



CONTRIBUTION OF INDONESIA-MALAYSIA-THAILAND GROWTH TRIANGLE (IMT-GT) TO IMPROVE HALAL FOOD IN THAILAND

KONTRIBUSI INDONESIA-MALAYSIA-THAILAND GROWTH TRIANGLE (IMT-GT) DALAM MENINGKATKAN MAKANAN HALAL DI THAILAND

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Abstract

The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) is an important factor in the development of the halal food and industry sector in Thailand. Through collaborative efforts that promote knowledge sharing and best practices, technological advancements that enhance efficiency and transparency, regulatory frameworks that facilitate trade, and capacity-building initiatives that empower local enterprises, the Indonesian government has been able to enhance the quality and competitiveness of its products on the global market by sharing successful experiences and tactics in halal certification, product monitoring, and regulation. In this study, we adopted a qualitative approach to examine the contribution of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle in improving the quality of the food industry in Thailand. The qualitative findings provided a theoretical framework and conceptual dimensions, enhancing the understanding of how IMT-Growth Triangle initiatives influence the development and management of a sustainable dietary system in Thailand from the very beginning.

Keywords: Halal food, IMT-GT, Thailand

Abstrak

Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) merupakan salah satu faktor penting dalam pengembangan sektor makanan dan industri halal di Thailand. Melalui upaya kolaboratif yang mendorong pertukaran pengetahuan dan praktik terbaik, kemajuan teknologi yang meningkatkan efisiensi dan transparansi, kerangka kerja peraturan yang memfasilitasi perdagangan, dan inisiatif pengembangan kapasitas yang memberdayakan perusahaan lokal, pemerintah Indonesia telah mampu meningkatkan kualitas dan daya saing produknya di pasar



global dengan berbagi pengalaman dan taktik yang berhasil dalam hal sertifikasi halal, pengawasan produk, dan regulasi. Dalam penelitian ini, kami mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif untuk mengkaji kontribusi Segitiga Pertumbuhan Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand dalam meningkatkan kualitas industri makanan di Thailand. Temuan kualitatif memberikan kerangka teori dan dimensi konseptual, meningkatkan pemahaman tentang bagaimana inisiatif Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle mempengaruhi pengembangan dan pengelolaan sistem pangan berkelanjutan di Thailand sejak awal.

Kata Kunci: IMT-GT, makanan halal, Thailand

1. INTRODUCTION

Thailand is mostly a Buddhist nation, however it also possesses a notable Muslim minority. In 2022, approximately 12% of the population, or to around 7.5 million individuals, identified as Muslim, establishing Islam as the predominant religious minority in the nation. The predominant population of Thai Muslims is located in the southern provinces, especially Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, where they constitute a significant segment of the local demographic. Contrary to popular belief, official statistics indicate that only approximately 18% of Thai Muslims reside in the southern provinces, with substantial populations also located in other areas, including Bangkok and various southern provinces like Songkhla and Krabi (Royal Thai Embassy, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2022).

Due to the one-of-a-kind Islamic dietary standards, which stipulate rigorous recommendations for the consumption of food, the development of a Halal Science Centre (HSC) has become an indispensable prerequisite. This is because the regulations stipulate stringent guidelines for the consumption of food. The objective of the program is to provide assistance to the local Muslim community by ensuring that food products are in compliance with the standards for halal cuisine which are in place. This objective will be achieved through the dissemination of information and the supply of resources.

Civil society organizations and a large number of stakeholders, particularly those who adhere to the Muslim religion, recognize the value of such a center in terms of generating a knowledge of Halal standards and ensuring that they are adhered to on a consistent basis. An exceptionally high percentage of those who adhere to the Muslim faith are affected by this phenomenon.

The Halal Science Centre (HSC) has set forth several important objectives aimed at advancing the halal industry in Thailand. These include researching and developing halal science, technology, and innovation to protect both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers while enhancing Thailand's international competence. Additionally, the HSC aims to utilize halal science as a tool for human resource development, contributing to the growth of social, economic, and national advancements in science and technology. Finally, the HSC seeks to ensure that halal science is recognized and accepted at both national and international levels, promoting broader acceptance of halal standards globally (Halal Science Center Chulalongkorn University, 2022).

Even though it is a substantial organization, the Human Security Council (HSC) is facing challenges, notably with regard to the availability of human resources. Accordingly, in order to ensure that the activities of the center are carried out in an effective manner, there is an immediate need for a workforce that is not only informed about Halal standards and practices but also possesses the necessary skills. In order to nurture a workforce that is capable



of supporting the objective of the HSC, it is necessary to have training programs and ties with educational institutions. The existence of this gap underlines the importance of these things.

