

Review Article

Developing Knowledge Products to Strengthen Halal Infrastructure Systems in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Expanding worldwide demand for Halal goods and services has created manifold opportunities for participation in this growing market, not excluding the Philippines. This paper undertakes a brief overview of Halal development initiatives in the Philippines, revealing a fledgling but steadfastly pursued program. It underscores the severe lack of knowledge production on Halal in the Philippines as obtained from a review of current literature and determines the importance of Halal education. Finally, the paper details two knowledge products in progress: a postgraduate course as planned curriculum and a working paper as class output from guided service learning activities.

Keywords: Halal; Halal education; Knowledge products; Infrastructure

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Introduction

Expanding worldwide demand for Halal goods and services is a widely-recognized reality, creating new industries and inviting a growing number of industry players in the global arena. The Philippines, for its part has applied itself to participate in this global phenomenon though it is yet a fledgling player in the field.

This paper gives a concise synopsis of Halal development in the Philippines highlighting knowledge and information gaps, briefly underscores the increasing claim for Halal education and finally proposes two knowledge products that are intended to contribute to addressing the existing knowledge vacuum on Halal in the Philippines.

Methods

The paper initially undertakes a review of extant literature on Halal development in the Philippines to obtain an overview of initiatives towards Halal advancement, not to mention establish the nature and trajectory of Halal knowledge products in this respect. Secondly, the paper surveys resources on Halal education to determine its place in the global Halal phenomenon. Finally, the paper outlines two specific knowledge products: 1) a planned curriculum as the outcome of course conceptualization and development; and, 2) a working paper focused on an industry-specific set of Halal protocols.

Halal Development in the Philippines

Systematization of the Halal industry in the Philippines is yet at its infantile stage. The government has recently taken the onus of Halal development from the private sector, initially but briefly through the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF)ⁱ then subsequently through an inter-agency cooperation under the umbrella of the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board created by virtue of Republic Act no. 10817 in May 16, 2016. A select number of Philippine government agencies are anticipated to play the most high-impact roles for their particular functions scoping standards and accreditation:

1) Halal standard setting

- a. Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) – primary and post-harvest food
- b. Department of Health – Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – processed and pre-packaged foods, drugs and cosmetics
- c. Department of Trade and Industry – Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS) –nonfood products aside from drugs and cosmetics

2) Halal accreditation- solely delegated to the Philippine Accreditation Bureau, to craft accreditation policies and guidelines and directly oversee their enforcement via license-granting and revoking/denial prerogatives.

A review of extant literature determines that to date, the Philippine government has undertaken several measures to support Halal development in the country as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Government Actions on Halal development in the Philippines

INITIATIVE	DATE	GOVERNMENT AGENCY
1. Creation of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos with functions inclusive of Halal development in the country	Tabled: 27 July 2009 Approved: 18 February 2010	Congress of the Philippines
2. Launching of a Halal	1 st quarter of 2011	Department of Science

laboratory in Cotabato City		and Technology (DOST) Region 12
3. Accreditation of three Halal certifying bodies and notification to embassies of Muslim countries in the country, likewise the Islamic management agencies of Malaysia and Singapore (JAKIM and MUIS)	Year 2013	National Commission on Muslim Filipinos
4. Opening up of the Philippine Halal sector to potential investments from Malaysia	Mid-2015	Executive action
5. Acquisition of Organization of Islamic Cooperation-Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries' (OIC-SMIC) accreditation of to adopt its unified global halal standards	June 2015	DOST Region 12
6. Creation of the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board	May 16, 2016	Legislative action (Republic Act 10817)
7. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Brunei Darussalam on Halal Industry and Halal Export Development and Promotion	April 27, 2017	Executive Action
8. Adoption of implementing rules and regulations	May 2017	Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board
9. Membership agreement with the UAE-based International Halal Accreditation Forum, a global network of Halal accreditation bodies	December 2017	Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board
10. Construction of a Php 75M National Halal Laboratory in Koronadal City	2017	DOST Region 12

The Philippine Halal Export Development Board's functions supersede the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) mandate of spearheading Philippine Halal Industry development including accreditation of halal-certifying agencies. There has been observation that this development undermines the potential of a Muslim institution to provide leadership in matters pertinent to Muslim affairs in the country and address Muslim community needs.

Similarly, Muslim groups opposing the legislation that created this inter-agency board cite two principal issues: first, the legislation's trade and export-driven nature overlooked Halal's essentially religious aspect, correspondingly, Halal domestic consumption requirements; and second, the country's Halal initiative is not headed by a Muslim agency (Perez, 2017; Ibnuman, 2016; GMA News Online, 2016).

