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HALAL CERTIFICATION SYSTEM AS A KEY DETERMINANT OF FIRM INTERNATIONALISATION IN THE PHILIPPINES AND MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

There is a broad consensus to the effect that public agencies can mitigate the obstacles and uncertainties associated with the process of firm internationalisation. One critical aspect of such interventionist policy is the establishment of a national/region halal certification system, which has been widely recognised as core factor in the international expansion of halal food firms. Based on a thorough field research conducted in the halal food industries of the Philippines and Malaysia, the present article shall explicitly examine how exactly different models of halal certification can promote and ease access of local firms to international markets. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the present article will allow us to formulate general conclusions regarding the relationship between firm internationalisation and halal certification, as well as specific insights for other halal food industries seeking to promote their international activities.

Keywords: halal industry, firm internationalisation, halal food, Malaysia, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The present article intends to examine the process of firm internationalisation by focusing on the specificities of the halal food industry. As we shall see, in recent years, both local and national governments in Malaysia and the Philippines have played a leading and central role in encouraging the development of their domestic halal food industry, especially through various export promotion policies aimed at promoting firm internationalisation. Indeed, there is also a broad consensus to the effect that public institutions can somewhat mitigate the risks, uncertainties and barriers associated with the internationalisation process (Lima & de Carvalho, 2011; Da Rocha, Costa Pereira & Monteiro, 2007; Conconi, Sapir, & Zanardi, 2010). Public agencies can provide firms with an easier access to funds and information about potential foreign opportunities,

and—by sharing the costs and risks through effective use of coordination projects and economies of scale—make it much easier for even small firms to access foreign markets and undertake export activities (Lagendijk & Charles, 2003).

But while in both cases public agencies have adopted a proactive and interventionist role, the new halal food development hubs that have emerged in the Philippines and Malaysia differ greatly in terms of the nature, the efficiency and the scale of their internationalisation promotion policies. The respective results of these policies, with regards to the performance of halal food firms on the international arena, also differ greatly, ranging from obvious failures to brilliant successes. But a specific aspect of these export promotion policies—one that is especially important for the halal food industry—deserves more attention: the halal certification system. Indeed, halal certification has been widely recognised as a core factor in the international expansion of halal food firms by many authors (Bohari, Cheng, & Nurwahida, 2013; Borzooei & Asgari, 2013; Hadju, 2011; Hussain, 2009).

Thus, the main purpose of this article is to examine and measure how different models of halal certification system, each with its own set of characteristics, limits and advantages, can affect the performance of halal food firms, particularly with respect to their objective of accessing foreign markets. By focusing on two halal food industrial parks in Malaysia and in the Philippines, we shall see how different models of halal certification can facilitate or hinder the process of firm internationalisation. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the present article will allow us to formulate general conclusions regarding the relationship between firm internationalisation and halal certification, as well as specific insights for other halal food industries seeking to promote their international activities.

THE RISE OF THE HALAL FOOD INDUSTRY IN ASIA

The halal industry refers to the way goods and services are produced and delivered in a manner that is consistent with Islamic law, or Sharia, avoiding practices and products prohibited by the precepts of Islam. While the concept of halal is most often associated with the food production and processing industry, it also applies to areas as diverse as pharmaceuticals, healthcare products, tourism, cosmetics and hygiene products, logistics, packaging and many others areas (Seong & Rizal & 2006). This industry is known for the importance it gives to the verification and certification measures at all stages of production to ensure that products are not contaminated with non-halal materials or processes, which involves rigorous analytical techniques (Nakyinsige, Che Man, Sazili, Zulkifli, & Fatimah, 2012).

With a worldwide Muslim population of around 1.6 billion people, the estimated total value of the growing global halal industry was around \$2.3 billion in 2012 and this amount is expected to increase consistently in the coming years. This remarkable growth is due to a significant increase in consumption of halal products in Muslim countries and to an ever growing awareness of Muslim consumers concerning the importance of halal certification (Bohari et al., 2013; Husain, Ghani, Mohammad, & Mehad, 2012). This significant growth of the halal industry is nowhere more evident than in the Arab Muslim countries of the Persian Gulf, especially when considering the rise of their food imports. To meet the needs of their growing domestic demand, the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have to import 90% of their annual grain needs and 60% of their meat products. For Saudi Arabia alone, that is 5 million heads of cattle annually (Xia, 2008).

