²² Shaikh Ibn Abbas. *Market Analysis of Consumer goods: A case study of Gambia consumer protection agencies*. Gambia: Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah (MIRD). 2018.

²³ An Islamic Research Foundation registered in The Republic of The Gambia.

CONCLUSION

Ḥalal is a multifaceted term that encompasses a broad range of activities. Ḥalal, according to *Al-Ghazali* and *Al-Qaraḍāwī*, encompasses all significant sources of human sustenance, including animals, plants, natural materials, chemicals, and microbes. Additionally, it contains components from biotechnology that are utilised in manufacturing food and other consumer items such as clothes, toiletries, and cosmetics. Thus, ḥalal can be interpreted broadly to indicate what is lawful for human consumption and usage under Islamic law. Permissibility or ḥalalness is insufficient in and of itself regarding food goods.

Additionally, it must satisfy the requirement of "goodness" (*Ṭayyibīn*), which refers to cleanliness, safety, and quality. This is because completed food items undergo a lengthy process, from ingredient selection, material preparation, manufacture, production, storage, transfer, and distribution, to customer service. Thus, the whole supply chain, from the source to the completed product, should adhere to both ḥalal and ethical standards. Due to the fast growth of the ḥalal business and its global recognition, there is an urgent need to expand its reach to include a broader range of consumer goods. Seven main areas comprise the ḥalal industry: food services, consumer goods, financial services, pharmaceutical products, cosmetics products, *ḥalal* logistics, and tourism. The *ḥalal* industry's seven primary sectors may be classified into four broad segments: food and beverage, pharmaceuticals and health goods, cosmetics, and tourism and travel services. The report discussed the definition, origins, extent, prospects, difficulties, and possibilities in the Gambia's *Ḥalal* industry.

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