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A Shariah-Compliant Model for Urban Development: Langsa Halal Industry and A Hub-City

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Abstract

This study explores Kota Langsa, Aceh Province, Indonesia's potential as a halal industry hub-city, addressing gaps in Shariah-compliant urban models. Novelty lies in integrating halal principles with the hubcity concept, grounded in Islamic values of justice, fairness, and sustainability, offering a fresh theoretical framework urban economics. Adopting phenomenological design, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document analysis were conducted to collect data from the stakeholders. As a result, in the purpose of ensuring halal authenticity, there were significant challenges of inadequate infrastructure, lack of skilled workers, and weak regulations. Responding to the challenges, a five-pillar strategy is proposed: Halal Cluster Development, Industry Infrastructure Enhancement, Human Capital Building, Regulatory Strengthening, and Public-Private Partnerships. This model contributes to Islamic economic theory by showing how to embed ethical practices and social responsibility into urban development. It provides actionable recommendations for policymakers, urban planners, and Islamic finance experts, helping Kota Langsa to drive regional growth by bridging urban development with halal ecosystems.

Keywords: Halal Industry; Hub-City; Shariah-Compliant; Sustainable Halal Tourism; Urban Development

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Introduction

The global halal sector represents a significant and emerging paradigm of ethical and sustainable economic growth. Supported by a demographic of over 1.9 billion Muslims, the industry has diversified to include sectors such as food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, finance, and tourism. Furthermore, its economic significance is substantial, with an annual revenue generation exceeding USD 2 trillion and a projected valuation of USD 3.2 trillion by 2028 (Samsul et al., 2022; Susilawati, 2020). Moreover, a notable alignment exists between this industry and the global paradigm shift towards sustainability and social responsibility. This synergy is attributable to its governing Shariah principles, which stipulate ethical sourcing and forbid deleterious materials (Hagenaars, 2022; Tubastuvi et al., 2020). Therefore, for nations with a Muslim majority, this sector constitutes a strategic pathway toward achieving economic diversification, expanding employment, and fostering deeper integration within the global economic framework.

As the world's most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia leverages its halal industry as a significant driver of economic growth, fueled by substantial domestic demand and export markets. This economic role is being formalized and amplified through state-led initiatives, notably the National Halal Certification Program and the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), which are designed to cement the country's status as a global halal center (Lubis, 2022; N. Maulana & Zulfahmi, 2022). Pivotal to this national agenda is Aceh Province, which is uniquely positioned by virtue of its autonomous, Shariah-based legal framework instituted in 2001. Within this context, the municipality of Kota Langsa presents a compelling case for development, given its strategic location as the province's eastern gateway, a rich Islamic heritage, and substantial, yet underutilized, agricultural and fisheries resources. However, the realization of this potential is constrained by several significant impediments, including weak regulatory enforcement, limited enterprise capacity, low stakeholder awareness of halal standards, suboptimal product marketing, and inadequate supporting infrastructure (Putra & Tucunan, 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2023). Therefore, addressing these impediments necessitates a series of strategic interventions in human capital development (training and education), brand management, and capital investment. All with the ultimate objective is to foster sustainable economic development that is fully compliant with Shariah principles (Ahyani et al., 2021).

A significant gap in the existing literature lies at the intersection of the global halal industry, hub-city models, and Shariah-compliant urbanism. Despite robust

research on each domain separately, there is a scarcity of scholarship that integrates these frameworks, particularly within the context of autonomous regions like Aceh. Despite a burgeoning interest in the halal ecosystem, studies frequently focus on broad economic impacts or isolated sectors, such as halal finance or tourism, and fail to address the synergies between halal ecosystems and urban hub development in Muslim-majority subnational areas (Busari & Sitiris, 2021; Nursita et al., 2024). Besides, there is limited exploration of stakeholder perceptions and approaches necessary to uncover context-specific challenges. Consequently, there is a demonstrable absence of practical, Shariah-aligned urban models that can effectively synthesize theoretical knowledge into actionable strategies for regional contexts such as that of Langsa (Rachman, 2019).

Accordingly, this research aims to bridge the identified gaps by analyzing Kota Langsa's capacity to function as a halal industry hub and by proposing a corresponding model for Shariah-compliant urban development rooted in justice, fairness, and sustainability. The investigation is operationalized through an inquiry into three key questions: (1) What strategies are required to institute and nurture a sustainable halal industry ecosystem in Kota Langsa? 2) How can the halal industry be integrated with the hub-city concept to create a sustainable ecosystem in Kota Langsa? (3) What are the prospective economic, social, and environmental implications of establishing Kota Langsa as a specialized hub for the halal industry? Synthesizing the findings from these inquiries, the study's ultimate contribution is the formulation of a strategic framework. This framework will encompass conceptual models, actionable solutions, and policy recommendations designed to mitigate existing challenges, enhance Kota Langsa's competitive position in the halal sector, and thereby foster sustainable economic growth for Aceh Province and the broader region (Bux et al., 2022; Rachmiatie et al., 2023). This research contends that a nuanced understanding of the halal ecosystem, especially within urban frameworks, is necessary to navigate the complexities of stakeholder relations, regulatory structures, and market forces. As supported by existing scholarship.

