

HALAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA-MALAYSIA-THAILAND GROWTH TRIANGLE (IMT-GT): AN ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC DIPLOMACY IN ENHANCING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

This research will discuss the growth of the halal industry in the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) region, with an emphasis on boosting regional collaboration and economic development through Islamic diplomacy analysis. This research employs a qualitative approach, using data sources drawn from document analysis and literature reviews. Results from this research indicate that the growth of the halal industry in IMT-GT is critical to increasing regional collaboration and economic development. The analysis of Islamic diplomacy conducted in this study reveals that the development of the halal industry in IMT-GT adheres to diplomatic principles consistent with Islamic values, such as equality, equity, and justice in relations between countries or actors, and seeks to minimize conflict. Cooperation between Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in the halal tourism sector is increasingly optimal through increasing the development of the Islamic Tourism Center (ITC), implementing SISPARNAS as a service for tourism stakeholders, as well as international cooperation with the Growth Triangle concept which has succeeded in increasing cooperation in the field of Muslim Friendly Tourism. tourism strategy, cultural diplomacy, and digital diplomacy. This initiative aims to increase the competitiveness of halal products and services in the global market, strengthen regional cooperation in developing the halal industry, especially in the ASEAN region, and aims to strengthen Muslim solidarity to promote a positive image of Islam in the international World.

Keywords: Islamic Diplomacy, IMT-GT, Halal industry, Regional Cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

Multilateral cooperation carried out by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, in the forum *Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth-Triangle* (IMT-GT) has been established since 1993 (Meutia et al., 2019), as a form of subregional cooperation for regional economic improvement in the three countries, which include Sumatra (Indonesia), Malay Peninsula (Malaysia), and parts of Southern Thailand. The collaboration, which has been initiated for more than 20 years, aims to improve the welfare of people in border areas and accelerate economic growth in IMT-GT countries (Bisnis & Unpas, 2019).

In the context of cooperation in the halal industry, IMT-GT has a very unique cooperation development because in previous cooperation these countries have not shown complementary cooperation, namely in a complementary direction. Especially the increase in the halal industry which in the progress of this industry shows the existence of inequality in each country (Amalia, 2021). The global halal market is expected to reach a value of USD 2.8 trillion by 2024 and continue to grow (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian Republik Indonesia, 2020). IMT-GT has a large Muslim population, which is around 260 million people, especially in countries that have a majority Muslim population, namely Indonesia, and Malaysia which have the potential to have massive market development in halal products (Fogg, 2019).

The halal industry has important significance in the context of IMT-GT because it can become a regional and global economic power, strengthen cooperation between countries, and increase global interest in halal products. The collaboration of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand in developing the halal industry sector through the promotion of halal tourism and the use of social media technology is an important strategy in increasing regional economic growth (Maqfirah et al., 2022). The IMT-GT area is famous for its largest Muslim population, especially Indonesia, and Malaysia. The application of the halal industry also has a significant impact, namely in strengthening the identity and image of Muslims in the IMT-GT Area (Jalal, 2017). Therefore, there is a close relationship in the development of this halal industry with Islamic diplomacy. What makes matters related to Islamic diplomacy related to the strategy of these countries promote halal certification that is not only in accordance with the halal aspects of products, but ensures in the conduct of sustainable and ethical business in accordance with Islamic values.

Based on the above phenomenon, this study will discuss how the values of Islamic diplomacy can be applied in the development of the halal industry in the IMT-GT Region, the purpose of this study is to analyze how Islamic diplomacy can improve regional cooperation and economic development. As in the case of IMT-GT where Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand work together in developing the halal industry sector to achieve common interests. Through Islamic diplomacy, countries can strengthen economic cooperation, promote halal trade, and expand markets for halal products and services, thereby boosting overall regional economic growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Halal Industry

In the Qur'an Qs. Abasa Verse 24

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ ٢٤

It is said that God commands man to always care about his food, in the sense that what is consumed and can have a profound impact on life (Hikmah, 2018).

