

# THE IMPLICATION OF DIFFERENCES IN HALAL STANDARD OF MALAYSIA, INDONESIA, BRUNEI AND SINGAPORE

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## ABSTRACT

The difference in the halal standard is a significant challenge for the development of the global *halal* industry. This article predominantly discusses the different factors of *halal* standards implemented in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore and their implications respectively. The study is based on reliable primary sources including in-depth interviews with respondents from halal institutions in each country. The study shows that differences of *halal* policies, cultures and *maslahah* (public interest) are the main factors of the different halal standards in those four countries. The implications as such have affected the imbalance acknowledgement of *halal* certification, stringent control of the business and negative perception and double standard in *halal* certification. Apart from that, it led to confusion within Muslim consumers themselves as there are various *halal* logos from different countries.

**Keywords:** *Halal*, *halal* standards, *halal* certification, Muslim consumers, cultures, *maslahah*

## INTRODUCTION

*Halal* has been a significant commercial value which crosses the borders of religions, races, and nations. The international trade value for this industry has reached USD 50 billion a year (RM190 billion) with an expected increase in trading value for each subsequent year. Demand for *halal* products is very high compared to demand for other domestic and international productions. It is largely driven by the significant growth rate of the Muslim population.

The evidence clearly demonstrates that the growth factor of the Muslim population is the factor for *halal* product demand to grow rapidly in countries that belong to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The population of the Muslim population in the ASEAN region according to the study has reached 254 million people. The breakdown of the Muslim population percentage over non-Muslims in each ASEAN member country has been preceded by Indonesia with 88 percent, followed by Malaysia with 60.4 percent, Brunei Darussalam with 67 percent, Singapore with 16 percent, Thailand with 10 percent and Philippines with 5 percent.

The influence of ASEAN in the world economy market is also seen as significant with the composition of ASEAN economic power being ranked seventh in the world and third in Asia. In addition, ASEAN's population growth position has also been ranked third as the world's largest, with 662 million people behind China (1,367 million) and India (1,259 million) (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2015). This clearly shows that the rapid growth of the *halal* industry in ASEAN will have a big impact on the global level.

Looking at the growing trade value of the *halal* industry, specifically at the global and ASEAN level, the demand for *halal* products is not a foreign issue. However, the global *halal* industry encounters a big challenge as there is no international *halal* certification body which uses a unified *halal* standard and a single logo. So far, there are about 200 certification bodies all over the world that issue *halal* certificates and logos in their countries based on their respective *halal* standards which differ from one another.

Recently, Malaysia as one of the key players in the global *halal* industry has suggested that this issue should be seriously and collectively addressed by each country that participates in global *halal* trade. In this regard, different *halal* standards for every country will trigger some issues and problems. Based on this situation, this paper will discuss factors that lead to the differences in *halal* standards in three Muslim majority countries in the South East Asian countries, namely, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, and one Muslim minority country in the same region, which is Singapore. This paper also focuses on the implications of the differences primarily on the advancement of *halal* business within the region.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Mohammad Ajir Abdi Moenip (2006) in his PhD thesis titled Halal Label: Comparison between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore compares *halal* certification bodies and the *halal* legal system that exists in all three countries. The results show that the *halal* certification implemented in the three countries is almost identical. Furthermore, according to Mohd Al-Ikhsan Ghazali and Siti Salwa Md. Sawari (2014) who studied about the *halal* standard practice in Southeast Asian Countries found that the *halal* standards used in Malaysia and countries in Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei and Singapore) are supervised by responsible parties. Based on the *halal* standards used, each country has its own distinctive features. Among the similarities are the Quran and the Sunnah that are used as the basis of the standard reference for *halal* goods. However, Malaysia has comprehensive and complete Halal Product Guidelines along with the existing Islamic religious jurisdiction that helps the authorities to monitor the *halal* products in Malaysia as well as export countries that recognize the *halal* standards adopted by Malaysia. Meanwhile, the situation in Brunei is similar to Malaysia because of the lack of expertise in the development of *halal* standards that has led

Brunei to offer the involvement of various parties from Malaysia. This has resulted in the standardization of Malaysia's *halal* standard and Brunei's *halal* standard that are almost identical.

