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SWOT-PEST ANALYSIS OF HALAL INDUSTRY IN BRUNEI

Nor Surilawana Sulaiman[1a,b]* and Rose Abdullah[2c]

[a]Halalan Thayyiban Research Centre, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Sinaut Campus, Tutong, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM.
[b]Faculty of Halal Science and Sustainable Tourism, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Sinaut Campus, Tutong, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM.
E-mail: surilawana.sulaiman@gmail.com[1]
[c]Faculty of Agriculture, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Sinaut Campus, Tutong, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM.
E-mail: rose.abdullah@unissa.edu.bn[2]

*Corresponding Author: surilawana.sulaiman@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT

The demand for halal products has increased over the past few decades alongside the growing Muslim population worldwide. The halal market is expanding every year not only in Islamic countries but also in non-Islamic countries. In most Muslim nations, people consume halal products because of halal certification, which guarantees that products are safe to eat and meet standards of quality, taste, and health guarantees. This study investigates the development of the halal industry in Brunei Darussalam using a PEST-embedded SWOT approach. Primary data were collected through 3 in-depth interviews with halal industry players, supported by 50 survey respondents, literature review and observation. Key findings reveal Brunei's strengths in stringent halal certification procedures, strong government support, and public awareness. At the same time, weaknesses include insufficient enforcement manpower, low global ranking in the Global Islamic Economy Indicator, and overreliance on imports. Opportunities lie in leveraging ASEAN Free Trade, sustainable development goals, and halal product innovation, whereas threats include trade barriers, high technology costs, and a shortage of skilled manpower. The study highlights that political stability and institutional support provide Brunei with strong foundations, but economic diversification and technological upgrading remain urgent. Recommendations include targeted capacity-building, smart halal logistics, and regional market expansion to position Brunei as a credible halal hub.

***Keywords**: Brunei, Economic Diversification, Halal Industry, PEST Analysis, SWOT, Analysis, Strategic Management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The demand for *halal* products has surged in the past few decades, in line with the global increase in Muslim populations. The region's predominantly growing Muslim population is one key driver of the expanding *halal* market worldwide. Muslims worldwide are increasingly seeking *halal* products, driven by their religious dietary requirements. This increasing dominance of the Muslim community is a notable advantage for the halal market. Adams (2011) found in his study that the demand for *halal* products remains consistent, as Muslims continue to purchase and consume *halal* products to meet their daily dietary needs and adhere to the teachings of Islam. Besides, Nik Mohd Rosli et al. (2022) also mentioned that *halal* products are not only limited to Muslims but are also gaining popularity among non-Muslims to seek ethical, quality, and safe products offered by the concept of *halal*.

The *halal* industry represents one of the fastest-growing segments of the global economy, projected to reach USD 7.7 trillion by 2025 from 2021 (DinarStandard, 2022; Ooi et al., 2023). People are attracted to halal products because of their health benefits, cleanliness, high hygienic standards, and religious significance convictions (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024). According to Ahmed (2008) and Razzaque and Chaudry (2013), Muslims must eat *halal* food whether they live in majority-Muslim or minority-Muslim societies. Some multinational corporations, including Tesco, McDonald's, Carrefour, KFC, and Nestle, have expanded their "Muslim-friendly" offerings to serve Muslim customers better (Alserhan, 2024).

Due to the increasing global demand for halal products, Brunei has opportunities to strengthen its economy by expanding its halal sector industry. The *halal* industry encompasses diverse sectors beyond food, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, finance, and tourism, making it a significant driver of socio-economic development. Hence, Brunei is currently preparing to leverage its *halal* market and further establish itself as the global *halal* hub (Sulaiman et al., 2023; Azalie & Samad, 2022; Rahim & Sulaiman, 2023). The development of the Brunei *halal* industry through the promotion and development of a reputable organisation is one attainable way if Brunei is serious about achieving *Wawasan Brunei 2035* (Brunei Vision 2035).

Three main visions must be realised before or by the year 2035: (1) producing educated, highly skilled, and accomplished people, (2) having a high quality of life among the top ten nations, and (3) having a dynamic and sustainable economy among the top ten nations (Prime Minister Office, 2007; Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama, 2017). As a result, it is worth noting that for Brunei to have a sustainable, resilient, and dynamic economy, the nation's income must be diversified by generating economic activity in sectors other than oil and gas (Arrifin, 2018). With a promising demand for *halal* products, the *halal* industry is set to grow substantially, encompassing a wide range of sectors within the *halal* economy. The development of forwarding linkages of each sector in the *halal* economy, from animal husbandry, food, and logistics to pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and finance (Ai'han Mujar & Hassan, 2014), as well as the booming tourism and hospitality, can be observed as economies of *halal* products and services. In short, the global *halal* market has enormous potential, and it has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, not only in the *halal* food market but also in other business sectors and industries (Abdul-Talib & Abd-Razak, 2013; Lada et al., 2009).

Thus, this paper aims to discuss the development of the Brunei *halal* industry. It also investigates the external and internal factors driving the *halal* industry's development through strategic management models. The primary objective of this study is to address various issues and challenges encountered by the *halal* industry in Brunei and to offer appropriate recommendations. These research findings can be used to raise awareness about the opportunities and realities of the Brunei *halal* market. The government and policymakers can also use the findings to develop policies and programs to enhance or strengthen the country's *halal* markets. While Brunei aspires to be a global *halal* hub, limited research exists on the internal and external factors constraining its *halal* industry development. Without a systematic analysis, policymakers and industry players risk overlooking critical threats and underutilising opportunities. Hence, this study asks: (1) What are the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the *halal* industry in Brunei? (2) How do political, economic, social, and technological (PEST) factors shape these SWOT dimensions? and (3) What strategic directions can Brunei pursue to strengthen its *halal* industry development?