According to Abdullah (Abdullah & Azam, 2020) The concept of halal industry itself means from production activities that are halal in nature and are allowed to be used or consumed by Muslims in accordance with Sharia. However, the context of halal here is not only limited to its consumption and use but includes the value connected in services and production processes that become one in a sustainable chain or known as *Halal Value Chain*.

2. The Concept of Islamic Diplomacy

In the Qur'an QS. Al-Mulk 15

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ ١٥

"It is He who makes the earth easy for you, so walk in all directions and eat some of His sustenance. And only to him are you (returned after) resurrected." This verse contains several important points relevant to the concept of diplomacy and international relations in Islam such as hinting at the importance of exploring the earth and interacting with various nations as the basis of international relations and diplomacy. This verse

encourages Muslims to be active in establishing good relations with various countries and peoples, utilize available resources wisely, and always keep in mind their moral and spiritual responsibilities to Allah (Rosyidi et al., 2021).

Arshid Iqbal Dar (Sayed, 2017) suggests that Islamic Diplomacy is a concept that combines the principles of Islamic teachings in the practice of diplomacy and international relations. Islamic diplomacy can be understood as a negotiation activity that prioritizes the principles of justice, transparency, and accountability. The concept of "clean diplomacy" that prioritizes the interests of all parties involved in the dispute, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. This diplomacy focuses not only on the end goal, but also on the processes and means used to achieve it.

3. IMT-GT and Regional Cooperation

According to Majid (Majid et al., 2022) IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle) is a sub-regional cooperation initiative formed in 1993 that aims to accelerate economic growth in regions that have geographical proximity and social, cultural, historical, and linguistic similarities. This cooperation area covers 10 provinces on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, 8 states in Malaysia, and 14 provinces in the southern part of Thailand. The main objective of the establishment of IMT-GT is to create a seamless, progressive, prosperous, and peaceful sub-region and improve the quality of life of the people in the region. Through this cooperation, it is expected to create interdependence between the three countries that can positively affect sub-regional stability and development, and promote world peace.

According to Nugraha (Nugraha, 2019) Economic and social cooperation in IMT-GT involves various sectors, including agriculture, agro-based industries, tourism, and halal service products. One of the main focuses is the development of the halal industry, which is recognized as the initial capital for the development of halal tourism in the IMT-GT sub-region. Through a network of cooperation between universities, UNINET IMT-GT, the three member countries share information, knowledge, and experience to develop and implement halal products and services. The 2017-2021 Blueprint of IMT-GT includes seven strategic pillars used to achieve the vision of IMT-GT 2036, with halal tourism as one of the slices of the Lead Focus Area of halal tourism and service products. Thus, IMT-

GT plays an important role in facilitating the development of the halal industry through science and technology, as well as encouraging economic and social growth in the region.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Halal Infrastructure Development in Enhancing IMT-GT sub-regional economic cooperation

Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand *Growth Triangle* (IMT-GT) is known as the growth cooperation triangle which is one of the cooperation in the sub-regional economic sphere within the ASEAN scope involving several regions of the country, namely Indonesia (10 provinces on the island of Sumatra), Malaysia (8 states especially the northern part), and Thailand (14 provinces in the south)(Harahap, 2020). The establishment of this sub-regional economic cooperation aims to encourage economic cooperation within the ASEAN region and anticipate the realization of the AFTA free market. Characteristics of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand *Growth Triangle* This itself is economic complementarity, geographical proximity, government commitment, and infrastructure (Meutia et al., 2019).