This research explores the halal ecosystem, and it focuses on city environments. The study examines interactions between stakeholders, various regulations, and market trends. Collaboration among key groups is essential. The government, universities, and businesses must cooperate, for this teamwork helps the halal industry grow. This growth must also adhere to Islamic principles (Cipta & Hatamar, 2023; Judijanto et al., 2024). Thus, a comprehensive framework integrating these elements is highly needed for establishing a resilient halal industry capable of

fulfilling modern economic and ethical standards (Dzukroni & Afandi, 2023; Karudin et al., 2024).

Literature Review

Halal Industry

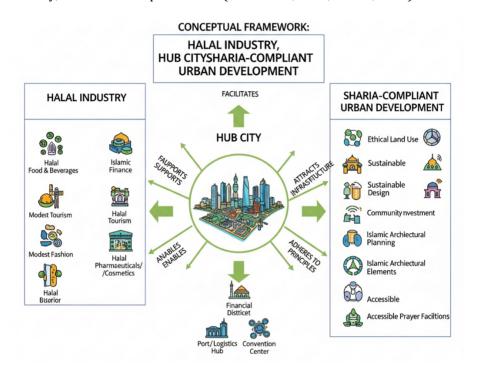
The halal industry involves creating and delivering products and services that follow Islamic law. This concept of a halal hub-city directly supports several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (Idris et al., 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2023). Specifically, it aligns with three goals: first, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which fosters halal-based industries that create jobs, support local businesses, and drive inclusive economic growth. Second, it contributes to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities by promoting urban planning that is both socially fair and environmentally aware. Third, it helps achieve SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production by ensuring that halal products meet ethical and sustainable standards (Raman et al., 2022). This approach of embedding the halal industry within the framework of the SDGs ensures that economic progress is balanced with social equity and environmental care (Zaki et al., 2022), reflecting the Islamic principle of Maqasid al-Sharia, or the higher objectives of Islamic law (Albareda-Tiana et al., 2018).

The halal industry, hub city, and Shariah-compliant development create a powerful model where each part synergizes with the others. This industry is the core economic engine, and covers many sectors like food, finance, fashion, tourism, and pharmaceuticals (Devi & Firmansyah, 2019; Rahayu & Ningtyas, 2021). Its expansion requires an urban hub equipped with the right infrastructure, logistics, financial services, and skilled talent (Fathoni, 2020). As a central point, it supports everything from production and certification to distribution and trade, and it also attracts investment, hosts events, and houses key institutions like Islamic banks and certification agencies (Agustina et al., 2022; Koe et al., 2015).

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) links the halal industry, hub city, and Shariah-compliant urban development through an integrated design emphasizing public health, ethical land use, and community-centered planning (Akbar et al., 2023; Aswad, 2023). This model forms a self-reinforcing cycle: a strong halal industry drives the growth of a specialized hub city, which then fosters broader Shariah-compliant urban development, thereby strengthening the halal industry (Akkas, 2020; Husin et al., 2020). Therefore, the Langsa plan benchmarks global

halal hubs like Malaysia, Dubai, and Brunei, as it aims to become more competitive internationally and meet the rising demand for quality and cleanliness (Sulaiman et al., 2023; Syarif & Adnan, 2019).

Figure 1. The Conceptual framework diagram connecting the halal industry, hub city, and sharia-compliant urban (Akbar et al., 2023; Aswad, 2023)



The Hub-City of Shariah-Compliant Urban Development

The Hub-City is designed as an urban model that actualizes a central hub for a region. It interconnected economic, social, and infrastructure activities into a central regional hub. It serves not only as a trade center but also as a connector for transportation, business, education, research, and public amenities, fostering efficiency and regional identity (Iswari et al., 2023; Manfarisyah et al., 2022).

In addition, the presence of a Hub City promotes holistic development because of the work of skilled people (Andiny & Nurjannah, 2018). When its development is guided by Shariah principles, the city must emphasize values like sustainable

planning, green energy, fair trade, and responsible consumption so that justice and environmental care are guaranteed (Kamil et al., 2020; Karisma & Rani, 2023).

Methods

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design. In accordance, this approach is ideal for exploring the lived experiences and views of stakeholders who are developing Kota Langsa into a halal industry hub city (Barton, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lahiri, 2023). Phenomenology focuses on real-world experiences; it was the best choice to capture the progress of the local government and the efforts of stakeholders. Furthermore, this approach uncovered important insights about challenges and opportunities that are often missed in typical policy studies (Astalin, 2013; Dall'Alba, 2009). Ultimately, the findings from this research will inform a Shariah-compliant urban development model, and this model can act as a blueprint for other Muslim-majority cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Dubai.