To address these questions, this study applies a PEST-embedded SWOT framework, integrating internal and external analyses to provide a holistic assessment of Brunei's *halal* industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A structured review of the literature is essential to situate this study within existing scholarly discourse and to justify the integration of SWOT and PEST analyses. This section is organised into four subthemes: (1) Global *Halal* Industry Trends, (2) *Halal* Industry in Brunei, (3) Strategic Analysis Models in *Halal* Research, and (4) Research Gap and Conceptual Framework.

2.1 *Global Halal Industry Trends*

The *halal* industry has emerged as one of the most dynamic segments of the global economy (Rizkitama et al., 2024). The global *halal* market is projected to reach USD 7.7 trillion by 2025, covering diverse sectors such as food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, tourism, and finance (DinarStandard, 2022). The demand is driven not only by 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide but also by non-Muslim consumers seeking products associated with cleanliness, safety, and ethical standards (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008; Ambali & Bakar, 2013; Saleh & Rajandran, 2025).

Halal food alone accounts for more than 60% of the global *halal* economy, valued at USD 1.9 trillion in 2021 (SESRIC, 2021). Moreover, the *halal* tourism sector has grown rapidly, with Muslim-friendly travel expenditures projected to exceed USD 225 billion by 2028 (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2024). The continuous growth underscores the strategic importance of *halal* industries as engines of economic diversification and global trade.

2.2 *Halal Industry in Brunei*

Brunei, with Islam as the official religion and 80.9% of its population identifying as Muslim (Commonwealth Chamber of Business, 2023), has long recognised *halal* as a national economic agenda. Initiatives such as *bruneihalalfoods*, a government-linked company (GLC) established in 2009, have been launched to promote local *halal* products globally (Mustafa, 2009). The country's halal certification, administered by the *Halal* Food Control Division (HFCD) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), is known for its stringency and credibility (Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022).

However, despite strategic branding such as *bruneihalalfoods*, Brunei's *halal* industry lags behind regional leaders like Malaysia and Indonesia. Its position in the Global Islamic Economy Indicator (GIEI) has declined, falling out of the top 15 in 2021/22 after ranking 10th in 2019/20 (DinarStandard, 2022). This reflects structural weaknesses, including reliance on imports, low SME competitiveness, and insufficient technological adoption. While *halal* is prioritised in Brunei Vision 2035 as part of economic diversification, more targeted strategies are required to position Brunei as a credible global *halal* hub.

2.3 *Strategic Analysis Models in Halal Research*

Strategic management tools such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) and PEST (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological) have been widely applied in business and policy studies. SWOT identifies internal and external factors shaping organisational competitiveness (Panagiotou, 2003; Irawan, 2024), while PEST analyses macro-environmental conditions (Wu et al., 2022). Scholars argue that combining SWOT and PEST offers a more holistic view, mitigating the limitations of using SWOT alone

(Arslan & Er, 2008; Dong et al., 2021).

In *halal* research, SWOT has been applied to logistics (Talib, 2014), certification challenges (Handriansyah, 2014), and food diversification (Oh et al., 2018). PEST has been used to assess *halal* industry environments, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia (Tan et al., 2012; Hanzala et al., 2021). However, there remains a limited application of integrated SWOT-PEST frameworks in examining *halal* development within smaller economies such as Brunei.

2.4 *Conceptual Framework*

While the *halal* industry literature highlights growth potential and strategic challenges, Brunei remains understudied despite its ambition to establish itself as a global *halal* hub. Prior studies on Brunei's *halal* sector (Oh et al., 2018; Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022) provide valuable insights but lack a systematic analysis integrating internal and external factors. The use of SWOT-PEST integration can therefore offer a comprehensive analytical lens to understand Brunei's *halal* industry development.

SWOT analysis is a valuable method for environmental assessment, which systematically summarises the internal and external circumstances of the research subject, as well as evaluates its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT analysis started in 1960 (Learned et al., 1965). In 1963, a business policy conference was held at Harvard, where the SWOT analysis was examined and discussed, concluding that it represented a breakthrough in strategic planning (Panagiotou, 2003). Due to that, the SWOT analysis has become a vital tool for creating business strategies (Ghazinoory et al., 2011). Albert Humphrey's SWOT model systematically aligns opportunities and threats identified from the external environment with the organisation's internal strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, by correlating these two categories of factors, a reasoned strategic decision can be formulated through comprehensive deliberation with senior leadership within the company.

Meanwhile, PEST analysis is a macro-environmental analysis method that uses environmental scanning to examine four key environmental factors: political, economic, societal, and technological. It is one of the most important models for macro-environmental analysis. It evaluates how these factors influence strategic objectives and strategy development by employing factor analysis across four aspects to understand the macro environment. The company's general environment, also known as its macroenvironment, includes all environmental factors that directly or indirectly impact all companies, regardless of industry. These factors are political-legal, economic, socio-cultural, and technological. A simple acronym to remember the general environmental factors is PEST. The PEST factors are generally factors that companies cannot control and differ according to the country, continent, or even region.

However, a single SWOT analysis, on the other hand, can give a subjective qualitative assessment of development competitiveness (Antony, 2012), which is the foundation for strategy formulation (Wu et al., 2022). However, a single SWOT analysis cannot thoroughly evaluate the strategic decision-making process (Arslan & Er, 2008) since it is impossible to determine the relative influence of various factors on strategic decision-making by quantifying their importance; therefore, many researchers have extensively combined SWOT analysis with other quantitative evaluation approaches. Hence, Dong et al. (2021) integrated the variables of the selected environmental factors into politics, the economy, society, and technology by introducing the PEST tool, which provides a clear direction for the analysis of SWOT environmental factors (Pan et al., 2019), to classify the complex factors clearly (Wu et al., 2022).

The interplay between internal and external environments influences Brunei's *halal* industry development, as illustrated in Figure 1. This research employs the PEST-embedded SWOT analysis methodology to identify internal and external factors influencing the industry's sluggish development and develops a specific SWOT analysis matrix. The analysis reveals various significant strengths and opportunities for the industry's development, as well as weaknesses and threats in the development process.