This exponential demand coming from the GCC represents a significant financial windfall for those who can capture a share of this market and has obviously led to a heightened interest of foreign entrepreneurs (Seong & Rizal 2006). Currently, multinational agro-business firms in Brazil, Australia and New Zealand have secured the biggest share of world exports of meat and processed halal products to countries in the Middle East. But in recent years, several Asian regions and countries with a significant Muslim population have sought to capture a share of this market by encouraging the development and internationalisation of their local halal production base. This is the case, among others, of Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Thailand, and, of course, Malaysia and the Philippines.

In the majority of these countries, the development of the domestic halal industry is strongly supported by both central and local public authorities, in particular with various internationalisation and export promotion policies. Such measures have been at the very core of the industrial policies in these countries, and are generally defined in the literature as the set of collective actions of institutional stakeholders (governments and affiliated para-public agencies) to support firms setting up, undertaking and developing international activities (mostly, but not restricted to, export). This interventionist approach in favour of promoting export corresponds to an active model of economic interventionism, mostly in vogue in the rising Asian economies (Kuchiki, 2005; Mitsui, 2003).

According to this model, the role of public agencies is to address market failures by providing a wide range of services and resources, such as networking and business matching activities, target market analysis, marketing services, etc. (Hatem, 2005) Public policies can also assist firms in obtaining bank loans in order to finance their international activities (Organisation for Economic and Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2000). The empirical literature suggests that such export promotion policies were at the very heart of the

internationalisation of many agro-food industries, including Latin America (Gálvez-Nogales, 2010), Indonesia (Burger, Kameo, & Sandee, 2011) and Mongolia (Webber & Labaste, 2010).

Besides the obvious and visible aspect of such industrial development support policies, the halal food industry also benefits from another aspect of public intervention, which, although less apparent, is potentially much more influential: the halal certification system. Indeed, the halal certification system is fundamentally inseparable from the overall halal food industry, and we argue in this paper that it constitutes a significant factor in determining the export performance of halal food firms. By looking at the halal certification models currently in place in Malaysia and the Philippines, and by analysing how the core characteristics of these models differ, we shall assess how exactly they affect the degree of firm internationalisation inside the halal food industry.

HALAL CERTIFICATION SYSTEM AS A RESOURCE

Given the potential importance of halal certification for the internationalisation of halal food firms, it is essential to examine in greater detail the theoretical underpinnings of firm internationalisation. Internationalisation is, as defined by Welch and Luostarinen (1993), "the process of increasing involvement in international operations". From this definition, theories of firm internationalisation have sought to explain the reasons why a given firm engages in international activities, the different paths to internationalisation, and, concerning public policy research, how institutions can hinder or ease this process. Many convergent and competing theories have been developed to answer these questions, of which one approach is particularly relevant in the context of the halal food industry: the resource-based view of firm internationalisation.

Rooted in the works of Chandler (1962) and Penrose (1959), the resource-based view of internationalisation considers the firm as a collection of specific and heterogeneous resources. According to this approach, whether a firm will achieve and maintain a profitable position in the international market depends on its ability to obtain vital and exclusive resources, and on maintaining this advantage. Independently of the content of the international activity itself, the resource-based view implies that internationalisation consists, according to Conner (1991), in the mobilisation, the accumulation and the development of resources, which are then used to initiate international activities.

If the distinctive resources of a given firm meet the four characteristics of *exclusivity* (i.e. they are valuable, scarce, difficult to imitate, and limited), they can provide a significant competitive advantage for the firm in the international arena. Many empirical studies confirm the insights of the resource-based view of

firm internationalisation. Indeed, it appears that many aspects of international development are utterly dependent on the critical resources available to the firm. For example, resources determine the path, the speed and the sequence of internationalisation (Kamakura, Ramón-Jerónimo, & Vecino, 2012), and different resources create different competitive advantages (Wang & Ahmed, 2007).

