

FROM ISLAMIC REVIVALISM TO HALALIZATION: ISLAMISATION AND THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF HALAL IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *Islamic revivalism in Malaysia reshaped not only religious education, politics and public institutions, but also the way halal was understood and institutionalised. Although existing studies have increasingly discussed halal from the perspectives of certification, regulation, political economy and market growth, the ideological roots of halalization in Islamic revivalism remain less explored. This article examines the relationship between Islamic revivalism and the development of halalization in Malaysia, with particular attention to how state-led Islamisation shaped halal practices into a formal system. Using qualitative document analysis of historical records, policy texts, halal standards and scholarly literature, together with selected Qur'anic and Prophetic sources, the study traces the development of halalization from the Islamic revival movements of the 1970s to the establishment of a more structured halal ecosystem under state institutions. The findings show that halalization in Malaysia did not emerge as a standalone regulatory or economic initiative, but as an outcome of revivalist-driven Islamisation, functioning both as a mechanism of Islamic identity consolidation and as an economic strategy positioning the country within the global halal market. This study contributes to the literature by conceptualising halalization as an institutional outcome of Islamic revivalism and a manifestation of state-led Islamisation, thereby complementing political economy and regulatory explanations with an Islamic conceptual understanding of halal development in Malaysia. Future research should test this interpretation through archival work, stakeholder interviews and comparative studies across Muslim-majority societies.*

Keywords: *Halalization, Islamic Revivalism, Islamisation, Halal Institutionalisation, Malaysia*

Introduction

The concept of halal, referring to what is lawful under Islamic law, regulates Muslim conduct beyond dietary rules and is grounded in *fiqh* (Calder, 2020). Its normative foundation is explicit in revelation. Islamic law outlines foundational principles for consumption through its scriptures. The Qur'an establishes the concept of *ḥalālan ṭayyiban* (permissibility and wholesomeness) across multiple verses as one inseparable standard (al-Baqarah 2:168 ; al-Mā'idah 5:88; al-Nahl 16:114). Prophetic teaching then identifies the categorical distinction between the clearly lawful, the clearly unlawful, and the ambiguous middle ground, a taxonomy that shapes how Muslims approach everyday choices regarding food and commerce (al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. 52; Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. 1599). For much of Muslim history, assurance depended more heavily on personal knowledge, local production and communal trust, whereas certification became increasingly important as food production and trade grew more complex (Gauthier, 2021). This change belongs to a wider global pattern. Since the 1970s, the Islamic revival has led to the reorientation of Islamic practice within both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority societies, reshaping the everyday life of Muslims (Calder, 2020). Halal markets expanded beyond their traditional regional limits along this shift, with Kuala Lumpur among the major centres of what had become a global trade (Mohamed Nasir, 2022). In Malaysia, this modern transformation developed alongside the Islamic revival of the 1970s and the subsequent expansion of Islamic institutions (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Kirihaara, 2021).

The Malaysian Islamic revival gave the institutionalisation of halal its distinctive setting. During the 1970s, ABIM and Darul Arqam promoted Islam as a comprehensive way of life, al-Islām al-shāmil, while Jamaat Tabligh intensified grassroots religiosity through personal piety and community-based dawah, together raising expectations that Islamic values should be visible in education, economic life and consumption (Ab Ghani et al., 2019; Anwar, 1987; Mutalib, 1993; Nagata, 1984). PAS's growing influence intensified competition over Islamic legitimacy, and UMNO responded through state-led Islamisation (Jomo & Cheek, 1988; Liow, 2009). From the 1980s, that competition gave rise to a range of official Islamic institutions that extended the state's role in organising and formalising Islamic practice (Mutalib, 1990). State-led Islamisation extended well beyond halal. More importantly for this study, it created an institutional environment in which religious requirements could increasingly be expressed through policy, standards and specialised administration.