Hence, this study adopts a PEST-embedded SWOT framework. Internal factors are examined alongside external factors, which are categorised under political, economic, social, and technological dimensions. This integration allows for a systematic evaluation of Brunei's *halal* industry competitiveness and provides a basis for policy and strategic recommendations.

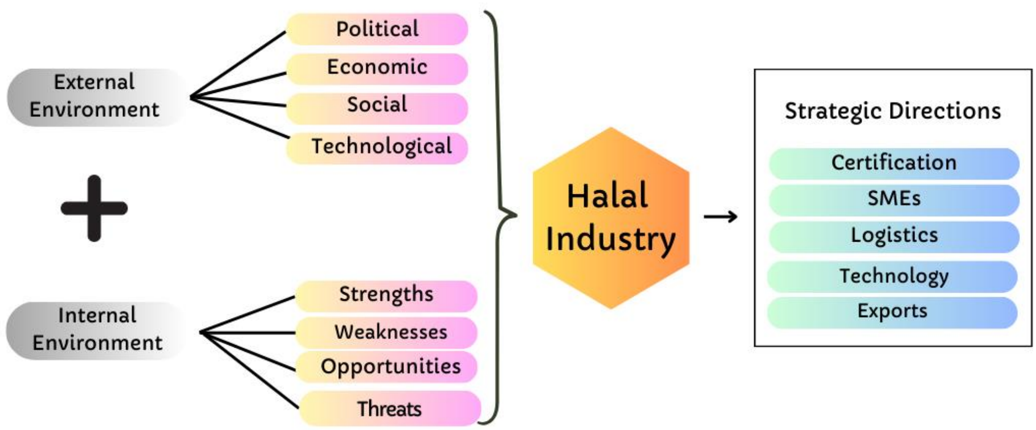

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of PEST-SWOT for the *Halal* Industry

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 *Research Design*

This study adopted a qualitative approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the development of Brunei's *halal* industry. Figure 2 below shows that the aim of conducting a qualitative analysis is related to three components: exploring, analysing, and interpreting the phenomena. The study aims to explore the development of the *halal* industry in Brunei, analyse the collected data, and assess whether the *halal* industry has progressed.

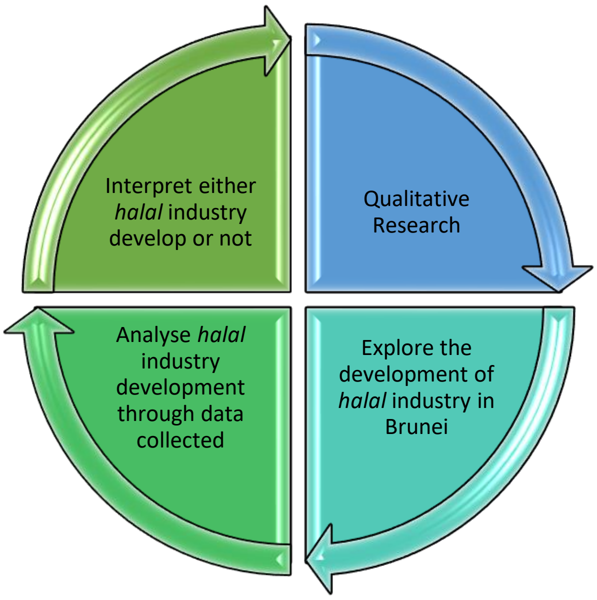

Figure 2. Aims of Qualitative Research

Adapt from: (Rahman, 2021)

Moreover, after reviewing the past literature, several studies have used quantitative and qualitative research methods in the *halal* industry. However, the number of studies related to the *halal* industry in Brunei still needs to be higher than that of other countries. The area is still underdeveloped, and further research is needed to better understand the issues related to the *halal* industry in Brunei. Hence, qualitative research is chosen to gain a deeper understanding of Brunei's *halal* industry scenario, particularly its development.

This research also adopts a case study approach, as suggested by Yin (2003), to gain a more comprehensive understanding and insights into the industry process towards development by the *halal* industry and attempts an idiographic explanation. (De Vaus, 2004) to understand the whole case. According to King (1994), it was decided that a semi-structured qualitative approach would be appropriate to explore the underlying (subjective) reasons for industry players' particular decisions. This approach enabled the researcher to address process-based issues concerning why events happened and how they unfolded over time (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

This study employed multiple case study to explore the *halal* industry in Brunei, analysing and interpreting the effects of external and internal factors on its development. The case study allowed the researcher to observe the business performance of the selected *halal* industry. The major source of primary data was in-depth interviews with the founders or top management officers of the *halal* business, supplemented by observations.

3.2 *Data Collection Methods*

The case study allowed multiple data collection methods (Njie & Asimiran, 2014; Sibbald et al., 2021; Taherdoost, 2021). Typically, case studies use multiple data sources, including two or more sources, including documents, archival records, interviews, direct detailed observations, participant observation, and physical artefacts (Rowley, 2002). Each of these different sources requires a distinct approach, and the richness of the case study evidence base is primarily derived from the multi-faceted perspective yielded by using various sources of evidence. Therefore, the study applied triangulation to gather data on the *halal* industry in Brunei. Figure 3 illustrates the triangulation approach employed in this study for data collection.