The study by Noor Eshah Tom (2008) reviewed the concept of *halal* food from a religious and community perspective of the Christians, Chinese and Hindus. The study found that religion, customs, culture and beliefs are among the factors that influence the determination of food in a society.

The writers found limited studies which deals specifically with the implications for *halal* standard differences between Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore. Therefore, the authors assume that this study is important to be looked into. It has made a great contribution in the field of research.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach and the type of research used was a library study that collects information that is relevant to the research objectives. Library methods used, among others, are reference to authoritative sources of books, theses, dissertations, conference papers, journals, and other relevant documents. Websites were also used as an intermediary in communication with officials from each *halal* certification body in four countries to obtain information related to the study.

This study also used in-depth interview methods to obtain views and data directly from interviews with respondents who had been determined by each *halal* certification body in the four countries. Respondents consisted of academic experts and those who had long experience in the field of *halal* policy and certification.

This study also used a structured interview method that was formally conducted, carefully planned and implemented according to a list of questions to be answered by the respondents. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted if the respondents did not understand the meaning of the questions and needed further clarification on an issue given by the respondent. Answers were recorded with recordings and written notes. In certain circumstances, the study required further clarification, thus interviews via telephone was made with a few respondents.

## RESULTS

### Factors of Differences of Halal Standards in Four Countries

There are three main factors that contribute to the differences of *halal* standards between Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore. The first is the different

policy of respective country; second is the different culture (*urf*) practised in each country, and the third is the different consideration of public interest (*maslahah*).

### **Different Halal Policy in Each Country**

*Halal* industry has been among the robust and fast developing sector at the global level. Most of the countries in the world have realised that *halal* business will provide considerable opportunities for worldwide trade and they have embarked on establishing *halal* industry in fulfilling global market demands. Malaysia, for example, has built its expertise in developing a *halal* certification system to the extent that it has been recognised as a centre for global *halal* reference. Halal Hub Division under the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) has long been established to manage the administration of *halal* certification and monitoring to ensure that *halal* industry and its products are by the Islamic principles as well as meeting the requirement of *halal* standards. Manual procedures for *halal* certification and other *halal* standards in Malaysia are in fact based mainly on the law of Shafi'i *madhhab* as this *madhhab* has been acknowledged as an official *madhhab* for Muslims in Malaysia (Nadia Zammil Md Nasir, personal communication, 22 May 2015).

Brunei has also established their *halal* certification system through Division of Halal Food Control under Islamic Religious Council of Brunei mainly to handle the problem of *halal* meat import and its related issues (Dayang Zurina Salwa, personal communication, 10 November 2014). Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and Brunei, and the Shafi'i *madhhab* is mainly referred to in Islamic law practices for Muslim societies in both countries. The only difference is Brunei has gazetted the position of Shafi'i *madhhab* in its constitution, by which any reference or practice to *madhhabs* other than Shafi'i *madhhab* must be given a written permission by the Ruler of Brunei, Ke Bawah Duli Yang Maha Mulia Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan and the Yang Di-Pertuan Negara of Brunei Darussalam. In terms of *halal* enforcement, Brunei has Law of Halal Meat Session 183 and Halal Certificate Command and Halal Label 2005 which have been gazetted by the government to ensure the certification's compliance with the terms and conditions. Brunei also imposes a small amount of fee for *halal* certification on applicants since the operation of *halal* certification in Brunei is under the government financing (Dayang Zurina Salwa, personal communication, 10 November 2014).

With regard to Singapore and Indonesia, they have certification bodies which are authorised by the respective government notwithstanding that Islam is not their country's official religion. Singapore nowadays is intensively promoting its effort to make itself as an international hub for *halal* products. Halal Certification Unit under the Singapore Islamic Religious Council (MUIS) is a government body that plays essential roles in issuing *halal* certificate and logo as well as enforcing the law related to *halal* issues under the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) 1968 (see <http://www.muis.gov.sg/>). Singapore also refers to the Shafi'i *madhhab*

in establishing their *halal* standards and policy. However, in terms of *halal* auditing, MUIS has given authority to its representative, a private company of its own, Warees Halal (Warees Investments Pte Ltd) since 2006. Warees Halal consists of officers from MUIS Halal Certification Unit who are on loan to the company to facilitate the *halal* audit assessment procedures. This mechanism has resulted in the speedy issuing of a *halal* certificate, for instance in the range of 14 to 28 days only (Dewi Hartaty Suratty, personal communication, 25 August 2014). Compared to Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, Singapore is the fastest one in terms of issuing the *halal* certificate. Thus, Singapore is regarded as one of the most effective countries that have a systematic and efficient *halal* certification procedure (Lokman Abd Rahman, personal communication, 22 April 2015).