It goes without saying that the process of carrying out its development makes it a catalyst in the process of enhancing the quality of halal standardization in the field of industry and service providers respectively. It is through the promotion of collaboration and synergy among member nations that the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of the halal business in Thailand. Through the implementation of joint development plans, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia collaborate to safeguard the integrity of halal production, share expertise, and create joint training and education systems (Nurjanah & Prasetya, 2022). The use of this collaborative strategy makes it possible to establish sub-regional halal hubs, which are places where member countries complement one another along the value chain of the halal business.

An example of this would be the Pasir Mas Halal Park, which is situated in close proximity to the border between Thailand and Malaysia. This park acts as a hub for the growth of micro-enterprises that are responsible for the creation of meals that are both traditional and unique. Additionally, in addition to giving these opportunities, this park will also provide Thai enterprises with the possibility of collaborating with Malaysian businesses through joint ventures (Montague Lord & Pawat Tangtrongita, 2014).

In addition, our conversation will investigate the influence that the IMT-GT has on the growth of the human capital sector. The objective of the IMT-GT initiative is to strengthen economic and development cooperation among the three nations, which, in addition to Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia are countries with a predominantly Muslim population. These countries have the potential to provide HSCs great opportunities in terms of collaboration, funding, and the sharing of expertise. Having a solid understanding of the ramifications of this regional cooperation is absolutely necessary for the effective development of HSC in Thailand and for its continued existence.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, we adopted qualitative approach to examine the contribution of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) in improving the halal food industry in Thailand. The qualitative method was employed to elaborate and develop the concepts of 'halal standards' and 'food quality.' The primary data were collected through direct interviews conducted with representatives from the Halal Science Center at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, on 16 July 2024. Additionally, secondary data were gathered through a comprehensive review of relevant literature and studies focusing on halal food development, regional cooperation, and the IMT-GT initiative.

The qualitative findings provided a theoretical framework and conceptual dimensions, enhancing the understanding of how IMT-GT initiatives influence halal food development in Thailand. These findings were further reinforced by insights from secondary sources. For the quantitative-empirical approach, the concept of 'halal food certification and regulation' was applied. This required verification using data representing diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, private sectors, and academic institutions within the IMT-GT region (Marnita, 2024). Sampling followed a multi-stage approach to ensure inclusiveness, capturing diverse perspectives from stakeholders engaged in halal food production and certification. The datasets reflected a wide range of views, with an emphasis on local knowledge and practices in halal food innovation (Aziza et al., 2020).



Regarding the confirmation of the general conceptions of halal food preparation within the context of the IMT-GT collaboration, both primary and secondary data played an essential role. This was the case since both types of data were used. In this article, the data that is presented illustrates how regional relationships and the sharing of knowledge contribute to the strengthening of Thailand's position as a leader in the manufacturing of halal goods, foods, and services

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within the context of this particular case, the author will talk about the crucial role that IMT-GT played in the development of the halal food and industry in Thailand from the very beginning. As was said in the introduction, the IMT-GT performs a variety of duties that contribute to the accomplishment of the missions of the HSC in Thailand. This is done in order to assist in the realization of those missions.

Through extensive collaboration with Malaysia and Indonesia, IMT-GT has been a significant contributor to the enhancement of the quality of halal cuisine in Thailand. Thailand has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and precision of its halal product monitoring by drawing on the experiences and approaches that have proven successful in both countries. Additionally, for the purpose of strengthening halal regulations, strengthening import-export data on halal products, and integrating common halal standards across the three nations, IMT-GT established synergistic agreements (Masy, 2021), thereby making it possible for Thailand to enhance the competitiveness of halal products on the international market.

During this conversation, the role of IMT-GT will be broken down into three distinct main subjects, each of which will have the same primary objective. Starting with the findings of the HSC presentation on the necessity of reorganizing the halal food system in Thailand, we will begin that discussion. After that, there will be a discussion about the part that IMT-GT plays in enhancing the quantity and quality of halal cuisine in Thailand. An explanation of the influence that this collaboration has had in regards to the development of the quality of halal food in Thailand is included at the conclusion of the document.

Outcomes of the Halal Science Center (HSC) Presentation Regarding the Necessity of Enhancing the Halal Food System in Thailand

Over the course of several centuries, Islam has played a significant role—both historically and culturally—in Thailand. Islam is the second most widely practiced religion in the country, and it is afforded legal protection and formal recognition by the constitutional monarchy. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution of Thailand, and the Royal Thai Government respects and protects the right of its citizens to embrace and act in accordance with their own beliefs. It is a philosophy that is supported by the Constitution of Thailand that all people should have equal rights and freedoms (Aminudin & Fitriyani, 2022).