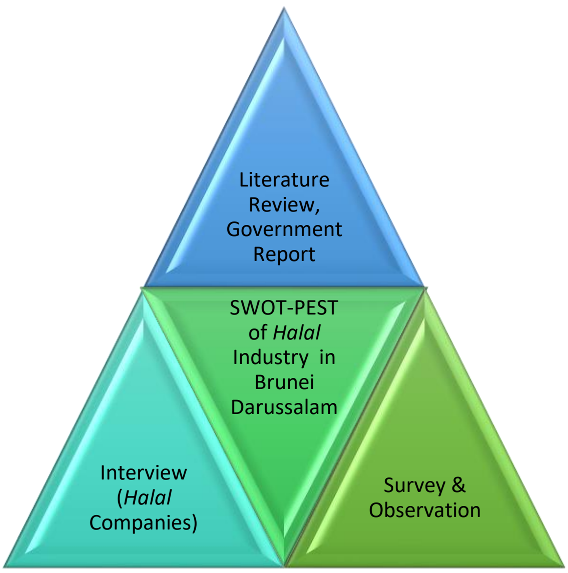

Figure 3. Data Source Triangulation Approach

Therefore, triangulation uses different sources to corroborate the same fact or finding. This is one of the great strengths of case studies compared to other methods, as data can be collected from multiple sources. Additionally, the technique was initially introduced into qualitative research in the 1950s to mitigate potential biases arising from the use of a single methodology.

Therefore, the data for this study were collected through a triangulation data source approach. The study conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews to obtain data on three selected *halal* companies. Informants were drawn from top management, including the managers of each selected *halal* company, to gather data on general information, *halal* practices, and external and internal factors. The data were collected and recorded in writing. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour with the informants.

In addition, prior to the interview session, the target informants are approached and asked for their consent and willingness to participate in the study. Once agreed, the researcher will set an appointment date according to the informant's availability. The questions were distributed to the informants, who were business owners or managers with a better understanding of the industry. The target informants were informed of the researcher's arrival, and the purpose of data collection was communicated to them in advance. This manner was observed to establish a rapport between the researcher and target respondents to forge a trusting relationship and potentially ease the data collection process (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The study also collected data via e-mail from two related government agencies. The researcher sent a letter via the HFCD counter to set an appointment date for data collection with an officer from their department. However, the officer requested email communication to gather information on *halal* regulations, the number of *halal*-certified companies in Brunei, and related matters concerning *halal* in Brunei. Additionally, the study approached one of the strategic officers, Ong Sum Ping, in person at the Department of Economic Planning and Strategic (DEPS) in Brunei. However, the officer requested contact via email for easier sharing of data on Brunei's statistics.

The study also collected data through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms among Bruneians. For this part, the snowball sampling technique was applied, where the questionnaire, also known as a survey form, was distributed to friends and family and then asked to be shared with other respondents.

3.3 *Sampling and Selection Criteria*

This section discusses explicitly the target population and sampling procedures. Population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The sampling size is not an essential issue in qualitative research (Tutar et al., 2024) because of the depth and quality of information obtained; its richness in unearthing clearer views of a particular situation or process is considered more prominent than the numbers (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). As cited in Njie and Asimiran (2014), Kruger (1988) and Morse (1994) proposed at least one sampling in the case study, but due to the quest for rich data, more than a single sampling case could be used as the researcher deemed fit.

Nevertheless, in contrast to surveys, the number of units studied in a case study is significantly smaller; however, the extent of detail available for each case is likely to be more comprehensive. In a survey, data may be collected from several organisations to generalise to all other organisations of the same type. In contrast, a comparative case study across several different organisations aims to systematically compare or replicate the organisations studied with each other, exploring various research issues.

Sampling procedures are an integral part of research as the potential results will represent or generalise the characteristics of a studied population. The population of this study consists of selected *halal* industries in Brunei. The founder or top management of the companies was interviewed to get data. The questions are both open-ended and closed-ended. Hence, the focus is instead on the sample that gives the best and the most in-depth information that the researcher seeks, and since a careful selection of where information is best gotten often yields more information relevant to unearthing the questions that are asked in qualitative research, purposive sampling and the relevant number(s) involved are much more revered (Njie & Asimiran, 2014).

Thus, the study targeted three *halal* companies as a population to obtain a comprehensive view of *halal* industry development and to realise the research objectives. Additionally, the selection of sampling methods must also be based on the research objectives. Therefore, the study employed purposive sampling to select *halal* companies that exemplified best practices in the *halal* industry. The three selected *halal* companies, along with their general descriptions, are tabulated in Table 1. A diverse *halal* sector was selected for population sampling to capture a comprehensive view of the *halal* industry landscape in Brunei.

Table 1. Sampling Details of Three Selected *Halal* Companies

No	Company	Foundation Year	*Halal* Sector
1	Sabli's Food Industries	1985	Food Production
2	Sahamada Sdn Bhd	2003	Agri-food Production
3	BruHouse Sdn Bhd	2018	Health Supplements Manufacturing

Each selected *halal* company serves as a distinct unit of analysis. This approach enables an in-depth examination of each company's unique practices, challenges, and strategies. Focusing on individual companies enables the study to gather detailed qualitative data through interviews, document analysis and observations, providing insights into their operational and market positioning.

Hence, in this study, a single respondent from each selected *halal* company was selected as the unit of analysis. A single respondent or informant from each company is a common approach used by scholars to gather information about internal and external factors and their impact on business performance.

Apart from informants from selected *halal* companies, this study also interacts with stakeholders involved in the *halal* industry, including regulatory bodies from the HFCD and statistics officers responsible for economic statistics in Brunei. Both informants are physically present and face-to-face, but they were then requested to be approached via email for easier communication and data sharing.

The study also considers the public as the unit of analysis to gather their perception and attitudes as consumers towards *halal* products offered in Brunei. Consumer perception is critical for the success of *halal* products in the market. Analysing this unit can provide insights into how companies can better align their marketing strategies with consumer expectations. Fifty respondents were collected, which was sufficient to support the case study data. Israelsson (2016) asserted that there is no predetermined minimum number of participants required in a good case study. Moreover, since the study employed triangulation data, 50 respondents provided rich, detailed data that offered valuable insights into consumer perceptions. Furthermore, 50 respondents can still provide valuable insights, particularly when the case study data is meant to be exploratory or qualitative. Besides, case studies in this study focus on in-depth analysis and a detailed understanding of halal industry development on selected *halal* companies, rather than aiming for broad generalisation

(Israelsson, 2016). Hence, in this context, the primary goal is to understand nuances and gather insights rather than to achieve statistical representation.