Indonesia is also competing in promoting itself as a centre for the global *halal* hub. Its *halal* certification system meets the global standard, and it offers a competitive *halal* certification for both local and foreign companies. The Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) conducts *halal* certification system in Indonesia. MUI is an NGO authorised by the Indonesian government, and they have established a board known as Lembaga Pengkajian Pangan Obat-obatan dan Makanan Majelis Ulama Indonesia (LPPOM MUI) (Monitoring Board for Food and Medicines Products) in developing *halal* standard and *halal* audit. This body is also responsible for certifying *halal* products including foods pharmaceutical and cosmetic products. It also plays a vital role in generating *halal* awareness among Muslim manufacturers and society, as well as providing *halal* information to the national community (see <http://www.halalmui.org/>). In establishing the standard for *halal* certification, LPPOM MUI is not restricted to applying the standpoints of the Shafi'i *madhhab*, but it opens to all four Sunni *madhhabs*. The success story of Indonesia can be seen through its effort in obliging Halal Assurance System on all levels of industries to guarantee the *halal* status of all products (Hendra Utama, personal communication, 11 May 2015).

### Culture Differences

Despite being in the same region, i.e. Southeast Asian region, each country has its own culture which results in different perceptions, attitudes and values in each society. In determining the *halal* standard, for example, Indonesia has agreed to acknowledge the process of *istihalah* (substance transformation) as a medium of change for Islamic ruling whether the change is by nature or made by human interference (Hendra Utama, personal communication, 11 May 2015). This standpoint is different with Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore who do not acknowledge the *istihalah* concept and process in their respective *halal* standards. However, the three countries agree to accept *istihalah* in limited cases which involve only natural change as can be seen through several fatwas on food and pharmaceutical products of each country. It is because these countries still adhere to the principles of the Shafi'i *madhhab* in this particular issue. It is known that the Shafi'i *madhhab* has limitedly approved the *istihalah* process in a few cases

of food products and external use products (Nadia Zammit Md Nasir, personal communication, 22 May 2015; Dewi Hartaty Suratty, personal communication, 25 August 2014; Dayang Zurina Salwa, personal communication, 10 November 2014).

For example, for Malaysia, wine vinegar is regarded as unclean (*najis*) and prohibited (*haram*) to be consumed as it is produced by using human interference, i.e. by adding substances, not by natural process. According to the Shafi'i *madhhab*, the change of wine to vinegar by adding a foreign substance such as onion or yeast is not an exact *istihalah* and therefore, it is considered as impure (*najis*) (Portal Rasmi Fatwa Malaysia, 2015). Contrarily, the Indonesian *halal* authority, MUI perceives that wine vinegar is pure and *halal* since they do not use the standpoint of Shafi'i *madhhab* in this case. The MUI prefers to adopt the standpoints of the Hanafi and Maliki *madhhabs* which acknowledge the principle of *istihalah* in the case of using the foreign substance as an agent in turning the wine to vinegar within a shorter period (Hendra Utama, personal communication, 11 May 2015; Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2003).

In another case, Malaysia and Brunei differ in determining the status of aquatic animals that have been fed with unclean food such as pig's offal as frequently used by non-Muslim fish breeders in Malaysia. In Malaysia, in MS1500: 2009 clause 3.5.1.1 it is stated that aquatic animals that bred in unclean (*najis*) water or purposely and continuously fed with unclean food are *haram* to be eaten (Jabatan Standard Malaysia, 2009). Contrarily, it is different for Brunei, as stated in PBD 24:2007 clause 3.1.1.2 (The Religious Council Brunei Darussalam, 2007). It is because Malaysia has issued a clear fatwa on this issue which is then adopted into the Malaysian Halal Standard. The Malaysian fatwa is suitable with the Malaysian reality since many non-Muslim fish rearers use to feed their fish with unclean foods, especially pig's offal. It is also to preserve the Malay Muslims sensitivity that are very critical to pig and its derivatives. The use of *sadd al-dhara'i`* (blocking the means) is also apparent in this fatwa which means to avoid possible exploitation by non-Muslim fish breeders (Fatwa Malaysia, 2013; Research Paper for Muzakarah, 2006).