The Research Designs

This phenomenological study looked into the shared experiences of policymakers and stakeholders in Kota Langsa's halal industry ecosystem. The study uncovered key social and cultural factors influencing its development. Specifically, the research explored three key area, first, it examined the current ecosystem so that we could understand what drives its creation, development, and policies (Friesen, 2023); second, the study looked at how stakeholders feel about mixing halal tourism with the hub-city idea, and it gathered their recommendations on the potential benefits and challenges (Ahmad et al., 2019); and third, it assessed the potential economic, social, and environmental impacts from different viewpoints and identified ways to manage them (Field et al., 2016).

Participants

This study used a purposive sample of 20 key stakeholders. These individuals were selected because they have expertise in the halal industry and urban development in Kota Langsa. Participants included five government officials who oversee economic development, urban planning, and halal regulation; five business leaders were chosen from halal companies in the food, tourism, and finance sectors; five community representatives, and this group was made up of local leaders, religious figures, and engaged residents; and five academics from Universitas Samudra and IAIN Langsa specializing in relevant fields joined the study.

Instrument

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a guide developed from the research questions and relevant literature (Heddebaut & Di Ciommo, 2018; Lahiri, 2023). The guide included open-ended questions on stakeholders' perceptions of the halal industry, the hub-city concept, related challenges and opportunities, expected economic, social, and environmental impacts, and recommendations for policymakers, businesses, and communities (Adams, 2015; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Supplementary data came from document analysis of government reports, policies, industry publications, and news on halal development in Kota Langsa. The study's limitations include its context-specific sample and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias.

Data Collection and Analysis

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling, and informed consent was secured before participation. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia in private settings, audio-recorded, transcribed, and supported by field notes to capture contextual details. Thematic analysis guided data interpretation, using Barau's (2015) framework on Shariah-compliant hub-city development. Transcripts and notes were inductively coded to identify key themes: (1) halal industry ecosystem, (2) integration of halal tourism within the hub-city concept, and (3) potential socio-economic and environmental impacts. Emerging patterns were then interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were ensured. Participants could withdraw at any time, and all data were securely stored and anonymized.

Result and Discussions

Result

This research investigated the potential of Kota Langsa to become a halal industry hub-city, employing a phenomenological approach to explore stakeholder perspectives. The findings revealed key insights into the opportunities, challenges,

and strategic considerations for developing a Shariah-compliant urban development model that fosters a thriving halal industry ecosystem in Kota Langsa.

The Description of the Ecosystem Halal Industry in Kota Langsa

Kota Langsa's strategic coastal location on the Strait of Malacca positions it as a potential hub for halal product distribution, serving both domestic and international markets. An interview was proposed to Muhammad Nur, CEO of PT. Pelabuhan Kota Langsa (PEKOLA). He stated that;

"The port of Kuala Langsa has an essential role in supporting the distribution of halal commodities, especially from the fisheries and agriculture sectors. We at PEKOLA are actively improving the port's infrastructure and logistical facilities to boost export capacity and maintain product quality for the international market" (Nur, interview, 2024).

Muhammad Nur's statement highlights the Port of Kuala Langsa's strategic role, as it is a foundational part of Langsa's ambition because the city wants to grow into a halal industry hub. From a development perspective, a successful hub-city must have efficient transportation and logistics to attract industries and create clusters (Handayani et al., 2022). In line with this requirement, PEKOLA is currently working to improve the port's infrastructure. These efforts, in turn, directly support the infrastructure goals of the proposed Shariah-compliant urban development model for Kota Langsa. Since improved facilities, such as those for tourism and local culinary offerings, not only expand export capacity but also reinforce quality assurance systems vital for gaining international trust in halal-certified products (Fernando et al., 2023).

Tourism Spots

The City Government is committed to developing a robust halal industry ecosystem of tourism spots in Kota Langsa. This commitment is reflected in policies like the bill of Qanun No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance, which mandates halal certification for all products in the Indonesian market (Budiman et al., 2019). Supporting these tourism spots, the next participant, Bobby Edwin, who is the Head of the Industry Division, mentioned that:

"We have been coordinating various local initiatives to support SMEs, through training and mentoring programs, as local government, we help them meet halal certification standards and adopt Sharia-compliant production practices as the Mandatory by Qanun No. 33 of 2014" (Edwin, interview, 2024).

Bobby Edwin highlighted a statement on the strategic role of the local government training program. These initiatives are key because they help speed up Langsa's transition into a halal industry hub, which is an effort based on the Qanun of Aceh Province (Budiman et al., 2019). The training and mentoring programs aimed at SMEs in Kota Langsa are essential mechanisms for building up skilled people, and they also ensure local institutions are ready for the future. Both of these elements are critical for creating a competitive halal ecosystem (Bahusin et al., 2024; Muthalib et al., 2022). From a hub-city development perspective, the clustering of industries requires not only physical infrastructure but also a skilled and compliant workforce capable of producing goods that meet international halal certification standards. This bottom-up human capital development approach creates a broadbased industrial foundation, fostering innovation, competitiveness, and resilience among local enterprises (Budiman et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2023).