3.4 *Data Validity and Reliability*

To strengthen validity, triangulation was ensured through cross-verification of interview, observation, and document data. Member checking was applied by sharing summaries with participants for feedback. These measures enhanced trustworthiness and reduced researcher bias.

3.5 *Data Analysis*

This study employed the qualitative content analysis method as it is one of the most widely used methods in qualitative research. It is also known as a method of analysing text documents obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, articles, books, or manuals (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Krippendorff (2018) has defined content analysis as a research method that enables replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful materials to the context in which they are used.

In this study, the researcher presented the data in words and themes, which made it possible to draw some interpretation of the results (Bengtsson, 2016). This methodology was selected because the researcher intended to systematically transform a large amount of text into a highly organised and concise summary of key results (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

Hence, thematic analysis was applied to code and categorise data into themes. Thus, the data from the literature survey and case studies were then extracted into external and internal factors before being analysed through a strategic management model, namely, PEST analysis and SWOT matrix, conducted to analyse the *halal* industry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. SWOT and PEST are analytical tools that help identify the key external and internal factors that should be considered to achieve success. If not identified and addressed, it could critically affect the chances of success.

3.6 *Analytical Flow*

The research process is illustrated in Figure 4.

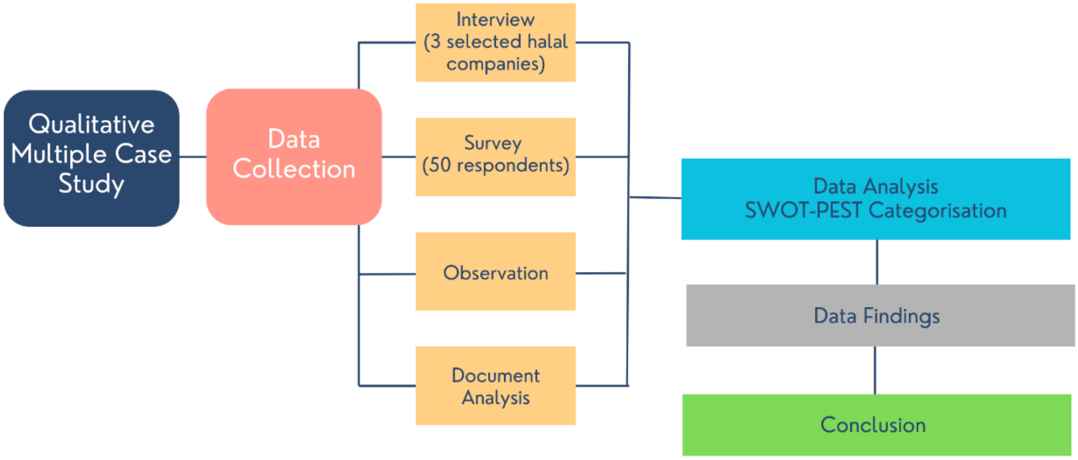

Figure 4. Research Design

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 2, this work develops a SWOT-PEST analysis model from the perspective of a comprehensive paradigm to obtain numerous environmental factors. The SWOT-PEST analysis approach combines SWOT and PEST analysis, in which internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) are included for systematic investigation and analysis (Wu et al., 2022). The SWOT analysis framework considers policy, economy, society, and technology to systematically analyse strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to obtain a comprehensive and straightforward overview of environmental factors and serve as a foundation for strategy formulation.

Table 2. PEST-embedded SWOT Analysis.

PEST	SWOT			
	Strengths	**Weaknesses**	**Opportunities**	**Threats**
Politics (P)	• Stringent *halal* certification procedure • Stable politic	Insufficient enforcement staff for certification	Sustainable development goals have become a global consensus, especially SDG 3, SDG 8, SDG 9, and SDG 12.	The trade barrier (export)

Economy (E)	MSME contribution to GDP as non-oil and gas sector	• Competition for *halal* products is fierce, with imported products. • The *halal* GIEI scoring ranking is declining	• Government support for economic diversification in the non-oil and gas sector • MSME contribution to GDP as non-oil and gas sector	• The epidemic has hampered the economy. • Inflation rate • ASEAN Free Trade Agreement
Society (S)	Public awareness of halal	Consumerism – brand loyalty	• The demand for *halal* products and services is high • Public awareness of *halal*	Exchange rate BND$ is strong – leading to importation or spending outside
Technology (T)	Promotion of *halal* products through social media	Technology is costly	Halal food innovation has become hot spots	Lack of skilled manpower due to the availability of high and advanced technology

Source: Data Analysis

The SWOT matrix is a tool used for strategy analysis, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It helps managers match external and internal factors to create suitable strategies. The matrix consists of four strategies: SO (strengths-opportunities), WO (weaknesses-opportunities), ST (strengths-threats), and WT (weaknesses-threats). It is crucial for generating an effective strategy. Based on the literature review, observation, and case study results, as shown in Table 3, an analysis matrix with four strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was identified using a SWOT-PEST matrix.

Table 3. WOT-PEST Matrix.