According to the Halal Standards Committee (HSC), one of the challenges that the halal food system in Thailand must contend with is the demand for standards that are comparable across the entirety of the country. In Thailand, there are still a significant number of food items that do not fully comply with the demanding halal certification requirements. This is especially true in areas that are not located in the southern region (Hesti & Dinta, 2023). There are a variety of causes that have contributed to the development of this gap, some of which include the absence of specialists, the low level of public awareness regarding halal standards, and the inadequate control of goods that are already available on the market. A wide range of additional



causes have also played a part in the establishment of this split. These factors include a variety of different factors.

In light of the circumstances, it is imperative that action be taken, particularly with regard to the fulfillment of the criteria for the enhancement of the infrastructure and the human resources. The act of taking action is absolutely essential. To give just one example, it is vitally necessary to upgrade the infrastructure that is responsible for halal certification. This is in order to provide an illustration. As part of this infrastructure, establishments such as laboratories and other establishments that are accountable for conducting food testing are included.

When it comes to providing the highest possible level of assistance for HSC operations, Thailand has to increase the number of people who are educated in halal science and technology. This is necessary in order to provide the highest possible quality of service. It is imperative that this be done in order to fully satisfy the prerequisites for the HSC. As a result of these conditions, Thailand is in a position to offer assistance of the highest possible quality. In order to fulfill the requirements for the HSC in their entirety, it is imperative that this step be completed and completed first.

It is of the utmost importance that these innovations be adopted as soon as possible in order to guarantee that the food items that are consumed by various communities in Thailand, including Muslim communities as well as non-Muslim communities, are in accordance with the halal standards of product protection and quality. This is because the halal standards are based on the principle that food should follow certain guidelines. Specifically, this is due to the fact that the halal standards are founded on the notion that food should adhere to specific requirements. Both those who do not identify as Muslim and individuals who identify as Muslim are included in this group.

The Role of IMT-GT in Improving the Quality of Halal Food in Thailand

The Growth Triangle, which consists of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, is an essential component that plays a vital part in the process of further strengthening the interaction between countries. When taking into consideration the expansion of the halal industry, the relevance of this information cannot be understated. The three countries are able to work together on a range of topics as a result of their involvement in this forum. One of the issues that they may work on together is the adoption of halal standards, which is one of the issues that they may work on together.

With regard to this topic, IMT-GT fosters extensive collaboration, which includes the cultivation of human resource capacity, the acquisition of knowledge, and the implementation of technology in relation to the production of delicacies that are viewed as being halal. It is for this reason that it contributes to the enhancement of the efficiency and quality of halal products in the region, as well as to the development of a more robust economic integration between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand (Dinarto, 2017). Additionally, it helps to ensure that consumers in their respective countries have access to halal products that are out there for them to purchase.

In the process of establishing the halal industry, IMT-GT presents Thailand with a fantastic opportunity to make use of the experiences and approaches that have proven to be successful in Malaysia and Indonesia. As a result of the fact that both nations have created halal sectors and have a Muslim majority, Thailand can draw inspiration and learn from both of these countries. Through the establishment of this international partnership, Thailand will be able to gain knowledge from the experiences of other countries in the areas of halal certification systems, product supervision, and innovation within the halal food industry.



Due to the fact that this is one of the most important aspects of the halal industry that needs to be managed, it is essential to build a trustworthy certification system for halal food goods. With the thorough halal certification standards and procedures that have been developed by Malaysia and Indonesia (Shalahuddin et al., 2024), Thailand has the ability to gain expertise from these standards and procedures. Malaysia and Indonesia were the ones that came up with the concepts that are being questioned within the context of this particular circumstance.

For the purpose of ensuring that the product is not only halal but also of high quality, it is crucial to take into consideration the monitoring of halal products, which is yet another highly important factor that must be taken into consideration. Thailand has the capacity to boost the efficiency and accuracy of its supervision of halal goods by collecting knowledge regarding the halal product supervision procedures that are employed in Malaysia and Indonesia (Latiff, 2020). There is a possibility that this skill can be obtained through the accumulation of knowledge.

Additionally, the success of this international partnership contributes to the enhancement of the competitiveness of Thai halal products in the international market. Thailand is able to enhance the quality of its halal products and better distinguish them from those of other countries by using innovations and technologies from Malaysia and Indonesia. As an illustration, the implementation of cutting-edge technology in the process of developing halal products can contribute to the enhancement of both the efficacy and transparency of the product certification and supervision procedure. Since this is the case, IMT-GT becomes a very strategic platform for Thailand to enhance its competence and competitiveness in the halal industry on a worldwide and international scale (Zhan et al., 2016).