In this article, we shall regard halal certification systems as a resource made available for firm internationalisation by public agencies. Thus, public agencies can exert a beneficial influence and ease firm internationalisation process by influencing the four characteristics of exclusivity of its domestic halal certification system, namely its value, scarcity, difficulty to imitate, and limited aspect. By doing so, public agencies are in fact modifying the resource available for firm internationalisation. Guided by the theoretical framework presented above, we shall evaluate and compare the inherent characteristics of the halal certification systems currently in place in the Philippines and in Malaysia. This way, we shall be able to evaluate which one of these certification systems is the most effective in regard to promoting firm internationalisation, and assess the validity of our theoretical assumption.

The results are based on qualitative and quantitative empirical data, collected during a wide-scale field research conducted in the Penang International Halal Hub and the Zamboanga halal food industry, between November 2014 and March 2015. In total, 58 halal food firms in these two countries were interviewed on site or by phone. In more than half of the cases, researchers had the opportunity to visit facilities, review products and certificates, and assess firsthand the degree of internationalisation of halal food companies. In addition, researchers had the opportunity to visit 18 government institutions and agencies (in the cities of Manila, Zamboanga, Penang and Kuala Lumpur). These valuable testimonies will be used to better contextualise the data and estimate the effects of each halal certification system.

HALAL FOOD INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA AND IN THE PHILIPPINES

Without any doubt, Malaysia is widely seen and recognised as the world's most successful example of halal food industry development, and its model has been regarded as the basis for the development of halal food industries in many countries. The development of the halal industry in Malaysia started 30 years ago. Halal inspections were then carried out by a private company appointed by the federal government. A public institution—JAKIM—was later established and all halal certification and auditing activities came under the control of the Malaysian federal state, with local states being responsible for the definition of

the Islamic law. From 1996, the development of halal industry was integrated into main industrial and agricultural government plans, including the *Halal Industry Development Master Plan*, which was adopted in May 2008.

As part of these efforts, halal industrial parks were established as one of the pillars of the Malaysian halal industry development master plan. Such parks consist in communities of manufacturing and service companies, supported by public and private organisations offering research, logistics, training and other services. The purpose the Malaysian halal industrial parks is to improve the economic performance of member firms; this includes boosting the performance on both domestic and international markets, increasing awareness and enforcement of various certifications and standards, increasing product innovation, and so on. In order to do so, public agencies provide a variety of services to member firms, including various financial incentives, such as full income tax exemption on capital expenditure for a period of five years. As a result of these efforts, Malaysian halal industrial parks have benefited from over RM6 billion in investment from 17 multinational companies and over 80 small and medium companies.

For the purpose of this study, we have selected the Penang International Halal Hub (PIHH) as our main research field in Malaysia. The PIHH is situated along the Straits of Malacca, in the historical city of Penang, which has been a traditional successful trading hub for northern peninsular Malaysia. *Halal Penang*, a state-owned agency, was set up in 2008 in order to manage the PIHH and support Malaysia's vision to become the world halal hub. *Halal Penang* is focused on promoting, enhancing and driving the growth of the halal cluster and help make up a holistic and integrated halal supply chain. Positive outcomes of these efforts are already visible, the local halal industry has grown from a handful of 55 companies in 2008 to the 565 there are today.

For its part, halal food firms in the Philippines are mostly found on the southern island of Mindanao, home to almost 22 million people, of which around 20% are Muslim. Most of the Muslim Filipinos live in a region known as the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which was created by the Philippine Government in 1989. Because of its Muslim heritage, Mindanao was a natural fit as the center of halal food industry efforts in the Philippines. According to Aleem Giapal, member of the *National Commission on Muslim Filipinos*, the Philippines has set ambitious goals for its halal food industry: The objective is to capture 30% of the halal market in ASEAN by 2016, which represent the current Malaysian market share (*The Halal Times*, 26 July 2014).