SWOT-PEST Matrix	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
	SP1: Stringent halal certification procedure **SP2:** Stable politic **SE:** The *halal* market continues to improve **SS:** Public awareness of *halal*	**WP:** Insufficient enforcement staff for certification **WE1:** Competition for *halal* products is fierce, with imported products. **WE2**: The *halal* GIEI score

	ST: The proposition of *halal* product innovation	rank is declining. **WS:** Consumerism – brand loyalty **WT:** High Advanced technology is costly
Opportunities **OP:** A sustainable development goal related to SDG 3, SDG 8, SDG 9, and SDG 12 becomes a global consensus. **OE:** Government support for economic diversification in the non-oil and gas sector **OS:** The demand for *halal* products and services is high **OT1:** *Halal* food innovation has become a hot spot. **OT2**: HFCD projected to operate via technology in 2025	**SO Strategies** **SO1:** Grasp the trend of the *halal* industry by diversifying the economy and actively developing *halal* innovation products and services.	**WO Strategies** **SO2:** Strengthen technological research and development, improve technological innovation capabilities, and focus on innovative products that cater to demand.
Threats **TP:** The trade barrier (exporting) **TE1:** The epidemic has hampered the economy. **TE2:** Inflation rate **TE3:** ASEAN Free Trade Agreement **TS:** The Exchange rate of BND$ is strong, leading to increased imports or spending abroad. **TT:** Lack of skilled manpower due to the availability of highly advanced technology	**ST strategies** **ST1:** Expand the *halal* industry's supply chain, actively develop international *halal* cooperation, and enhance the support capacity of resources.	**WT Strategies** **WT:** Strengthen risk management and control to reduce food security threats. **WT:** Enhance technical personnel training and implement an e-commerce platform.

Source: Data Analysis

4.1 *SWOT-PEST Analysis*

Brunei must devise stringent measures to address these challenges and turn them into opportunities for growth and development. There is room to improve, so it should look to the success stories of other countries' *halal* industries for inspiration and benchmarking.

4.1.1 *Political Factors*

The government's role in the *halal* industry is significant and involves many tasks, including planning, developing, implementing, regulating, promoting, and educating *halal* service providers and consumers. Government intervention in certification, procedures, and policies, as well as promotion, tax incentives, and financial banking, can produce political factors (Tan et al., 2012; Talib, 2014).

MoRA oversaw the administration of *halal* affairs in Brunei. The Brunei Islamic Religious Council (BIRC) is the highest governing body in Brunei, with legal authority under the Islamic Religious Council Act and Kadis Court Cap 77 of Brunei Darussalam law (Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022; Mohd Raffi, 2020; Ibrahim, 2022). The *halal* certification and the *halal* label are performed solely by the officers of the HFCD, starting from application to site auditing to certification and follow-up audit (Haji Kifli, 2019; Oh et al., 2018; Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022). HFCD serves as a secretariat for the *halal* certification process. The Brunei government also established a committee comprised of officers from the BIRC, State Judiciary, Agriculture Department, Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR), Ministry of Health, Islamic Judicial, HFCD, and Shariah Affairs Department at MoRA to enforce *halal* certification (Asa, 2019; Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022).

Food business owners in Brunei must apply for a *halal* certificate. However, non-food businesses that sell things like medicines, cosmetics, consumables, and services can do so voluntarily (Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022). The government announced in July 2017 that it was determined to increase the production and distribution of *halal* food in Brunei by requiring all businesses involved in the food industry to obtain a *halal* certification or permit (Oh et al., 2018). To meet the requirements of Muslim consumers, who make up about 80.9% of Brunei's population, with Islam as the official religion of the country (Commonwealth Chamber of Business, 2023), most food products sold in local supermarkets are *halal*-certified goods.

Moreover, *halal* certification, *halal* logo, *halal* legislation, enforcement laws, *halal* certification guidelines and *halal* standards all play essential roles in the development of the *halal* industry (A. Wahab, et al., 2016). According to Handriansyah (2014) and Aisyah et al. (2019), one of the significant constraints to the development of the *halal* industry, particularly for food services competing in international markets, is the lack of standardisation efforts and *halal* certification.

As asserted by Wardana et al. (2019), by counting the number of *halal* certification holders, one can gauge the development of the *halal* industry. Ibrahim (2022) pointed out that since the mandatory application requirement was implemented in 2017, there has been a significant rise in the number of businesses in Brunei that have received *halal* certification. From 2008 to 2020, 376 local companies received a total of 2005 *halal* certificates and 9240 *halal* permits, while 29 international companies received a total of 405 *halal* permits

(Ibrahim, 2022). MoRA revised its *halal* permit rate to account for the size and scale of businesses that manufacture and produce food for the supply, which increased the number of *halal* certifications (Haji Kifli, 2019; Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022).

Therefore, on 16 December 2017, KHEU amended the *Halal* Certificate and *Halal* Label Order (HCHLO) (Amendment) 2017, which was believed to have changed the *halal* certification scenario in Brunei (Ghani, 2017). The latest amendment aims to assist micro home-based entrepreneurs in meeting *halal* certification requirements. To address this problem, Chapter 49B under the HCHLO (Amendment) 2017 will allocate the following exclusions:

> *"With the consent of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, the council may, in writing, exempt any person or group of persons from all or any of the provisions of this order, subject to such conditions as may be imposed by him".* (Ghani, 2017)

These exemptions will be given to traders who need help to meet the requirements and guidelines provided by *halal* certification to operate and carry on their business, although they are not eligible for the *Halal* Certificate and *Halal* Permit. However, the duration of the exemption is only one year, and these traders must apply for a *Halal* Certificate or *Halal* Permit before the expiry of the exemption period (Ghani, 2017). In addition to the exception, halal permit fees were changed according to company classifications such as Micro Industries, Small Industries, Medium Industry, Macro, and Multinational Industries. Before the amendment, the *halal* permit cost was BND50 per product (Ghani, 2017); it has now been changed to the new rate (Sulaiman & Abdullah, 2022).

4.1.2 *Economic Factors*

The *halal* industry has become well-known as a new economic development sector with a significant presence in industrialised countries (Hanzala, Kartika, Latiff, & Razali, 2021). The *halal* sector is expanding rapidly worldwide due to its ability to satisfy the needs of Muslim consumers, encompassing the global Muslim population and the development of *halal* markets, thereby promoting economic activity and growth. These motivating factors can provide opportunities for the *halal* sector in Brunei.

