



Consumer Perspectives and Certification Barriers: A Case Study at Rumah Makan Uda Denai

Adli Febrian , Yenti Sumarni

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Abstract: Halal certification plays a crucial role in ensuring food compliance with Islamic law, yet its adoption among small food businesses in Indonesia remains limited. This case report addresses this gap by examining consumer perceptions and identifying the barriers faced by small restaurant owners in pursuing halal certification. The study was conducted at Rumah Makan Uda Denai in Bengkulu City, employing a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation, involving eight informants. Thematic analysis and data triangulation were employed to ensure the validity of the findings. Findings reveal a spectrum of consumer attitudes, ranging from formal reliance on certification to informal trust in the owner's religious commitment. The primary barrier identified is the owner's limited awareness and understanding of the certification process, which is further compounded by insufficient institutional support. These results underscore the need for targeted outreach and simplified certification mechanisms to support small enterprises. The study contributes to discussions on halal governance in microbusiness settings and highlights practical implications for policymakers and certifying bodies.

Introduction

Food is one of the most essential human needs. However, for the Muslim population in Indonesia, it is not enough for food to be merely edible; it must also be halal (1), meaning permissible according to Islamic law (2). The Quran, particularly in Surah Al-Mu'minun (23:51), commands believers to "eat of the good things" and do righteous deeds, emphasizing the importance of halal food. Consuming haram (forbidden) food is believed to hinder the acceptance of good deeds, making food choices a matter of serious concern in a religious context (3). Therefore, being cautious and selective about food, ensuring it is free from prohibited substances and not derived from non-halal processes, is a concrete practice of Islamic principles. Past incidents involving non-halal ingredients or hazardous substances in food have raised public concern and underscored the need for clear and reliable halal status (4).

In this context, a Halal Certificate serves as a crucial guarantee (5). According to the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), a Halal Certificate is a written fatwa declaring a product halal according to Islamic law, based on a detailed examination by the Institute for the Study of Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics (LPPOM MUI) (5). Regulation UU 69 tahun 1999 Article 11 paragraph 2 stipulates that such examinations are conducted according to procedures set by the Minister of Religion, considering recommendations from relevant religious institutions (6). Halal certification is seen as providing added value, not just for health, but also

economically, potentially increasing a business's turnover (7). It is also viewed as a means to enhance the competitiveness of Indonesian products in the free market (8).

For Muslims, choosing eateries that comply with Islamic law is a concern, especially given the potential for ingredients or processes to violate halal criteria. Criteria for halal food include not containing pork or its derivatives, forbidden substances (like human organs, blood, waste), originating from halal animals slaughtered according to Islamic law, and being free from alcohol (khamar) (9). Furthermore, storage, sales, processing, and transportation facilities must not be used for pork unless properly cleaned according to Islamic law (10, 11). While the principle in Islam is that everything is initially permissible unless explicitly forbidden by religious texts, formal certification by MUI through LPPOM is considered a necessary guarantee, particularly in a Muslim-majority area like Bengkulu City, where the owner's religion alone is not sufficient.

Despite these benefits, the actual rate of halal certification among small food businesses in Indonesia remains low. This is particularly evident in cities like Bengkulu, a growing urban center in western Indonesia with a Muslim-majority population. According to 2017 data, only 23 out of 156 food-related small and medium enterprises (UMKM) in Bengkulu City had obtained halal certificates (12). This indicates a significant gap between religious ideals and real-world business practices, making Bengkulu a relevant

and strategic location for studying the challenges and perceptions related to halal certification.

This study focuses on Rumah Makan Uda Denai, a local eatery in Bengkulu City, as a case to explore consumer views on halal certification and identify the barriers faced by small restaurant owners. By examining a real-world scenario, this case report aims to highlight the practical issues surrounding access to certification, information dissemination, and community trust, particularly in the context of small-scale food businesses.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate consumer perceptions and challenges associated with halal certification. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the case context. This approach is appropriate for uncovering nuanced insights from a small number of participants in a natural setting.

This study began on February 15, 2020, and was conducted in the Pagar Dewa area. The location was selected due to its strategic position and the presence of several restaurants (rumah makan), making it a suitable setting for exploring consumer perceptions and business practices related to halal certification.

Research Subjects

The informants in this study consisted of 8 individuals. These included 1 owner and 7 consumers of Rumah Makan Uda Denai in Pagar Dewa Urban Village, Selebar District, Bengkulu City. These informants were expected to provide data and contribute to the observations made. As a qualitative case study, this research does not aim to generalize findings but rather to explore in-depth perspectives within a specific context. The selected participants, which include the business owner and a diverse group of consumers, provide rich, context-specific insights into the phenomenon studied. While the number of informants is limited, this is consistent with case study methodology (requiring 4-10 participants) (13), which prioritizes depth and relevance over statistical representation.