A survey on current literature on Halal in the Philippines reveals very minimal locally-generated knowledge products of an academic or technical nature. Materials of this focus are from overseas sources, dealing with comparison studies (Dube et al, 2016; Othman et al, 2016; Andini, 2017; trade partnerships (Salerno, 2009); and Islamization systems issues (Marlon PG et al,). Rather, local extant literatures are more informational, coming as they are from media sources. The review underscores the need to produce literatures that are contextualized to the Philippines with attention to its escalating need to customize literature and materials on Halal. This paper is a working attempt to produce a more inquiry-based contribution to extant literature.

Halal Education

The exponential growth of global demand for Halal goods and services has been widely recognized (Golnaz et al, 2010; AR Alina et al, 2013; IA Shahdan et al, 2016; Tambo E et al, 2016; Nurhidayu M.Z. et al, 2017; Mohd Husin MN, 2017), creating a corresponding demand for knowledge and information to benefit both consumers and manufacturers (Hanini Ilyana CH and Sariwati MMS, 2016), likewise education and training for halal industry professionals (Zhari I and Abdul Halim E, 2010; AR Alina et al, 2013; Hanini Ilyana C H and Sariwati MMS, 2016)

As Halal integrity critically rests on authoritative, correctly developed and strictly- enforced Halal standards (Golnaz et al, 2010; Zhari I and Abdul Halim E, 2010; A.R. Alina et al, 2013), it has been proposed that Halal education should be seriously undertaken (Hassan et al, 2011; Zhari I and Abdul Halim E, 2010; AR Alina et al, 2013), the former assigning the task to higher education institutions; and the latter two envisioning dynamic research and development that would on one hand inform religious councils (Zhari I and Abdul Halim E, 2010) and on another, collaborations between education and training institutions, government agencies likewise professional and social media (AR Alina et al, 2013) to fill the knowledge gaps.

Initiatives towards Halal education have commenced on several fronts: from policy research and standards bodies to academic institutions (Golnaz et al, 2010; Zhari I and Abdul Halim E, 2010; AR Alina et al, 2013; Star Online, 2018).

Knowledge Products on Halal

A knowledge product is mainly viewed as a “tangible outputs” (Whyte and Ofir, 2004; ADB, 2012) of knowledge flows in the context of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) organization (Whyte and Ofir, 2004: 2) externalized as among others: books, reports, guidelines, action plans, newsletters and journals.ⁱⁱ Knowledge flows are illustrated as a highly vibrant, interactive and iterative process. Asian Development Bank clusters knowledge products with services (KPS), contextualizing outputs within the frame of “development, sharing or application of information and knowledge contents” in the form of publications, policy advice and other products (ADB Special Evaluation Study, 2012: 5).

Relating the foregoing premises on Halal education and knowledge products to Halal development in the Philippines, it is appreciated that the continued production, exchange, testing and utilization of knowledge are necessary steps to realize the following:

1. Extensive information dissemination, education and training on Halal
2. Organized Halal certification
3. A network of Halal infrastructures that will sustain Halal undertakings in the Philippines and ensure their integrity
4. The key participation of Muslims as experts and workforce in the Halal industry
5. Sustained knowledge generation on Halal and the subsequent production of Halal knowledge products

The succeeding section provides an overview on the conceptualization and development of two knowledge-products intended to address information and knowledge gaps on the concept of Halal in the Philippines. The products source from a postgraduate course entitled Halal Lifestyles and its class outputs, the latter as part of course service learningⁱⁱⁱ requirements for its participants.

Knowledge Product 1: Halal Lifestyles, The Planned Curriculum

Halal Lifestyles was envisioned as an introductory course on the concept of Halal and its multi-faceted applications. Specifically, it is aimed at providing course participants with an understanding of the worldview and principles that underpin the Halal lifestyle. It would likewise elaborate on the general domains under which Halal principles are operationalized and the critical points in the process of each domain.

It is significant to note that the course is not necessarily exclusive to Muslims despite its being promoted as a major course elective of a master’s program in Islamic Studies. Rather, the course is open to students of any discipline, as a cognate course in the Social Science clusters within the University of the Philippines academic program configuration. For this reason, the course needed to be designed for academic inquiry on Halal and its applications initiating from a general, layman’s perspective. There are five (5) course outcomes and coverage divided into four (4) major units. Course outcomes are delineated below:

1. Define the concepts of Halal and Haram

2. Elaborate on the Islamic worldview and its connection to Halal
3. Discuss Halal principles and provide an overview of the domains under which these are operationalized
4. Analyze critical points for Halal integrity per domain using selected cases.
5. Conceptualize and implement Halal producer rather than consumer-oriented projects that advance Halal development

The course's four (4) major units are: Framing halal, Foundations of halal, Halal domains and critical points and Halal development which, contextualized in the Philippine milieu, would necessitate discussions on: accreditation of Halal certifiers, Halal certification, its assurance system and consumer concerns on Halal product integrity. A sub-unit on the evolving domains of Biotechnology, Cosmeceuticals, Logistics and Halal Green is included to upgrade class participants' appreciation of the developing fields of Halal application today.