In Brunei, a fatwa is issued stating that eating fish bred or fed with unclean (*najis*) food is regarded as *makruh* (reprehensible) if the meat has changed its smell, taste and colour. If otherwise, it is permissible to be eaten. It is also permissible if the fish is quarantined for a specified period until there are no more traces of the unclean elements. This fatwa is suitable with local reality as Brunei authorities do not allow the trade of non-*halal* animal (pig) and its derivatives in their country so that the use of non-*halal* food for fishes is nearly impossible (Dayang Zurina Salwa, personal communication, 10 November 2014).

### **The Differences in Considering Maslahah (Public Interest)**

*Maslahah* is one of the *ijtihad* tools used to determine the ruling for something that is not detailed out in the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad

(PBUH). *Maslahah* or public interest is different from one society to another, depending on their respective local and current needs, with the condition that the interests do not exceed Shariah principles and limitations. In Indonesia for example, the meningitis vaccine, Mencevex is prohibited due to its unclean element as it is derived from pig's derivative. On the contrary, the Malaysian fatwa states that the same kind of vaccine is permissible based on the principle of *darurah* (state of emergency) and also on the principle of considering the less effect between two *darurahs* (*i`tibar akhaffu al-dararain*). The interest of preserving the life and avoiding the risk of death on the effect of meningitis epidemic is the primary basis of Malaysian fatwa (Mustafa, 2002).

However, Indonesia has a different standpoint on this issue as they already have *halal* certified vaccines for meningitis. Though certain unclean elements are used in the vaccine production process, it has passed through the *istihalah* process which is then certified *halal* by the LPPOM MUI. Since Indonesia allows only *halal* vaccines to be used, the use of unclean or haram vaccines is a non-issue (Hendra Utama, personal communication, 11 May 2015; Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2010). So far, Malaysia does not give any *halal* certification to any meningitis vaccines since there is no total *halal* and clean vaccine produced in the country (Abd. Rahman, 2013). Vaccine for meningitis is produced from Neisseria Meningitis bacteria taken from patient's spine liquid which is then cultured in the medium of horse or sheep blood (Research Paper for Muzakarah, 2013). This process does not meet the criteria and standard of Malaysian *halal* pharmaceutical (Abd. Rahman, 2013). **Table 1** shows the factors of differences of *halal* standard in Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and Indonesia.

**Table 1:**

**Factors of differences of *halal* standards**

	Malaysia	Brunei	Singapore	Indonesia
<b>Different Halal Policy in Each Country</b>	Halal Hub Division, Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM)	Division of Halal Food Control under Islamic Religious Council of Brunei	Singapore Islamic Religious Council (MUIS)	Lembaga Pengkajian Pangan, Obat-obatan dan Makanan Majelis Ulama Indonesia (LPPOM MUI)
	Official religion, Islam	Official religion, Islam	Islam is not their country's official religion	Islam is not their country's official religion
	Based on the law of Shafi'i <i>madhhab</i>	Based on the law of Shafi'i <i>madhhab</i>	Based on the law of Shafi'i <i>madhhab</i>	Opens to all four Sunni <i>madhhabs</i>
		Law of Halal Meat Session 183 and Halal Certificate Command and Halal Label 2005	Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) 1968	