Impact of IMT-GT on Halal Food Development and Management in Thailand

At the core of IMT-GT's impact on halal food development is its commitment to fostering collaboration among member countries. The Working Group on Halal Products and Services (WGHAPAS) has been instrumental in this regard, facilitating discussions and agreements aimed at strengthening halal product assurance. For instance, during the 17th WGHAPAS meeting held in July 2023, member countries emphasized the need for integrated approaches to halal certification and product management (IMT-GT, 2024). This collaboration allows Thailand to leverage the experiences of Malaysia and Indonesia, both of which have established robust halal industries.

One of the key initiatives under IMT-GT is the establishment of joint training programs and knowledge-sharing platforms. These initiatives enable Thailand stakeholders to learn from their counterparts in Malaysia and Indonesia about best practices in halal certification processes, quality control measures, and market access strategies. By participating in these collaborative efforts, Thailand can enhance its own halal industry standards and practices, ultimately leading to improved product quality and consumer trust.

In conjunction with this, the implementation of regulatory frameworks that control the production of halal food in Thailand is a crucial element of the role that IMT-GT plays in the establishment of these frameworks. The forum strongly encourages its member nations to unify their halal standards and legislation in order to bring about a more seamless flow of trade and investment activities within the region (Nurul et al., 2020). Therefore, this harmonization is an urgent necessity for Thailand producers that are interested in exporting their halal products to countries that are located in close proximity to Thailand.

IMT-GT members have come together to establish uniform halal standards, which has helped to reduce the disparity that exists between the various certification methods. Thailand



has the potential to strengthen its reputation in the international halal market by bringing its laws in line with those of Malaysia and Indonesia, two countries that are well-known for their demanding halal certification procedures. Not only does this alignment assist local producers, but it also encourages foreign investment in Thailand's halal sector thanks to its favorable conditions.

Furthermore, the programs that are provided by IMT-GT help to enhance the competencies of regulatory bodies, which are the organizations that are accountable for regulating halal certification. In order to ensure that inspectors and auditors are appropriately equipped to effectively enforce compliance with the standards that have been established, training programs that are designed to increase the capabilities of these professionals are introduced throughout the organization (IMT-GT, 2021). It is of the utmost essential that this capacity building takes place in order to guarantee that the halal food business in Thailand will continue to uphold high standards of honesty.

IMT-GT has a multifaceted impact on the development and management of halal food in Thailand. Through collaborative efforts that promote knowledge sharing and best practices, technological advancements that enhance efficiency and transparency, regulatory frameworks that facilitate trade, and capacity-building initiatives that empower local enterprises, IMT-GT plays a crucial role in shaping a robust halal industry in Thailand.

As global demand for halal products continues to rise, Thailand's active participation in IMT-GT positions it favorably within this growing market. By leveraging partnerships with neighboring countries and embracing innovative solutions such as latest technology, Thailand can enhance its competitiveness while contributing significantly to economic resilience through inclusive growth within its halal sector. The ongoing commitment to collaboration among IMT-GT members will undoubtedly pave the way for a thriving future for Thailand's halal food industry.

The Key Problem in the Implementation of IMT-GT Cooperation

During the process of putting this collaboration into action, it is unavoidable that it would encounter a number of challenges. This is something that cannot be avoided in any way. The author is bringing up this topic because the restricted availability of human resources is the most major problem that arises throughout the process of establishing halal production and industry in Thailand. This problem is also the incentive for the author to bring up this subject. These are the reasons why the author chose to bring up this particular topic.

This information was able to be obtained by me as a result of my travel to HSC Chulalongkorn in Thailand on July 16, 2024. The Human Resources Commission (HSC) stated that the sole problem that was inhibiting their progress was the limited supply of human resources. This is supported by the explanations that came before, which stated that one component of the collaboration is the dissemination of medical specialists. In addition, this is supported by the explanations that came before.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) is an important factor in the development of the halal food and industry sector in Thailand. This is accomplished through the partnership of Malaysia and Thailand. Thailand has the chance to increase its halal standards and improve the quality and competitiveness of its halal products on the global market by sharing successful experiences and tactics in halal certification, product monitoring, and regulation. This can be accomplished through the sharing of similar



experiences and strategies. Not only does this partnership help to standardize halal procedures across the area, but it also helps to create economic integration and provides assistance for the development of Thailand's halal sector infrastructure. The Halal Science Center (HSC) has brought to light the fact that one of the most significant obstacles that must be overcome in order to accomplish this mission is the restricted availability of human resources. In order to ensure the continued success of IMT-GT's operations in Thailand's halal food sector, it is essential to find a solution to this problem through the implementation of capacity-building initiatives and the exchange of information.

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