Two significant methods of course delivery are: 1) case discussions and 2) service learning activities – the latter determined by class interest and/or expertise, if applicable. Case discussions test course participant appreciation of Halal principles in light of authentic, contemporary issues. This methodology is predominant in the unit on Halal domains and critical points as participants encounter industry-specific issues then given time and space for involved group then plenary discussion sessions.

A sample case is the discussion and critiquing of Halal Pharmaceuticals requirements standards sourced from a selected country. The learning activity served three objectives: first, substantial interface with Halal infrastructure standards in the particular industry for knowledge-building; second, infrastructure analysis to identify crucial areas and/or fuzzy details in the system; and third, discuss and put forward particular actions-in this case, appraising the system's human resource demands and attendant competencies then identifying training foci and trajectories to build those competencies.

Other class methodologies are film showings, expert lectures/interviews, field visits, and independent research. Film showings are an alternative platform to enhance participant interest and exposure to authentic Halal issues. A case in point is a video documentary on pork materials and byproducts that permeate a multitude of production industries, leading participants to discuss ways and means to procure alternative products to ensure Halal integrity.

Expert lectures/interviews ensure that authoritative knowledge on Halal would be accessed and verified by course participants. One invited expert was a biochemist who served under a Halal certification team for food and related products. The expert discussed experiences and attendant issues on Halal certification and shared related *fatwa* (legal opinion) by religious scholars. Field visits afford opportunities for course participants to test/substantiate theoretical knowledge with actual practices. In this case, participants toured a natural farming community, leading them to examine its farming practices and the materials they utilized in the process, calling forth discussions not only on Halal materials but also on *toyyib* (good, wholesome) practices. Finally, independent research provide participants space to pursue their particular micro-research interests within the scope of the Halal Lifestyles course and

present their work in progress at the latter part of the term, opening up occasions for constructive peer and teacher critiquing that are expected to enrich research output.

Knowledge Product 2: Service Learning Output

Service learning activities on the other hand are designed to have explicit, tangible and community-benefitting outputs. A case in point is a working paper on protocols and resources for a Halal free-range chicken farm which, after completion and expert validation, would eventually be published as an open access document for public information. The white paper has so far established the necessity of foremost creating a Halal and Toyyib (permissible and wholesome), likewise organic ecosystem in the land where the farm is to be set up. The standard considers water sources, air, soil, feeds and fertilizers; the conditions that would qualify them as Halal and Toyyib and the mechanisms needed to render them Halal (in the absence of qualifying conditions).

The paper's focus actualizes Course Outcome no. 5, which highlights the urgency for guidelines on Halal infrastructure systems particularly at the production end. Focus on Halal raw material production in the Philippine context is not only viable, but essential. Raw material production viability is due to the country's vast untapped agricultural lands. On the other hand there is the imperative to ensure more control on, and subsequently minimize risks to Halal integrity by securing the sources for Halal-compliant raw materials.

Conclusion

Halal development in the Philippines is yet at its fledgling stages, even as the country has initiated various multi-agency but possibly discrete engagements to establish its Halal infrastructure systems. A review of literature obtains that local extant materials on Halal are not only very minimal, but also mainly informational and media-sourced. On the other hand, much-needed academic and/or technical literature are not locally-generated but rather, are foreign resources focused on comparison studies, trade partnerships and issues on Islamization systems. The highlighted need for locally-produced and contextualized knowledge products serves as both rationale and springboard for conceptualization and development of two such products serving Halal in the Philippine milieu. Knowledge product 1 is the planned curriculum of a course entitled Halal Lifestyles, a comprehensive introduction to Halal particularly focusing on its multidimensional applications. Knowledge product 2, one among several participant outputs to fulfill the course's service learning requirements, addresses the need for production-focused Halal infrastructure systems to secure Halal integrity.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article

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ⁱ Halal industry development is one of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos’ stated mandates upon the agency’s creation through Republic Act. No. 9997 dated July 27, 2009. Article II, Section 8 paragraph H: Promote and develop the Philippine Halal Industry and accredit halal-certifying entities/bodies for the utmost benefit of Muslim Filipinos and in partnership or cooperation with appropriate agencies, individuals and institutions here and abroad;The agency’s more comprehensive functions expands that of its predecessor, the Office on Muslim Affairs.

ⁱⁱ Other IUCN identified knowledge products are: policy briefs, electronic portals, videos and lessons synthesised from processes and projects, likewise databases and repositories (External Review of IUCN Commissions The Knowledge Products and Services Study, 2004, p. 2)

ⁱⁱⁱ Service learning is defined as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (National Service Learning Clearing House in Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. See URL: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-through-community-engagement/>)