	Malaysia	Brunei	Singapore	Indonesia
<b>Culture Differences</b>	<p>Only accepted by natural process of <i>istihalah</i> (substance transformation)</p> <p>i.e. Wine vinegar is halal in natural process and unclean (<i>najis</i>) and prohibited (<i>haram</i>) if not natural process</p> <p>i.e. aquatic animals that bred in unclean (<i>najis</i>) water or purposely and continuously fed with unclean food are haram to be eaten</p>	<p>Only accepted by natural process of <i>istihalah</i> (substance transformation)</p> <p>i.e. aquatic animals that bred in unclean (<i>najis</i>) water or purposely and continuously fed with unclean food are <i>makruh</i> (reprehensible) haram to be eaten</p>	<p>Only accepted by natural process of <i>istihalah</i> (substance transformation)</p>	<p>Accepted the both process of <i>istihalah</i> (substance transformation) natural or unnatural processes</p> <p>i.e. wine vinegar is halal natural or unnatural processes</p>
<b>The Differences in Considering Masalah (Public Interest)</b>	<p>The meningitis vaccine, Mencevex is permissible</p> <p>Based on the principle of <i>darurah</i> (state of emergency) and also on the principle of considering the less effect between two <i>darurahs</i> (<i>i`tibar akhaffu al-dararayn</i>).</p>	-	-	<p>The meningitis vaccine, Mencevex is prohibited due to its unclean element as it is derived from pig's derivative</p> <p>Already have halal certified vaccines for meningitis</p>

### The Implications of Different Halal Standards in Four Countries

The implications of differences in *halal* standards between Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore are:

#### Imbalance Acknowledgement of Halal Certification

The four countries, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore, recognise each other in terms of *halal* certifications and their logos. However, Indonesia has



another regulation in permitting foreign *halal* products to enter its market. LPPOM MUI has an MOU with the Republic of Indonesia Medicine and Food Monitoring Body (BPOM RI) in controlling and monitoring *halal* trade through monitoring *halal* labelling which is meant to control the abuse of *halal* logo among the industry players (Hendra Utama, personal communication, 11 May 2015). Based on this MOU, all *halal* products are obliged to possess MUI *halal* logo. It means that *halal* products from Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore need to undergo a second *halal* audit by LPPOM MUI. *Halal* logo from the three countries are recognised, but insufficient to enter the Indonesian market. However, Indonesian *halal* products are free to join the markets of three remaining countries.

### ***Stringent Control of Business and "Negative" Perception***

Since the Malaysian, Singapore and Brunei *halal* certificates are "not recognised" by Indonesian authority, companies from these countries who have already had *halal* certification from JAKIM need to pass LPPOM MUI *halal* audit certification to penetrate the Indonesian market. This situation has resulted in pressure to *halal* industry players of the three countries in marketing their products in their neighbouring country, and this would affect their revenue (Lokman Abd Rahman, personal communication, 22 April 2015; Johari Abd. Latiff, personal communication, 1 September 2014). It has also given negative perception on the part of LPPOM MUI since it has imposed a stringent control on foreign *halal* products.

### ***"Double Standard" in Halal Certification***

As Indonesian authority (BPOM RI) has imposed the law that every *halal* product in Indonesian market has to be re-audited by LPPOM MUI, the *halal* products from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei have to go through double *halal* standards. It would also cost more fees which will affect many small and micro industries due to their shortage of capital (Lokman Abd Rahman, personal communication, 22 April 2015). They will even have to spend on travel expenses for the LPPOM MUI *halal* auditors. The double *halal* audit will also take time and consequently affects the business.

Brunei has also imposed an additional condition in fulfilling the standard *halal* requirement for their country especially in terms of *halal* slaughter. For Brunei *halal* slaughterhouse, the need for two *halal* checkers is a must to ensure that *halal* slaughter procedures are adequately conducted according to their *halal* standard. (PBD:2007, 2002). The additional conditions imposed by respective country is a common practice and agreed by all four countries since 1994 according to their individual need and laws (Dayang Zurina Salwa, personal communication, 10 November 2014). For Malaysian market, there is no restriction for *halal*-certified products from Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei. *Halal* certificates from Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei, are fully recognised by Malaysia, and all *halal* products from these neighbouring countries are free and most welcome to enter the

Malaysia market as they meet the Malaysian *halal* certification requirements. There is no restriction as imposed by Indonesia and there is no additional condition as practised by Brunei (Johari Abd. Latiff, personal communication, 1 September 2014).

### Confusion among Consumers

In an aspect of consumerism, the different *halal* certificates among the four neighbouring countries would trigger confusion amongst Muslim consumers in each country except Indonesia. The scenario is worsened by other *halal* logos from other countries. All countries have a similar general *halal* standard but different to each other in terms of some instances as to fulfil their local interests.