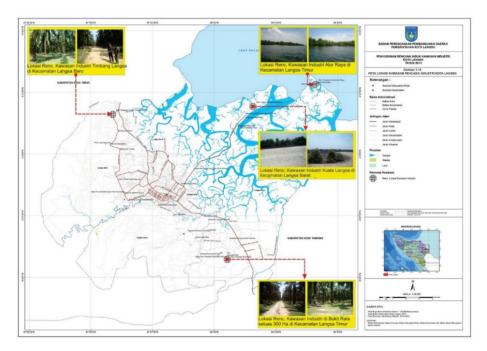


Figure 2. The Demography Map of Industrial Spots

Source: Kota Langsa (Kota Langsa, 2018)

In turn, this contributes to the agglomeration dynamics needed to sustain Langsa as a hub city, where local enterprises become integrated nodes within a larger halal industry network. Supporting these points, Bobby Edwin mentioned that:

"Our office has been coordinating several local initiatives, through training and mentoring, we help them achieve halal certification and adopt Sharia-compliant production standards to support SMEs in Kota Langsa" (Edwin, interview, 2024).

As representative of local government, Bobby Edwin reinforces the role of local institutional support in preparing the socio-economic foundation for Langsa's transformation into a halal industry hub city. Supporting this interview finding, the next participant, Sarizal, S.H.I., Village Secretary, pointed out:

"Our village has become a center for observing migratory birds. Through ongoing conservation efforts to protect the surrounding wetlands and mangrove forests, we've developed an ecotourism destination that attracts environmentally conscious visitors" (Sarizal, interview, 2024).

The remarks of Sarizal, S.H.I., highlighted the emerging significance of ecotourism as a complementary sector in Langsa's broader strategy to position itself as a halal industry hub city. The development of a migratory bird ecotourism site, supported by conservation of wetlands and mangrove forests, exemplifies how natural capital is transformed into sustainable economic assets while maintaining ecological balances for the surrounding wetlands and mangrove forests (Figure 2). Furthermore, ecotourism initiatives promote positive branding and city identity, projecting Langsa as a green and ethical destination (Batubara et al., 2021; Iswahyudi et al., 2019). Such integration is crucial for gaining the trust of environmentally conscious Muslim consumers and international partners, many of whom view sustainability as part of halal integrity. In addition, Sarizal, S.H.I continued:

"Our Migrant Bird Ecotourism in Gampong Cinta Raja shows how environmental sustainability go hand in hand with the halal tourism industry with our village-owned enterprise, BUMDes Tunas Muda, we manage the site and produce mangrove-based products like syrup and chips that are becoming popular with both local and international tourists" (Sarizal, interview, 2024).

The statement from Sarizal, S.H.I. emphasized the strategic integration of environmental sustainability and halal tourism through the village's Migrant Bird Ecotourism initiative. Managed by the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) Tunas Muda, this site demonstrates how community-based enterprises transform natural

assets into value-added halal tourism products, such as mangrove-based syrup and chips. The growing popularity of these products among both local and international visitors illustrates the potential for eco-friendly, Shariah-compliant tourism to contribute to Langsa's local economy (Figure 2). In addition, the secretary of BUMDes Tunas Muda, Nazar mentioned:

"The tourism spots created economic benefits for our community while also supporting environmental conservation through the sustainable use of mangroves, and shows that Kota Langsa has a growing capacity to develop a diverse and integrated halal industry ecosystem" (Nazar, interview, 2024).

The statement by Nazar underscored how tourism spots in Kota Langsa, particularly those based on mangrove ecotourism, serve as catalysts for both community welfare and environmental stewardship. In addition, the mangrove-based ecotourism area in Gampong Cinta Raja contribute to the diversification of Langsa's halal economic base. While the core pillars of Langsa's halal hub vision lie in fisheries, agriculture, and industrial halal production, tourism functions as a supporting sector that enhances value chains, creates local employment opportunities, and stimulates micro and small enterprises, i.e., the halal culinary businesses, local crafts, and eco-friendly products. This diversification strengthens the urban economic ecosystem, reducing overreliance on a single sector and promoting resilience and inclusivity in growth. They show how community-based tourism and environmental conservation work in tandem to support the city's long-term vision as a sustainable halal hub city. Thus, Kota Langsa exhibits a burgeoning capacity to support a diverse and integrated halal industry ecosystem.