IMT-GT is committed to developing the halal industry motivated by the interests of each country, namely Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to increase their economic growth through the development of the halal industry. The three countries see a great opportunity, estimated that the value of halal trade within the scope of IMT-GT reaches around USD 89.1 billion by Indonesia and Malaysia, which are the largest halal market shares in Asia(Darmawati et al., 2023). In addition, these three countries want to benefit through their domestic markets which have a population of around 77 million people in three countries that predominantly embrace Islam. The following is a mapping of the factors of the three countries in the Cooperation:

Table 1. Factors Impact IMT-GT collaboration

Impact Factors	Country		
	Indonesia	Malaysia	thailand
Cooperation Area	Aceh, Bangka Belitung,	Kedah, Kelantan,	Krabi, Narathiwat, Pattani,

	Bengkulu, Jambi, Riau, Kep.Riau, Lampung, Sumatra Selatan, Sumatra Barat,	Melaka, Penang, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Perlis, Selangor	Phattalung, Satun, Yala, Trang, Chumpon, Ranong, Surat Thani, Phang Nga, Phuket, Nakhon si Thammarat
Population (Million)	47,6	13,9	16,2
Halal Value Market (USD Billion)	78,5	8,4	2,2

The success of the IMT-GT collaboration has succeeded in developing Small and Medium Enterprises to as many as 4,215 export-oriented halal SMEs until early 2020(Siregar & Razali, 2022). In this development, the three countries succeeded in developing the halal industry that exceeded the initial target that had been determined. As with the previous SME development target of 3,000 SMEs in 2021, this number has exceeded the predetermined target. Related to this, the spirit of the three countries raised the SME development target to 7,000 in 2021. This achievement is also supported by a number of 56,188 halal experts, this number also exceeds the drastic target where in the initial target of 30,000 experts (Rohim, 2021).

In the development of the halal industry in the three IMT-GT countries, several efforts have been carried out, such as the development of halal labels where the three countries have conducted collaborative research in developing halal labels and improving the standardization of halal products(Ahmad, Fazullah, Borham, & Hashim, 2011). In addition, in the development of technology and infrastructure, IMT-GT transfers knowledge about halal tourism. Indonesia, for example, has implemented an online halal certification service system through CEROL SS-23000 and stipulated Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (Ro et al., 2017). Thailand, although not a Muslim-majority country, is showing seriousness in developing the halal industry.

Thailand coordinates with various parties, including institutions that deal with halal products and small and medium enterprise promotion offices. The country provided 264 million baht to The Institute for Halal Food Standard of Thailand for the development of the Halal Science Centre at Chulalongkorn University (Ardmare et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Malaysia successfully held an international halal trade fair or known as *Malaysia International Halal Showcase* (MIHAS), the event made a significant contribution to the global economy, attracting around 30,000 consumers and producers, giving it a transaction value of over RM 1.6 billion (\$380 million)(Halim et al., 2024).

Application of Islamic Diplomatic Values in the development of the IMT-GT halal industry

The sub-regional economic growth circle triangle consisting of 3 countries, otherwise known as IMT-GT has fostered several economic cooperation in the 3 countries. One of the focuses of cooperation is the development of the halal industry in the region. The successful development of the halal industry by IMT-GT has produced good results for the multilateral relations of the 3 countries, especially in the interests of the halal industry targeted at Muslims in the 3 countries(Yacob et al., 2018). In the purpose of IMT-GT cooperation in the development of the halal industry, it is clear that the main goal is for the benefit of Muslim consumers and the image and identity of Muslims in the 3 regions (Rizqiany & Maria, 2021)Moreover, Indonesia and Malaysia are famous for their Muslim majority civilian populations.

This cooperation aims to increase economic growth and welfare more evenly, consistently, and sustainably between the three countries that previously clearly had interests in Muslims in the three countries and even in Asia (Ardmare et al., 2022). Therefore, in the application of cooperation in the field of halal industry IMT-GT has values that are in line with Islamic diplomacy, where each sector of halal industry development fulfils the values of Islamic diplomacy such as justice, equality, and equality playing an important role in the process of harmonization of halal standards at IMT-GT (Rudi Chandra, 2021). These values are reflected in efforts to ensure that all member states benefit equally from this cooperation, as well as in the commitment to develop halal standards that are acceptable to all. The seriousness and commitment shown by the government and business actors in each country also reflect the values of justice and

equality in implementing strategies and policies that are in accordance with the halal industry (Ahmad, Fazullah, Borham, Hashim, et al., 2011).