The *halal* industry was identified as a development resource in the 9th National Development Plan (2007-2012) (Oh et al., 2018). The significance of halal was highlighted through the branding of *BruneiHalal* (now known as *bruneihalalfoods*), which ensures the validity of its halal industry, particularly food, which was officially endorsed in August 2007 with the initiative of several government agencies such as the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (now named Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT)), MoRA, and BIRC. Ghanim International Corporation operates the *BruneiHalal* brand, a *halal* industrial OEM (herein called Ghanim).

The *bruneihalalfoods* brand is one of the unique government projects established in 2009 as part of the Darussalam Assets group of companies to play a vital role in the development of the food industry and economic diversification by developing, marketing and promoting *bruneihalalfoods* products in Brunei and around the world. Ghanim's *bruneihalalfoods* brand is dedicated to being the global standard brand and the most trusted company that provides *halal* product solutions. Their product portfolio includes premium value-added chicken and beef, beverages, daily necessities, condiments, snacks, and various other items manufactured by partners throughout Brunei. Ghanim's vision is to be a globally recognised *halal* brand that excels in innovation and virtue. Its mission is to excel and lead the industry in raising the bar for society's lifestyle by providing solutions through accurate science and innovation, social responsibilities for health and well-being, quality, convenience, competitiveness, and long-term brand growth under one easily recognisable banner.

Furthermore, the *bruneihalalfoods* brand aims to serve as a platform for the development of Brunei's food industry. This project provides opportunities for local MSMEs, growers, 1K1P (1 *Kampung* 1 *Produk*/1 Village 1 Product), and entrepreneurs to manufacture halal products. The *bruneihalalfoods* brand project also aims to fulfil the Islamic obligation of *"Fardhu Kifayah"* to facilitate the supply of halal products to Muslims worldwide (Mustafa, 2009).

The *halal* industry is one of the fastest-growing industries in the domestic market and throughout the world. By the end of 2016, the local *halal* industry alone generated $88 million in revenue from *halal* food (Hassan, 2017). Therefore, SMEs are perceived as the engine of economic growth in Brunei.

In addition, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as the industry players, have a very crucial role in *halal* industry development as well as contribution to the nation economy (Bayraktar & Algan, 2019). According to the WTO, SMEs represent over 90% of the business population, 60-70% of employment and 55% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in developed economies (WTO, 2016). Whereas for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, SMEs are the primary type of enterprise, for nearly 99% of all businesses, supply the primary cause of employment (around 70% of jobs), primary sources of value creation (around 50% and 60%) of value added

(OECD, 2017). SMEs are crucial for increasing inclusive globalisation and economic growth (Bayraktar & Algan, 2019). Industry players have a significant impact on both profitability and competitiveness, according to Muli and Pellissier (2014).

Meanwhile, Wei Hin et al. (2011) mention that it is undeniable that the development of SMEs contributes significantly to economic growth by raising national income, generating tax revenue, and creating jobs. Nurrachmi (2017) also said that nations should embrace this industry as a new source of revenue, considering the global *halal* market trends.

While the *halal* industry has much potential, it also has many challenges to overcome to grow. Despite government initiatives to develop its *halal* industry, the country ranks low in the GIEI. The goal of GIEI is to benchmark the leading national ecosystems that are best positioned to support the development of Islamic economy business activity, concerning their size, providing a comprehensive picture of countries that are currently best positioned to address the multi-trillion-dollar global *halal* economy opportunity (DinarStandard, 2022). GIEI is also a composite weighted index that measures the overall development of the Islamic economic sectors, i.e. Islamic finance, *halal* food, Muslim-friendly travel, modest fashion, media & recreation, and *halal* pharmaceuticals/cosmetics, by assessing the performance of its parts in line with its broader social obligations (DinarStandard, 2022). Brunei has dropped out of the top 15 in the GIEI score, from 10th in 2019/20 to not being listed in the Top 15 in 2020/21. Even so, the indicator score rank in the *Halal* Food sector dropped from 8th to 9th. Meanwhile, the Media and Recreation sector remains sixth. Brunei, on the other hand, is not among the Top 10 indicator score ranks in the Pharma and Cosmetics sector in 2020/21 (DinarStandard, 2019; DinarStandard, 2020; DinarStandard, 2022)

4.1.3 *Socio-Cultural Factors*

The factor driving the expansion of the *halal* market not only globally but also domestically is the rapid growth of the Muslim population worldwide (Azam & Abdullah, 2020) causing a massive demand for halal products (Lever & Miele, 2012), rising consumer awareness (Aziz & Chok, 2013), and favourable acceptance among non-Muslims. The world's overall Muslim population is predicted to rise further by 35% by the year 2030, reaching 2.2 billion people of the world's population (PewResearchCenter, 2011), indicating that demand for *halal* goods and services will continue to grow. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has struck the growth performance and deteriorated prospects for the *halal* industry, it is estimated that the size of the global *halal* market will climb to the USD 6.0 trillion mark in 2024 (SESRIC, 2021). The estimated

Muslim population by 2050 could reach 2.6 billion, or nearly 30% of the projected global population (Fleishman Hillard Majlis, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, Muslim consumers are more aware, knowledgeable and concerned about their food intake (Bonne et al., 2007; Bonne & Verbeke, 2008). Malaysian consumers are worried about the *halal* status of a product or service and whether the *halal* logo is genuine (Shafie & Othman, 2006; Abdul et al., 2009). Apart from being more concerned and knowledgeable, Abdul et al. discovered that trust and confidence are the drivers towards purchasing *halal* products. Furthermore, aside from conforming to Islamic teaching, choosing *halal* products and services is due to health reasons (Ambali & Bakar, 2013). *Halal* products are known to be prepared in a hygienic and clean environment (Aziz & Chok, 2013), and this results in being healthy and safe for consumption or usage (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008). Some consumers also deemed *Halal* products and services to be kind to animal welfare. For instance, there are abattoirs in Spain that practice *Halal* slaughtering to cater for demanding consumers who are concerned about animal welfare and the pre-slaughter logistics chain (Miranda-de la Lama et al., 2010).