The culinary of local delight

The food and beverage sector demonstrate a strong adherence to halal certification standards, ensuring a wide array of permissible culinary offerings for both residents and visitors. Kota Langsa has rich culinary heritage, particularly its seafood and mangrove-based cuisine, is integral to its cultural and economic identity (Figure 3). One of the iconic dishes, the Gulai Ikan Sembilang, a flavorful curry dish featuring tender catfish sourced from Langsa's Wisasta Hutan Manggrove (Figure 3), attracts culinary tourists with its unique taste and regional authenticity. The Staff of Tourism office, Saputra mentioned that:

"Most of people who come to Kota Langsa aggreed that one of our dishes, the Gulai Ikan Sembilang has flavorful curry made from catfish caught in Langsa's mangroves, which has unique taste and regional authenticity attract culinary tourists, and these culinary activities not only bring economic benefits to our

community but also encourage the sustainable use of mangroves for conservation" (Saputra, interview, 2024).

The local cuisine based on indigenous ingredients, such as ikan sembilang and mangrove-derived products like syrup and chips, which derived from the Kebun Villa Indah (Figure 3), enjoys widespread popularity among both local and international tourists.

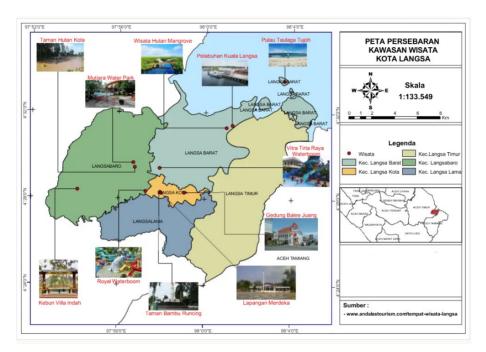


Figure 3. The Demography Map of Tourism Spots

Source: Kota Langsa (Kota Langsa, 2018)

The Traditional cuisine prepare substantial quantities of this dish daily, with demand peaking on weekends and during major events. The occasional scarcity of ikan sembilang enhances its exclusivity, attracting tourists from neighboring cities and beyond. These cuisines also offer a variety of authentic side dishes that complement the distinctive flavors of Langsa's culinary offerings. Supporting this, the next participants, Fina Nadhia, SH, Head of the Tourism Division at the Langsa Office of Youth, Sports, and Tourism, emphasized that:

"We are promoting halal cuisine as one of Langsa's key tourism cuisine. We also present the complementary dishes, i.e., shrimp paste, and various mangrove-based syrups and chips products, also attract both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists who are looking for an authentic cultural experience" (Nadhia, interview, 2024).

The statement by Fina Nadhia, SH, underscored how Langsa's culinary sector plays a pivotal role in supporting its identity as a halal hub city. Her role in promoting halal cuisine as a core tourism attraction, complemented by unique local products such as shrimp paste and mangrove-based syrups and chips, the city showcases its rich gastronomic heritage while adhering to Shariah-compliant standards. Culinary tourism not only enhances the city's cultural appeal but also stimulates local economic growth by creating business opportunities for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in food production, catering, packaging, and hospitality.

The contributions rise the diverse and resilient economic ecosystem, reducing dependence on traditional sectors while integrating the local population into the halal value chain. Furthermore, the integration of environmentally rooted ingredients like mangrove-based products reflects a commitment to sustainability and ethical sourcing, key aspects of Islamic economic principles. Accordingly, Islamic finance is well-represented within the city, with Sharia-compliant banks and financial institutions providing ethical and accessible financial solutions to individuals and businesses alike (Armia, 2021; Sa'adi, 2021). Qanun Aceh Number 11 of 2018 mandates that all financial institutions in Aceh operate in accordance with Sharia principles (R. Maulana, 2023). This law, effective as of January 4, 2019, prohibits conventional banking practices and aims to create a Sharia-compliant economic system that promotes fairness and prosperity (R. Maulana, 2023; Syamsuri et al., 2021).

The Fashion Tradition in Kota Langsa

The local fashion industry is increasingly embracing the principles of modest fashion, catering to the rising demand for garments that are both stylish and aligned with Islamic values, which has been acculturated with Acehnese custom and tradition. Concerning this point, the participants, Fina Nadhia, SH, mentioned that:

"We also encourage the plantation company, PT Perkebunan Nusantara I (PTPN I), which operationalized in Kota Langsa, commit their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) in developing local woven fabric to rise the modest fashion in Aceh exemplifies the convergence of Islamic values and Acehnese cultural identity" (Nadhia, interview, 2024).

The statement above highlighted an effort in nurturing Kota Langsa's local fashion industry within the framework of halal industry development. This initiative reflects how CSR serve as a catalyst for cultural and economic revitalization by supporting community-based creative industries. Encouraging PTPN I, which located in Palm Oil Plantation Complex, Kawasan Industri Timbang, Kota Langsa (Figure 1), to invest in the development of traditional woven fabrics underscores a conscious attempt to preserve Acehnese cultural heritage while simultaneously aligning it with Islamic ethical and aesthetic values through the promotion of modest fashion. This synergy contributes to the city's broader vision of cultivating a diverse and integrated halal industry ecosystem, where the fashion sector complements other halal-driven industries such as culinary tourism and eco-tourism. In addition, the rise of modest fashion in Aceh exemplifies the convergence of Islamic values and Acehnese cultural identity, illustrating how fashion serve as a medium for cultural expression and religious adherence. The traditional Acehnese styles with modern designs that uphold Islamic principles, the local fashion industry has created a distinctive form of modest fashion that resonates with consumers in the region and beyond.