Conformity in the application of Islamic diplomatic values can be seen in every sector of the halal industry developed by each country. Not only that, the values in Islamic diplomacy have become an instrument in the application of cooperation in the halal industry (Darmawati et al., 2023). The values of Islamic diplomacy can be seen in the harmony of halal industry cooperation in each country in the following table:

Table 2. Harmony of halal industry cooperation in each sector

No	Collaboration Sector	INDONESIA	MALAYSIA	THAILAND
1	Development of Joint Halal Standards	Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM)	The Central Islamic Council of Thailand (CICOT)
2	Halal product certification and supervision	Implementing an online halal certification service system through CEROL SS-23000 and the Stipulation of Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Product Assurance	3rd Industrial Master Plan & Halal Development Corporation in collaboration with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Malaysia to assist the Halal assurance system.	Halal Science Centre & The Institute for Halal Food Standard of Thailand Donated 264 Million Bath to Chulalongkorn University
3	Promotion and Marketing of Halal products		Holding Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) which is the main platform to promote products from the halal industry to promote products from the halal industry.	It has annual events to promote its halal industry such as, Thailand Halal Assembly.

4	Joint Halal Tourism Development	Kemenparekraf has a National Tourism Information System (SISPARNAS) and an Indonesia Muslim Friendly Application	Malaysia has an ITC system, namely the Islamic Tourism Center, as a medium to promote halal tourism and information media.	Expanding its promotion through Web-Government Tourism of Authority (TAT) with the introduction of Thailand Muslim Friendly web. Tourism of Authority Thailand (TAT) with its Introduction on the Web Thailand Muslim Friendly
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The impact of this cooperation is not only to increase trade in halal products, but also to improve the welfare of people in the three countries for example in Increasing Exports: Halal products from the three countries are increasingly accepted in the international market, increasing export volumes and state revenues. In addition, Welfare Improvement: Through the development of the halal industry, many MSMEs are involved and get economic benefits, which ultimately improves people's welfare (Harahap, 2020).

Impact of IMT-GT halal industry development in Strengthening Cooperation and Positive Image of Islam

IMT-GT has implemented various halal industry development programs and promotion of cultural exchanges to strengthen cooperation between member countries. One of the main programs is the halal trade promotion event and the Comprehensive Priority Training program jointly organized by the Working Group on Halal Products and Services IMT-GT and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB)(Meutia et al., 2019). The program covers all aspects of the halal industry, including halal theory, halal certification, and halal management systems. In addition, the Halal Development Corporation Berhad (HDC) under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry Malaysia also provides in-depth training on the halal industry (Halim et al., 2024). These programs not only enhance knowledge and skills related to halal products, but also strengthen cultural relations between member countries.

Islamic diplomacy plays an important role in strengthening solidarity among IMT-GT member countries through various cultural and social activities (Septiani, 2021). Islamic diplomatic values such as justice, equality, and equality are applied in various cooperation initiatives, which aim to improve the welfare and economic growth of people in the border areas of IMT-GT countries. Islamic diplomacy also encourages activities such as scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, and conferences aimed at building closer and mutually beneficial relations between member countries. Through these activities, member countries can learn from each other and share experiences, which in turn strengthens solidarity and cooperation (Tarigan et al., 2022). The IMT-GT initiative aims to enhance halal tourism in Southeast Asia through a comprehensive diplomacy strategy that includes several key components:

1. **News Management:** The initiative utilizes technology and mass media, such as official websites, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and a smartphone application, to facilitate Muslim tourists in their travel and worship activities (Rokhaniyah & Almeira, 2023).
2. **Strategic Communication:** This is carried out by establishing specialized teams and groups such as the Halal Tourism Acceleration Team (TP3H) (Komalasari, 2017), Working Groups on Halal Products and Services (WGHAPASS) (Meutia et al., 2019), and the Halal Science Center of Chulalongkorn University (HASCI) (Ardmare et al., 2022). These entities work together to promote and standardize halal tourism services.
3. **Relationship Building:** IMT-GT strengthens relationships through various training programs and international showcases such as the Indonesia Muslim Travel Index (IMTI) (Pariwisata et al., 2022), the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) (Halim et al., 2024), and the Thailand International Halal Expo (TIHEX) (Fahriyati & Rahmawati, 2020). These events not only promote halal tourism but also facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration among stakeholders. Through these public diplomacy strategies, IMT-GT aims to make the halal tourism sector in Southeast Asia more competitive on a global scale, thereby enhancing the region's attractiveness to Muslim travelers.

Figure 1. Conference and exchange of delegations of each country following the 16th IMT GT Strategic Planning Meeting (SPM)



The application of Islamic diplomatic values can be seen from cultural exchanges or cultural diplomacy from Indonesian, Malaysian, and Thai Muslims. The Trilateral International Cooperation between the 3 countries also includes various activities such as conferences, forums, and public lectures aimed at discussing and developing the halal tourism industry in the three countries (Umah, 2018). They seek to strengthen the halal tourism industry and increase the number of tourists visiting the region, which in turn can strengthen the positive image of Islam and culture has a significant impact on the positive image of Islam in the international arena and the strengthening of regional cooperation (Yuanitasari & Muchtar, 2021). Through the promotion of halal culture and cultural exchange, IMT-GT has succeeded in demonstrating that Islam is a religion that supports peace, justice, and prosperity (Irewati & Nufus, 2024). Programs such as halal trade promotion and halal industry training not only increase understanding of halal products, but also reinforce the positive image of Islam as a religion that supports innovation and economic development (DEWI, 2023). In addition, cultural diplomacy also helps strengthen relations between member countries, which in turn enhances regional cooperation in various fields, including economic, social, and cultural.

CONCLUSION

The Cooperation Triangle between Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth *Triangle* (IMT-GT) is a cooperation in the scope of sub-regional economies within ASEAN. The purpose of the establishment of sub-regional Economic Cooperation is to encourage

cooperation within the ASEAN region and can anticipate the realization of the AFTA free market. The development of the halal industry is motivated by the interests of each country, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand to encourage the economic growth of each country through the development of the halal industry. The impact of the cooperation between the three countries creates an increase in trade in halal products and increases public welfare in the three countries, for example in increasing exports: halal products from the three countries are increasingly accepted in the international market, increasing export volumes and state income. In addition, improving welfare: through the development of the halal industry, many MSMEs are involved and get economic benefits that ultimately improve people's welfare.

The success of this IMT-GT collaboration has succeeded in developing small and medium enterprises to as many as 4215 export-oriented halal SMEs by early 2020. Because the purpose of this cooperation is how to develop and increase economic growth and provide more equitable, consistent, and sustainable welfare between the three countries, especially the interests of Muslims in the three countries and even in Asia. This collaboration is carried out in the field of halal industry IMT-GT applies values that are in line with Islamic diplomacy. Where every development of the halal industry sector has fulfilled Islamic values, namely, justice, equality, and equality which play an important role in every harmonization process of halal standards at IMT-GT. Islamic values applied in carrying out this cooperation can be seen from cultural exchanges or cultural diplomacy from Indonesian, Malaysian, and Thai Muslims. This applied cultural diplomacy has a significant impact on the positive image of Islam in the international arena and strengthens regional cooperation. The success of IMT-GT is obtained through the promotion of halal culture and cultural exchanges, so as to show the international world that Islam is a religion that upholds peace, justice and welfare.

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