In order to achieve these development goals, a 15,000-hectare Special Economic Zone—the "Zamboecozone"—was established near the southern Muslim city of Zamboanga in 1995. The Zamboecozone intends to position itself as the center of

halal food industry in the southern Philippines, according to the director of the Special Economic Zone Authority. To this end, the Zamboecozone includes a 100-hectare zone reserved exclusively for the development of halal food firms. This project has received the full support of regional and municipal authorities, as evidenced the by its board of directors, on which sit the Mayor of Zamboanga city, Maria Isabelle Climaco, and many others Zamboanga city councillors.

But attracting and retaining halal food firms has proven to be extremely difficult: The local halal food industry has struggled with many major problems, which appear overwhelming when compared with the efforts of public agencies. The whole region of Zamboanga suffers from violent harassment and extortion by armed groups, longstanding power interruptions and water supply shortage. In fact, since the 1970s, Mindanao has seen extensive armed conflict between the central government and Muslim separatist groups. This explains why, according to our field research, the Zamboecozone is largely underused, and empty at more than 90%. This is not to say that the regional halal food industry is devoid of success stories, but according to local respondents, successful firms are closely intertwined with the interests of paramilitary groups. Despite this, many firms have been successful at exporting fresh fruits (particularly bananas and pineapples), which have remained among the top halal food exports of Mindanao to the UAE, the KSA, Qatar, and Kuwait.

EFFECTS OF HALAL CERTIFICATION MODELS ON FIRM INTERNATIONALISATION

Halal food firms in Penang and Zamboanga were asked to evaluate their level of internationalisation (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest level, based on set of common standards, i.e. percentage of revenue coming from exports; number of international cooperative projects; size of presence in foreign markets). Firms were then asked to assess, according to their experience, whether their internationalisation activities benefited or not from their national halal certification system (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most beneficial effect). Finally, further qualitative data were collected to explain in details the statistical effects of each halal certification system.

As we can see from Figure 1, both industries differ widely in terms of their level of firm internationalisation. The mean score of firm internationalisation among Philippines (Zamboanga) halal food firms was 1.27/5, compared to 3.46/5 for the Malaysian (Penang) halal food industry. The standard deviation of the scores for each group (1.60 and 1.08) indicates that the spread of the scores is slightly higher among the Philippines halal food firms than in the Malaysian halal food industry.

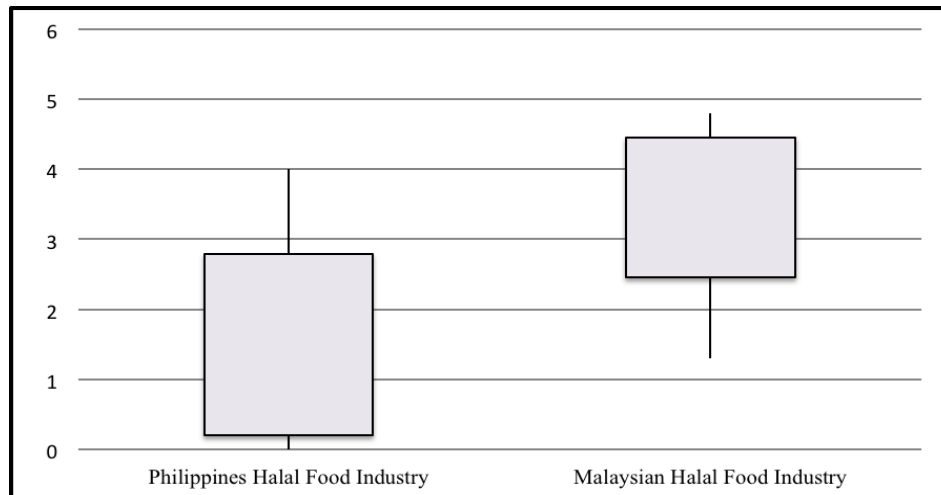


Figure 1. Level of firm internationalisation in Malaysia and the Philippines

In order to determine if this difference is statistically significant, we shall compare the difference between the mean score of firm internationalisation under both halal certification systems. The results of the independent samples t-test tell us that the difference between the means (2.19) of the two certification systems is statistically significant. Indeed, the results showed that the degree of firm internationalisation under the Malaysian halal certification system was significantly higher ($M = 3.46$; $SD = 1.08$) than under the Philippines halal certification system ($M = 1.27$; $SD = 1.60$); $t = 8.17$, $p = .000$. The difference would lie between 1.6 and 2.7, which shows that the effect of the halal certification system is quite important, considering that the maximum value for the degree of firm internationalisation is 5.