Hub-City Integration

The logistics sector, with the Kuala Langsa Port serving as a critical node in the regional trade network, ensures the efficient and secure distribution of halal products, further solidifying Kota Langsa's position as a burgeoning hub for halal industry. The participant, Muhammad Nur; CEO of PT. Pelabuhan Kota Langsa (PEKOLA), mentioned that:

"With direct access to the strategically vital Malacca Strait, Langsa holds a geographic advantage to serve as a pivotal gateway for trade and tourism, connecting Aceh with neighboring regions and facilitating international commerce." (Nur, interview, 2024)

Nur's remark highlights Langsa's strategic geographic position along the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest maritime routes. He claimed that a geographic advantage, held by Langsa, has significant role in trade and tourism. In addition, he underscores how Kuala Langsa Port functions as a critical node within the regional trade network. This geographic leverage directly supports the logistics infrastructure needed for efficient and secure distribution of halal-certified products, a cornerstone for building a reliable halal industry ecosystem. This, in turn, will attract investment, stimulate economic growth, and create employment

opportunities within the halal industry and beyond. In addition, Muhammad Nur mentioned that:

"Exports and imports from Langsa City Port currently include a mix of agricultural, plantation, and fishery products, which are shipped to Port Klang, Port Lumut, and Hutan Melintang Port in Malaysia." (Nur, interview, 2024).

Muhammad Nur's observation of Langsa Port's export-import dynamics, shipping agricultural, plantation, and fishery products to key Malaysian ports like Port Klang, Lumut, and Hutan Melintang, directly exemplifies the operationalization of Hub-City Integration within regional halal logistics. This integration hinges on positioning Langsa not merely as a port city but as a cohesive logistics ecosystem where the port (Kuala Langsa) functions as the critical node synchronizing urban economic strategy with global trade flows. The consistent movement of goods to major Malaysian gateways underscores Langsa's embeddedness in a high-volume. cross-border supply chain serving Muslim-majority markets, where halal compliance is non-negotiable. Accordingly, this trade pattern necessitates integrated halal logistics protocols: from certified handling at Langsa's facilities to temperature-controlled transit and Sharia-compliant documentation en route to Malaysia. This specialization attracts halal-focused exporters, processors, and logistics providers, reinforcing Kota Langsa's emergence as a dedicated halal industry hub. The city's strategic alignment with Malaysia's halal market, leveraging proximity and established routes, validates Hub-City Integration theory when port operations are deliberately synchronized with municipal economic planning, i.e., halal zoning, skills training planning in Kota Langsa, the city amplifies its regional influence. In addition, the coverage of export, Muhammad Nur mentioned that:

"We are also implementing regular export schedules every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday to Malaysia and Thailand. These shipments will be jointly utilized by exporters and importers from Langsa and surrounding areas" (Nur, interview, 2024).

Muhammad Nur's disclosures of fixed export schedules, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays to Malaysia and Thailand, exemplifies Hub-City Integration in action, transforming Kuala Langsa Port from a passive transit point into the orchestrating core of a dynamic halal logistics ecosystem. As CEO of PEKOLA, Muhammad Nur also disclosures the predictable departure windows, PEKOLA enables Langsa's city-based halal producers, certification bodies, and logistics providers to synchronize all pre-shipment activities, from Sharia-compliant processing and cold-chain storage to documentation, around these fixed nodes. Supporting this the next participant, Sarizal who is business owner for agriculture product, mentioned that:

"The potentiality of halal-hub integration proved that our region's superior commodities from agriculture, plantations, and fisheries are not only reliable and competitive domestically but also in the international market. Many Acehnese commodities have been exported through routes outside Aceh, so with the inauguration of this first direct export from Langsa, we hope all parties make the most of this opportunity."

Sarizal's testimony powerfully validates Hub-City Integration as the catalyst transforming Aceh's halal potential into tangible market advantage. His observation that Acehnese agricultural, plantation, and fishery commodities were historically exported via external routes, bypassing Langsa, regional producers lacked direct access to integrated halal logistics, forcing goods through fragmented, non-specialized channels that risked halal integrity and eroded competitiveness. Here, Kuala Langsa Port ceases to be merely a transit point; it becomes the orchestrator where halal certification, cold-chain management, and export documentation converge seamlessly within the city's jurisdiction. This integration ensures commodities move from Acehnese farms directly into Sharia-compliant logistics streams, eliminating transshipment risks, reducing delays, and guaranteeing traceability from origin to Malaysian or Thai markets. Accordingly, Sarizal's emphasized on all parties leveraging this opportunity underscores the collaborative urban-rural synergy at Hub-City Integration's core. In addition, Sarizal continued that:

"In fact, these export activities to Malaysia and Thailand are a concrete realization of the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) memorandum of understanding that was signed during the Ministerial Meeting in Langkawi."