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

Based on their source, data can be classified into two types: primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Primary data, also known as first-hand data, is data obtained directly from research subjects using measurement tools or collected directly from the subjects, providing the information sought (14). Primary data was gathered through interviews with the owner of Rumah Makan Uda Denai in Pagar Dewa.

Secondary Data

Secondary data, also known as second-hand data, refers to information collected from other sources and not directly obtained by the researcher from the research subjects (15). Secondary data typically consists of documentation data or pre-existing report data (16). Data for this study were obtained from books on halal certificates, MUI fatwas, magazines, journals, newspapers, and other sources relevant

to the thesis material.

The techniques used by the researcher for data collection were as follows:

Observation: In this technique, the researcher conducted direct observation, actively participated in the field, and recorded the findings.

Interview: The interview method was conducted verbally with informants to obtain answers or information. A semi-structured interview technique was employed, utilizing a pre-prepared list of questions that could evolve as the interview progressed. These interviews were conducted with the management of Rumah Makan Uda Denai.

Documentation Method: This method involved studying and discussing research results related to regulations and books, as well as examining documents relevant to the writing of this thesis. Specifically, this included reviewing the criteria established by the Institute for the Study of Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics of the Indonesian Ulema Council (LPPOM MUI) for obtaining halal certification for restaurants and eateries, as well as the process for applying for such certification.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, in which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded to identify recurring patterns and themes. To ensure data validity, methodological triangulation was employed by comparing findings across interviews, observations, and document reviews. This enhances credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Result and Discussion

Role of Halal Certificates for Consumers

Interviews conducted in this study reveal varied consumer perceptions regarding the importance of halal certification at Rumah Makan Uda Denai. Some consumers emphasized the certificate as a crucial assurance of a product's halal status, particularly for Muslim patrons. They noted that halal certification provides peace of mind, as it reflects an official examination by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) or another authorized body. For these consumers, the presence of a halal label and clear ingredient information is often the first thing they look for when purchasing food.

Conversely, not all consumers view halal certification as essential. Several informants indicated that other factors, such as taste, price, food variety, generous portions, and friendly service, play a more significant role in their decision to dine at a restaurant. These consumers often rely on personal judgment and the perceived religious adherence of the restaurant owner when assessing whether food is halal, as one informant explained in **Quote 1** when asked whether she always looks for a halal label before buying food. This is also confirmed by four other consumers who gave similar answers to the same question. In the case of Rumah Makan Uda Denai, its loyal customer base remains strong despite the absence of certification. Many customers prefer the taste over having a certificate and say it is not important as long as the owner is Muslim, as one customer noted in **Quote 2**. Other customers also expressed trust in the owner's commitment to halal principles and believed the food served was healthy and permissible (see **Quote 3**). One consumer stated that they would continue eating there as long as the dishes, such as chicken or beef, were recognizable and

*"Tidak juga, tetapi tergantung apa makanan yang dijual, di mana, dan seperti apa. Kalau di rumah makan Padang yang pemiliknya Muslim dan makanannya dari bahan yang halal, saya biasanya makan juga [walaupun tidak bersertifikat halal]." — **Quote 1** - Consumer #1*

*"Menurut saya sih [sertifikat] tidak terlalu penting, karena kebanyakan rumah makan yang saya singgahi adalah [milik seorang] Muslim, dan tetap selalu ramai, karena rasanya yang enak dan harganya yang terjangkau." — **Quote 2** - Consumer #2*

*"Saya tetap menjadi pelanggan rumah makan ini karena saya yakin rumah makan ini baik dan halal." — **Quote 3** - Consumer #3*

*"Iya. Jika makanannya enak saya akan tetap menjadi langganan disitu, tetapi saya tau yang saya pesan adalah makanan yang halal untuk saya makan, seperti daging ayam ataupun daging sapi." — **Quote 4** - Consumer #4*

*"Kendala saya dalam membuat sertifikat halal ini [adalah karena] belum mengerti jalur pengurusannya dan agak ribet, saya juga belum memiliki waktu yang tepat untuk mengurusnya dikarenakan untuk membuat sertifikat halal tentunya harus memiliki surat izin usaha dari kelurahan dan pembuatannya memakan waktu yang panjang." — **Quote 5** - The Owner*

clearly labeled as halal (see **Quote 4**). While these individuals may not prioritize certification, they still acknowledged its value in providing formal halal assurance. This suggests that although halal certificates are important for a segment of consumers, others base their choices on trust and subjective evaluations of the restaurant's practices.