For Malaysian Muslim consumers, for example, the 66 recognised *halal* logos from various countries may lead to public confusion as not everyone remembers each logos. In facing this problem, they have to refer to JAKIM's Halal Portal or to use specific "apps" such as Verify Halal to verify them, and this would lead to some difficulties among Muslim consumers. For Indonesia, they do not have this problem as they oblige the use of MUI *halal* logo on every halal product marketed in the country as explained before.

### Recommendation

As mentioned earlier, the primary constraint resulted from the differences in *halal* standards among the four countries is a stringent control for *halal* business in Indonesia since there is a particular regulation that obliges all *halal* products should pass through the Indonesian *halal* audit even though the products may already have *halal* certification from the original countries. It is recommended for Indonesian authority to review this policy to facilitate *halal* business between the countries. Indonesia should put a consideration to waive site audit for *halal* products from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. It is also suggested that Indonesia should give accreditation to *halal* authorities in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei to certify *halal* products of their own country to boost *halal* business in the region.

There are also many differences in *halal* standards of the four countries such as those related to slaughter procedures particularly pre-slaughter stunning and mechanical slaughter; permissible alcohol rate in foods and beverages, acceptance of *istihalah* concept which has been subjects of polemic between them. Therefore, it is suggested that a universal global standard for *halal* products should be established to manage the variety of *halal* standards, starting with a geographical standard first, i.e. the Southeast Asian region.

For a beginning, they may apply their respective *halal* standard together with several global standards which were accepted globally, such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) (Norazilawati, 2015). This practice can fulfil the international standard for food production.

To further enhance the *halal* certification function, the Halal Assurance System needs to be applied in the company's management system. Halal Assurance System can monitor and regulate the halal productivity process that takes place in the company besides reducing the burden of the *halal* certification body. The principles in the Halal Guarantee System are based on commitment, customer needs, quality improvement without increasing costs and producing items from time to time without any defects and without recycling even without inspection.

Also, the meeting of MABIMS (The Informal Meeting of Religious Ministries of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore), which is usually held once in two years, is capable of forming regional agreements that move on a religious basis to safeguard the interests of the Muslim community. This meeting deals with cooperation in the field of *fatwa* and harmonisation of *halal* standards. Therefore, it is recommended that MABIMS meetings be held more frequently (once a year) to discuss and find solutions that need to be addressed to strengthen unity and to improve the social harmony of society.

The Mufti and the Fatwa Committee are encouraged to use the *ijtihad tarjihi* approach in harmonising different fatwas overseas among the countries. *Ijtihad tarjihi* is one of the forms of *ijtihad* that can be practised in solving common issues faced by each country. This approach is the process of selecting and analysing the views of the *madhhabs* and then opting for the best standpoint that suits the circumstances and needs of the people of this region. However, this approach is less practised by Fatwa Committees in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei except in exceptional cases only. Therefore, it is recommended that the *ijtihad tarjihi* approach be intensified to avoid confusion and misunderstandings among Muslims in the ASEAN region.

## CONCLUSION

It has been identified that there are specific factors that mainly contribute to differences in *halal* standards for Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei, namely, different policy, culture and public interest of each country. To some extent, these factors have been affecting the *halal* industry as well as Muslim consumers in these countries especially in terms of *halal* business control and ambiguity amongst the consumers. Therefore, it is recommended that these four countries should embark on establishing a progressive regional *halal* ecosystem including setting up a standardised *halal* standard and flexible *halal* business policy among them.

Malaysia should take a holistic approach to create a *halal* ecosystem to emerge as a global *halal* hub. It is because the Malaysian *halal* standard has been recognized internationally and has gained trust from countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as the leading *halal* standard among Muslim countries. In fact,

many Islamic countries believe that Malaysia can create a global *halal* standard and become a global *halal* hub due to its more than 40 years of experience in the development of *halal* certification.

Efforts should be made to improve the development of *halal* research and harmonise *halal* standards between these countries. Although the *halal* product market has contributed significantly to the industry, there are still a lot of excellent opportunities to improve in reinforcing the positive image of Islam in the eyes of the world, particularly in enhancing the certification of *halal* certification bodies for MABIMS countries. It is hoped that this study will be contributing useful inputs for JAKIM, LPPOM MUI, MUIB and MUIS in re-evaluating the respective existing *halal* standards.

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