Sarizal's linkage of Langsa's exports to the IMT-GT MoU crystallizes how Hub-City Integration transcends local logistics to anchor Kota Langsa within Southeast Asia's premier transnational economic architecture. The port of Kota Langsa is more than just a valuable asset; it is a strategic line that connects the IMT-GT. By serving as the physical link for regional commitments, the port ensures that halal products move through the IMT-GT corridors with certified integrity. This is made possible by the port's integrated ecosystem, which embeds Sharia-compliant handling, documentation, and traceability directly into its framework. This crucial system eliminates the halal compliance gaps that previously forced exports use inefficient third-party routes. The route starts from Aceh, which transforms Kuala Langsa into a key node for regional trade. This institutional alignment with IMT-GT elevates the city beyond a transit point; it becomes the trusted orchestrator of halal value chains across three jurisdictions, where synchronized customs protocols and joint

certification, i.e., with Malaysia's JAKIM, minimize delays and secure premium market access (Noordin et al., 2009). Consequently, Sarizal's observation confirms that Langsa's halal hub status is not merely aspirational but institutionally embedded within regional policy, turning geographical advantage into competitive sovereignty.

This institutional embedding manifests physically through Langsa's purpose-built infrastructure, where strategic IMT-GT positioning converges with tangible assets. Kota Langsa, as a key economic center in eastern Aceh, has adequate infrastructure and facilities to support general economic growth. The transportation infrastructure in Langsa is well-developed, with a road network that connects the city to other major cities in Aceh and North Sumatra, such as Medan and Banda Aceh. This accessibility facilitates the movement of people and goods, which is crucial for economic and social activities in Langsa. The existence of public transportation places a vital port work together in supporting the local economy. The bus terminals and other facilities boost the residents mobility while also generating the local business.

Meanwhile, the Kuala Langsa Port is an important facility supporting export and import, enabling the distribution of a wide variety of goods. It carries various commodities, including agricultural products, fishery goods, and industrial items. In logistics, Langsa has a growing network of storage and distribution facilities that meet domestic and international market demand, like warehouses and logistics centers around the port and industrial areas, which provide secure storage for both consumer goods and export products.

Discussion

This discussion explores the development trajectory of Kota Langsa as a halal hub city. This purpose is structured and framed around three major aims, i.e., the strategies for building a sustainable halal industry ecosystem, the integration of halal tourism with the hub-city model, and the potential economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Building a Sustainable Halal Industry Ecosystem in Kota Langsa

Langsa has a comprehensive strategy to be a halal industry hub in Aceh and the broader Malacca Straits, which is cultivating a supportive ecosystem. This ecosystem is a major support for the economic growth cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, this ecosystem is designed to thrive on

the interplay between regulatory support, business empowerment, and the maintenance of cultural authenticity, all of which are underpinned by strategic infrastructure. The key strategies are presented in the table 1.

Table 1. Key Strategies and Challenges on Sharia-Complance

Challenges	Strategies	Theoretical Link
Fragmented halal business ecosystem	Establishing robust regulatory frameworks (Law No. 33/2014) to ensure halal certification compliance	Islamic urban governance , building Sharia-based regulatory order
Limited SME capacity in halal markets	Providing training and mentoring for SMEs to navigate halal standards and access financing	Ecological psychology theory, "environmental scaffolding" for SME development (Di Fabio, 2017)
Lack of integrated supply chains	Building collaborative networks across food, fashion, and logistics sectors	Cluster theory, interlinked industries driving local development
Weak cross-border linkages	Upgrading export- oriented infrastructure (Kuala Langsa Port) to connect with Malaysia and Thailand	Regional economic integration theory (Meagher, 2020).

Langsa's use of Islamic-based regulatory systems ensures consumer trust and sets a strong institutional base for halal growth. Simultaneously, the ecological psychology perspective (Di Fabio, 2017; Meagher, 2020), explains how training and mentorship scaffold local SMEs to survive and adapt within this ecosystem. As SMEs grow, they contribute back to the system, forming a positive feedback loop that strengthens the halal economy.

This approach advances Islamic urban development theory by showing how an emerging city can embed Sharia-compliant principles in its economic governance without sacrificing inclusivity. Unlike conventional urban development, which emphasizes capital accumulation, Langsa's model integrates ethical regulation,

community empowerment, and environmental care, core Islamic values (Anthopoulos et al., 2022; Barau, 2015). Accordingly, Langsa's regulatory ecosystem offers a replicable model for the ASEAN halal corridor, particularly for second-tier cities. With support from IsDB and the OIC Halal Economy Program, Langsa serve as a pilot city for capacity-building projects, knowledge-sharing on halal certification, and cross-border SME incubation schemes linking Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Integrating Halal Tourism with the Hub-City Model

Langsa's rich biodiversity, cultural assets, and proximity to Malaysia position it to become a halal tourism hub city. This requires aligning tourism development with halal standards and embedding it within Langsa's broader trade and logistics network. In addition, the key tourism assets and development strategies are presented in the table 2.