However, looking at the local supermarket shelves, one can see that there are very few options for local *halal* products to sell in the market. This is further proven during the COVID-19 global pandemic, from the limited availability of food products to the disruptions in the supply chain. Observing the shelves in the supermarket reveals that certain products are no longer available on the market. This could be due to the difficulty of producing the product in the origin country, as the country implements emergency and quarantine states, which restrict people's ability to leave the house. Many businesses had their operations severely disrupted by the epidemic, pulling the proverbial rug out from under them. Over the previous year, significant developments have been noted in the increased attention to food security (DinarStandard, 2022).

Fortunately, the disruptions to the supply chain caused by the pandemic also provided opportunities for localisation (DinarStandard, 2022). Even though some local industries produced a few varieties of frozen food during those difficult times, such as homemade nuggets, consumers still preferred imported products. According to a consumer behaviour survey, the main reason for the halal industry's slow growth is the need for local *halal* product marketing and advertising. (Oh et al., 2018). Lack of promotion results in a lack of appeal to consumers, who prefer imported goods over locally produced goods, indicating Brunei's continued high reliance on imports, 80 per cent of its food requirements are met by imports (Kwek, 2016).

On the other hand, local *halal* products are more expensive than imported ones, and consumers believe local goods to be overpriced. Substantial food imports continue to be a disadvantage in a country with a low self-sufficiency rate and a slow development of the food manufacturing industry in Brunei (Oh et al., 2018). Given the nation's low rate of food production self-sufficiency and high reliance on food imports, food security has long been a worry for the government and its people (Pehin Dato Musa & Basir, 2021). Brunei's dependence on imports might have influenced the overall price increase. (Department of Economic Planning and Statistics (DEPS), 2020).

4.1.4 *Technological Factors*

The technological environment is defined by infrastructure and innovation and the improvement of the production process (Šarić & Rosi, 2020). Therefore, the industry must be alert to technological changes as it will alter how firms operate their businesses (Mohamed et al., 2010). Currently, the industry does not have the technology yet to incorporate this feature into the product (Sulaiman N. , 2020). Nevertheless, Sulaiman N.'s (2020) finding has enabled the industry to consider initiating new products in future by starting a new R&D project.

Another study shows a need for more technology during the *halal* certification application process, as the application form and filing system delivery are still processed manually (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021). In the future, the related stakeholders will process the application using technology, thereby reducing the *halal* certification procedures process.

Furthermore, in other countries, apart from using sophisticated IT, more innovative and simple methods of detecting *halal*-certified products and services have been introduced to consumers. Consumers are now able to cross-check the authenticity of a *halal* logo by using their phones (Mohd Albakir, 2011). This free *halal* logo detection and recognition system is linked with JAKIM's database and eases the minds of *halal* consumers. Junaini and Abdullah (2008) further enhance technology adoption on *halal* products by using a camera phone barcode scanning and multimedia message service (MMS) to check a product's *halal* status. These technology services can also be used for *halal* logistics services, allowing manufacturers, retailers, or consumers to know which logistics service providers are certified.

5. CONCLUSION

The *halal* industry in Brunei is transforming, having achieved specific results in the past few years. Through establishing a policy mechanism, environmental problems have been improved to a certain extent. Today, Brunei has amended *halal* guidelines and policy, planning to adapt modern *halal* certification technologies, set up manufacturing sites, and provide economic aid. The purpose of an industry environmental analysis is to assess how the forces of the company's immediate environment affect the attractiveness or profitability potential of the company. Therefore, it is necessary to determine an appropriate development strategy for the *halal* industry.

The current study explains the current state of Brunei's *halal* industry. As such, future research should actively collect data from stakeholders such as government agencies, *halal* food manufacturers, *halal* industry players, and people involved in the sector. Future research may also concentrate on a specific segment of the *halal* industry, such as *halal* food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, or services. A comparative study of leading *halal* industries could provide a broader scope for investigating the impacts and viability of industry development.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study applies SWOT and PEST together in one matrix analysis, which has yet to be used to study the external and internal factors of the *halal* industry. Through this study, the SWOT of PEST factors impacted the *halal* industry's development. These strategy tools were created to analyse internal and external forces affecting a company or industry. Examining a company's internal capabilities through SWOT and the external environment through PEST helps proactively create strategies to contend with organisational challenges.

This study is essential since the Brunei government is interested in developing the *halal* industry as part of its economic diversification plan, which has been discussed as an agenda item in Legislative Council meetings and the National Development Plan. The *halal* industry, for example, is critical to the economy because it converts raw materials into finished products and contributes significantly to the country's economy (Azmi et al., 2021). As such, the government can encourage and assist *halal* businesses in building the domestic economy.

One of Brunei's greatest strengths lies in its stringent *halal* certification system, managed by the MoRA through the HFCD. Political stability and centralised certification governance enhance credibility. However, weaknesses include limited enforcement manpower and delays in certification processing. This aligns with Sulaiman & Abdullah (2022), who note that the certification regime, while robust, is resource intensive. Strengthening capacity and introducing digital certification platforms can reduce bottlenecks.

The *halal* industry in Brunei contributes significantly to economic diversification beyond oil and gas. SMEs form the backbone of *halal* production and are key to GDP contribution. Nevertheless, imported products dominate supermarket shelves, reflecting both intense competition and weak local brand loyalty. This mirrors findings by Oh et al. (2018), which highlight marketing and competitiveness as barriers.

However, Brunei is still far from developing a thriving *halal* industry. Brunei must learn to devise strategies to create and sustain the country's *halal* industry in the long run. As a result, every stakeholder, including the government, industry players, and customers, plays an essential role in facilitating development, which is a challenge for the industry. Even though stakeholders are frequently competing for the same customers, collaboration and cooperation are also critical to the long-term success of the *halal* industry in Brunei.

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