These findings reflect a broader reality in halal consumer behavior. Studies in other regions have similarly found that trust in the vendor often substitutes for formal certification, particularly in small, community-based establishments (17, 18). This suggests a gap between religious ideals and everyday practice, shaped by social trust and convenience. It also indicates that while certification can enhance credibility and market reach, informal indicators, such as the owner's identity and customer experience, continue to play a significant role in influencing consumer decisions (19). Therefore, promoting halal certification should not only emphasize compliance but also address these social dimensions, particularly in areas where personal trust remains a dominant factor.

Factors Hindering Restaurants in Obtaining Halal Certificates

Several barriers were identified that prevent Rumah Makan Uda Denai from acquiring halal certification. The primary issue, as stated by the owner, is his limited understanding of the certification process (see **Quote 5**). He views the procedure as complicated and time-intensive, which poses a

challenge given his current responsibilities in running the business.

Administrative hurdles also contribute significantly. For instance, the requirement to obtain documents such as a business permit from the Kelurahan has proven difficult. These documents are necessary for submission to LPPOM-MUI. Additionally, the certification process involves multiple steps, including online registration, payment of fees, and the preparation of comprehensive documentation, ranging from a Halal Guarantee System (SJH) manual to production diagrams, ingredient and product data, and a product matrix. This extensive process reinforces the perception that certification is both complex and burdensome for small business owners.

Moreover, the lack of effective outreach and socialization from relevant authorities, such as MUI, has exacerbated these challenges. The owner noted that clearer communication and support from such institutions might ease the process and encourage more businesses to seek certification. Despite recognizing the importance of halal certification, the owner believes that many consumers are capable of making their judgments about a restaurant's halal status based on observable practices and the owner's background.

These barriers are not unique to Rumah Makan Uda Denai. Previous research in Indonesia and other Muslim-majority countries has shown that many micro and small enterprises struggle with the formal halal certification process due to limited resources, lack of information, and bureaucratic complexity (20-22). This indicates a structural issue that requires an institutional response. To bridge the gap between certification standards and the realities of small businesses, efforts such as simplified procedures, community-based education, and proactive support systems from certifying bodies are crucial.

In summary, while some view halal certification as a vital guarantee, its absence does not necessarily deter loyal customers who trust the owner's commitment to halal. The certification process itself presents practical challenges for small businesses, including time, documentation, and inadequate institutional support, which explains why Rumah Makan Uda Denai has not yet pursued it despite operating since 2016.

Government and LPPOM MUI Role

Beyond internal challenges, external institutional support also plays a crucial role. In this case, the owner highlighted a lack of socialization or assistance from relevant bodies such as LPPOM MUI or local government agencies. There appears to be limited outreach or educational initiatives that could help demystify the certification process for small business owners (23, 24). Proactive engagement, such as workshops, simplified guidelines, or even digital platforms, could reduce misunderstandings and improve participation. Previous studies emphasize the importance of institutional roles in facilitating halal adoption by reducing bureaucracy and increasing accessibility (25-27). Therefore, stronger institutional involvement is essential for bridging the knowledge gap and promoting wider compliance.

Conclusion

This study finds that consumer views on halal certification in restaurants vary. While many, especially Muslim consumers, see it as essential for assurance, others prioritize taste,

price, or trust in the owner's practices. Rumah Makan Uda Denai, though uncertified, maintains loyal customers who believe the food is halal.

These findings highlight a tension between formal religious expectations and practical realities in microbusiness settings. This gap suggests that halal institutions, such as BPJPH and MUI, must not only improve the socialization and accessibility of the certification process but also recognize the importance of personal trust and religious reputation in informal food economies.

Practical strategies could include fee subsidies for UMKM, simplified procedural guides, and mobile certification outreach. These interventions would lower barriers and incentivize small-scale participation in the halal assurance system.

This study is limited by its small sample size and single-location scope, which may restrict broader generalization. Future research should explore similar cases in diverse regions, assess the long-term economic effects of halal certification on microenterprises, and examine how digital media influence halal awareness and consumer decision-making.

Declarations

Author Informations

Adli Febrian

Corresponding Author

Affiliation: Department of Sharia Economics, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Bengkulu, Indonesia.

Contribution: Data Curation, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing.

Yenti Sumarni

Corresponding Author

Affiliation: Department of Sharia Economics, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Bengkulu, Indonesia.

Contribution: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing - Review & Editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicting interest.

Data Availability

The unpublished data is available upon request to the corresponding author.

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Not applicable.

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Additional Information

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