Table 2. Tourism Assets and Development Strategies

Challenges	Strategies	Theoretical Link
Limited brand identity for halal tourism	Promote signature ecotourism sites (e.g., Migrant Bird Ecotourism, mangrove parks, Monuments, etc.)	Place branding theory , building unique territorial identities
Inconsistent halal service standards	Enforce halal certification across accommodation, dining, and leisure sectors	Halal tourism governance (Aksamawanti & Ridwan, 2022)
Weak supporting infrastructure	Invest in visitor centers, transport links, and Sharia-compliant facilities	Hub-city model, infrastructure-driven regional integration
Low community participation	Foster community-based tourism enterprises (BUMDes model)	Community-based tourism theory, local empowerment through participation
Unsustainable tourism practices	Embed environmental stewardship and mangrove conservation	Islamic environmental ethics , stewardship (khalifah)

Langsa's halal tourism strategy merges ecological sustainability with economic inclusion. Village enterprises (BUMDes Tunas Muda) produce mangrove-based products (syrup, chips) alongside ecotourism operations, generating income while preserving nature. Culinary tourism, highlighted by dishes like Gulai Ikan Sembilang, connects visitors to local culture while ensuring halal integrity. Integrating halal tourism within the hub-city model contributes to Islamic urban development theory by showing how peripheral cities can leverage natural capital and cultural identity to build ethical tourism economies. It also affirms regional integration theory, as halal tourism attracts cross-border Muslim travelers, embedding Langsa into the Aceh, Medan, Penang subregional tourism network. Langsa could be positioned as a halal eco-tourism node within the ASEAN halal corridor through partnerships with, the IsDB's Sustainable Tourism Program, for financing eco-friendly infrastructure, ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies, for certification alignment, and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) forum, for joint tourism marketing packages.

Table 3. Summary of Impacts

Dimension	Key Impacts	Theoretical Link	Cross-Border Implications
Economic	Diversification into halal sectors; rise in SME competitiveness; expanded export through Kuala Langsa Port	Growth Triangle Theory, regional complementarities	Create export consortia with Malaysia and Thailand; attract IsDB halal investment funds
Social	Job creation; poverty reduction; community empowerment; preservation of Acehnese-Islamic culture	Islamic urban development, community- centered city	Develop cross- border halal skills training with IMT- GT universities
Environmental	Mangrove conservation; eco- tourism growth; green transport infrastructure	Islamic environmental ethics , stewardship (khalifah)	Join OIC Green Cities Network; access climate- resilient infrastructure funding from IsDB

Economic, Social, and Environmental Impacts

Langsa's halal hub-city initiative has multi-dimensional impacts. Framing these through Growth Triangle Theory (Low et al., 1998; Yani & Nizmi, 2018) and Regional Economic Integration Theory (Gavin & De Lombaerde, 2005; Siggel, 2016), shows how Langsa act as a catalyst within the Aceh, Medan, Penang corridor, enhancing trade flows, cultural exchange, and sustainable development. The impacts of dimension are presented on the table 3.

Langsa's integration into regional supply chains makes it a gateway node for halal exports. Scheduled shipments from Kuala Langsa Port to Malaysia and Thailand show that Langsa's agricultural, plantation, and fishery products are competitive internationally. This directly strengthens regional integration and enhances Langsa's fiscal capacity to reinvest in logistics, marketing, and innovation. The halal industry has fostered inclusive participation, from women's cooperatives producing modest fashion to BUMDes managing eco-sites. Culinary and fashion tourism, for instance, showcase Acehnese Islamic aesthetics while stimulating youth entrepreneurship. Ecotourism initiatives preserve mangrove ecosystems while generating income, embodying the Islamic ethics of khalifah (stewardship).

Conclusion

This study explored the feasibility of transforming Kota Langsa into a halal industry hub-city through a phenomenological inquiry of stakeholder perspectives. In response to the first research question, the findings reveal that establishing a sustainable halal industry ecosystem requires a robust regulatory framework, targeted support for SMEs, strategic promotion of halal culinary and tourism sectors, human capital development, and infrastructure enhancement. Addressing the second research question, the study found that integrating the halal industry with the hub-city concept, particularly through Kuala Langsa Port as a regional logistics gateway, strengthen trade connectivity, stimulate investment, and promote Langsa as a strategic node within the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth Triangle. Regarding the third question, the development of Langsa as a halal hub is expected to yield positive economic, social, and environmental impacts. Future studies could adopt mixed-method approaches and broader samples to validate and expand these findings. Overall, this study offers a strategic framework for policymakers seeking to promote sustainable, Shariah-compliant, and inclusive regional development.

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