Since the difference between the samples we have collected is larger than what we would expect based on the standard error, then the difference is genuine, and we can assume that the Malaysian halal certification system is thus significantly more effective to promote firm internationalisation than the halal certification system currently used in the Philippines. This is well illustrated by Figure 2, where we can clearly see that the responses from the Philippines halal food industry form a nearly flat relation, implying that the beneficial effect of the local halal certification system is not associated with an increase in the objective degree of firm internationalisation. Respondents from the Malaysian halal food industry, on the other side, report a strong and positive relation between the efficiency of their domestic halal certification system and their degree of firm internationalisation.

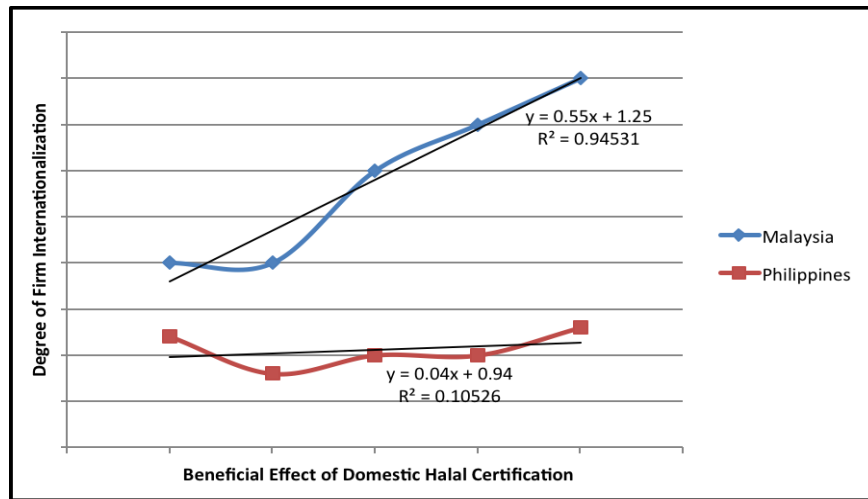


Figure 2. Firm internationalisation/certification system beneficial effect

The testimonies of responding firms and the qualitative data collected on site confirm our statistical results. As we have noted, Malaysia has fully centralised its halal certification system under the authority of the central government, and its halal certification system is fully supported by relevant government institutions. Established in 1997, the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) acts as Malaysia's sole agency responsible for issuing and controlling halal certificates. The Malaysian Halal Standard (MS 1500: 2004), *General Guidelines for Halal Food Production, Preparation, Processing and Storage*, complies with good manufacturing practice standards (GMP) and good hygienic practices (GHP) and is ISO-compatible. Because of this high degree of coherence, it is widely recognised by other certification bodies as being the most reliable halal standard in the world, and, as we saw, it represents a significant competitive advantage for Malaysian firms.

Moreover, according to many responding firms in Penang, many Muslim and Middle-eastern countries have recently started to require that not only the food products be certified halal, but that the entire logistical process, from production to consumption, be also "halal", to fully ensure the integrity of the products. The main principle of halal logistics is that halal products be separated from non-halal products throughout the entire logistic chain, in order to avoid any possibility of cross-contamination. The Malaysian certification system has proven extremely useful in this aspect, as it includes a halal standard specifically designed to ensure the halal integrity at every step of the logistical and supply chain.

The situation in the Philippines, however, is not nearly as cheerful, and in addition to security problems and obstacles identified earlier, Zamboanga halal

food industry also faces great challenges in terms of its model of halal certification. Indeed, the Philippine halal certification system is currently decentralised, scattered and lacks coherence. According to Roberto Amores of the *Philippine Food Exporters Confederation*, at the moment, halal certification can be done through many different halal certification bodies, which do not communicate or coordinate between themselves (*The Philippine Star*, 22 November 2014). Currently, there are 18 certifying halal agencies across in the country, but only 9 are members of the national Halal Federation and are deemed the more credible halal certification suppliers.

This situation is due to the Philippines Constitution, which enforces a strict separation of the Church and the State. Therefore, government agencies are forbidden from meddling in the management or the establishment of halal certification bodies, deemed to be a religious activity. Indeed, in 2003, the highest court of the Philippines nullified a law that gave the *Office on Muslim Affairs* (now the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos) the power to regulate the certification process of food products (Basa, 2014). This explains why, unlike Malaysia, the Philippines does not yet have a public agency in control of halal certifications, and why various non-governmental organisations, sometimes of questionable competency or quality, have taken over the certification. According to respondents in Zamboanga, this lack of unified halal certification agency makes it difficult for foreign countries, particularly in the Middle East, to recognise the validity and integrity of the local halal certificate, thus hindering their internationalisation efforts.

Another aspect of the halal certification system concerns the support infrastructure, meaning the way public institutions and agencies provide the required support and assistance in order to efficiently implement their halal certification system. In this aspect, Malaysia again proves its superiority. Indeed, respondents in Malaysia have said that the process of securing their halal certificate was fast and smooth, thanks mostly to the halal certification pre-assessment and coaching services provided by the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC). Established in 2006, HDC acts as a focal point of the halal industry in providing comprehensive support to domestic firms, including information and certification resources. Among its main services, HDC offers training and educational programs for Malaysian and international companies (more than 50,000 people have benefited from such training in Malaysia).

According to responding halal food firms in Penang, before submitting their halal certification application, Malaysian firms can benefit from a pre-assessment inspection by the experts of HDC, in order to ensure that their products meet halal, safety and quality requirements. This pre-assessment program is comprehensive and focuses on all eventual issues: halal logistics, halal

management, Islamic finance, halal slaughter practices, halal production, and so on. It also includes the assessment of chemical and molecular components. Firms that fail the pre-assessment inspection are then "coached" by HDC experts, so to help them rectify the problems and successfully secure a certificate. The current approval rate for halal certification in Malaysia is around 90%, which reflects the high efficiency of the coaching program.

Moreover, in order to be effective and help firms grow abroad, it is absolutely central for the certification support infrastructure to be flexible, and to always target their intervention according to the needs and the priorities of the halal food firms themselves. The Malaysian model of certification support mostly apply these principles, and its international success is the product of a much larger multilevel national strategy. Instead of trying to cater to the needs of different firms with one single program, Malaysian public agencies have opted for a multivectoral support infrastructure (which includes halal parks, SMECorps, HDC, JAKIM and many more specialised agencies), diverse enough to respond to the various needs of firms. This shows that in order to develop a strong and successful export-oriented halal industry, there is no one-size-fits-all solution: instead, public agencies at all level have to create an environment where halal food firms can prosper and internationalise themselves.

In the Philippines, local halal food businessmen unanimously recognise the current support infrastructure as seriously deficient. Local firms wanting to secure foreign or local halal certification are left alone. Many local entrepreneurs have said they did not receive any guideline or help when they asked regional government agencies for assistance in order to secure foreign certification. Support coming from government agencies is either inadequate, inefficient or plainly absent: according to local respondents, there is a total lack support and services to ensure an efficient transformation from their current production practices to halal-compatible practices. Moreover, the poor and limited infrastructure in the Zamboanga region makes it difficult to ensure safe and reliable farm-to-market and farm-to-port transportation, and is absolutely ill-suited to ensure the halal integrity of local logistics and supply chains.

Moreover, contrary to Malaysia, where the halal certification process usually does not involve high costs, the halal certification process of Zamboanga halal food firms is severely hindered by their limited access to finance. Indeed, many respondents in Zamboanga said that, while meeting the technical requirements for securing a halal certificate did not pose problems, it meant paying comparatively important sums for the certificate to be issued, some respondents even referring to instances of corruption in the halal certification business. This problem is particularly severe among small-scale Muslim farmers and food producers:

according to respondents, the overwhelming majority of ARMM municipalities do not have any sort of private banking or financial institution.

This situation may be the result of the overall deep-rooted and long-lasting lack of trust between halal food entrepreneurs and government agencies. Based on our field research in Muslim areas around Zamboanga, where most halal food firms are active, most respondents deeply believe that the central and regional governments are not sincere in providing assistance to the halal food industry and to Muslim communities in general. Moreover, the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the excessive bureaucratic control and corruption on the part of public agencies discouraged them from asking for help. Therefore, the prevalent dynamic inside the Zamboanga halal food industry is one of suspicion and autonomy with regards to state institutions, including industry support programs and halal certification norms. This explains why halal food firms mostly cater to the domestic market, and have great difficulty to export their products to neighbouring markets.

CONCLUSIONS ON HALAL FOOD FIRM INTERNATIONALISATION

The results presented above mostly confirm our initial hypothesis, and point to the fact that the specific aspect of export promotion policies under study in this paper—namely the halal certification system—can significantly affect the degree of firm internationalisation. These significant results give us a strong insight about the mechanisms by which public agencies can help and support the internationalisation process of halal food firms. Of course, a successful process of firm internationalisation does not depend only on the sole certification: many external factors also play a fundamental role, such as international business environment, target market, international and national trade policies, etc. However, all other things being equal, we argue that a highly influential and reliable halal certification system is a major asset that can help firms overcome obstacles that are inherent in a transition towards international markets.

Indeed, we saw that public agencies can play a positive role for firm internationalisation by promoting a halal certification system that meet the four characteristics of an exclusive resource. This is the case of the halal certification system currently in place in Malaysia: its centralised nature, reliable integrity and strong support infrastructure make the Malaysian halal certificate a valuable, scarce and hardly imitable resource. This, in turn, provides a significant competitive advantage for Malaysian firms in the international arena.

In the case of the Philippines, where the unreliability and de-centralised nature of the certification system is hindering the export performance of local firms,

improving the regional halal certification system should be an absolute priority of authorities. As long as the Zamboanga industry is struggling with its current certification system, it will be very difficult for local firms to gain a sustainable foothold in foreign markets. The first step towards a coherent internationalisation strategy should be the monopolisation and centralisation of all halal certification activities in the Philippines under a public certification agency. Only by centralising such activities can the local halal food industry hope to secure the recognition of foreign halal certification bodies.

Recent developments showed that government officials in Mindanao are well aware of this obstacle, and things could eventually change if the proposed "Philippine Halal Act of 2015" is passed. This legislative initiative intends to institutionalise regulatory policies and accreditation standards for halal products in the Philippines. If adopted, it will allow the central government to establish a centralised and credible halal certification agency, and pave the way for firms wanting to expand their international and export activities (Philippines News Agency, PNA, 2014). During our field research, many entrepreneurs with high international ambitions have expressed hope that this initiative will solve their long-lasting problems.

From a theoretical point of view, data presented in this paper appear to show that the theoretical approach introduced previously, namely the resource-based view of firm internationalisation, is a compatible theory, and appear to be particularly adapted to the halal food industry. Studies of the halal food industry which would ignore the certification aspect appear as missing out on a critical factor for firm internationalisation. We can only agree with Coviello and McAuley (1999) when they encourage future research "to use a more holistic approach to the conceptual thinking" of internationalisation and to avoid silo mentality, which has undermined this research area for too long.

Thus, the lesson for the development of future halal industries and for future research in this area is that the real issue at play here is not whether interventionist policies are a suitable choice for promoting the international development of halal food firms (this is widely unanimous and has been many times proven), but to evaluate what type of halal certification system is best able to overcome the specific obstacles and barriers faced by local firms in their internationalisation process. In order to do this, it is necessary to first study in details and identifies the specificities of local barriers, in order to question the relevance of the certification system currently in place. To do this, future researchers should concentrate their efforts on conducting extensive empirical research to collect both qualitative and quantitative data among firms, always with the goal of identifying a more efficient, more targeted model of certification and internationalisation.

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