Halalization gradually emerged as a distinct institutional phenomenon from within this broader process of revivalism and Islamisation, understood here as the progressive formalisation and institutionalisation of halal assurance within modern systems of production, trade and consumption (cf. Calder, 2020; Bergeaud-Blackler, 2017). This institutional expansion reflected and in turn, reinforced broader change in how Muslim consumers understood the religious obligations attached to commercial choices (Fischer, 2008). These global developments intersected with revivalist aspirations for a stronger Islamic identity, encouraging the expansion of certification and the integration of halal standards into logistics, hospitality, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Shukri, 2025). Malaysia later became a reference point in the global halal economy as Islamisation policies institutionalised halal administration through JAKIM and the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) (Shukri, 2025). This article argues that halalization in Malaysia can be understood as an

institutional outcome of Islamic revivalism and a manifestation of state-led Islamisation, through which revivalist aspirations were translated into formal halal certification, standards and regulatory authority.

Despite the growing prominence of halalization, existing studies have largely examined the phenomenon through consumer behaviour, certification expansion, market development and governance (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Calder, 2020; Fischer, 2008; Gauthier, 2021). These studies provide valuable insights into the spread of halal across contemporary societies. However, comparatively less attention has been given to the historical and ideological processes through which Islamic revivalism and state-led Islamisation facilitated the institutionalisation of halal in Malaysia. Consequently, halalization is frequently discussed as a regulatory or market phenomenon without sufficient consideration of the religious, intellectual and socio-political forces that contributed to its emergence.

This article addresses that gap by examining how Islamic revivalism and state-led Islamisation shaped the institutionalisation of halal in Malaysia. Two questions guide the analysis: how did Islamic revivalism contribute to the growing importance of formal halal assurance? (RQ1) and how did state-led Islamisation provide the institutional conditions through which halal requirements were formalised in administration, standards and law? (RQ2). These developments did not occur in isolation. Industrialisation, changing supply chains and market demand also increased the need for formal halal assurance (Calder, 2020; Gauthier, 2021; Abu-Hussin et al., 2026). Revivalism and Islamisation are therefore treated as important religious and institutional influences, rather than the sole causes of halalization. The article links these developments to show how a stronger concern for halal gradually became embedded in formal institutions. This study contributes conceptually by linking Islamic revivalism, state-led Islamisation and the institutional development of halal in Malaysia.

The article is organised as follows. The literature review synthesises scholarship on Islamic revivalism, Islamisation and halalization in Malaysia and identifies the research gap. The methodology section outlines the qualitative document analysis of legislation, standards, policy texts and scholarship. The findings and discussion answer RQ1 and RQ2, explain halalization as a manifestation of state-led Islamisation and relate this reading to market and political economy accounts. The article concludes with implications for policy, industry and future research.

Literature Review

Islamic Revivalism and the Reshaping of Muslim Social Life

Islamic revivalism, often expressed through the terms *al-tajdīd al-Islāmī* or *al-ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah*, refers to a broader religious phenomenon manifested through diverse movements sought to restore Islam's guiding role across social and personal life in response to modernity and secularisation. These movements were not ideologically uniform. They brought together diverse groups with different methods, but shared the conviction that post-colonial Muslim societies had marginalised Islam from the institutions where it should remain operative (Lee, 2011). Since the 1970s, revivalist movements have influenced political discourse, social norms and religious practices across many Muslim-majority societies, extending into everyday life, including consumption patterns (Mohamed Nasir, 2022; Yousif, 2004). Rather than rejecting modernity, scholars characterise revivalism as an attempt to reorient modern life through Islamic ethical and epistemological frameworks, shaped by wider conditions of ideological

contestation and moral uncertainty in the post-colonial period (Ali, 2023; Jomo & Cheek, 1988; Lapidus, 1997).

Revivalist movements were also shaped by transnational influences. The Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 gave new momentum to Islamic revivalism across the Muslim world, with existing movements drawing on its example and new ones forming in its wake (Ali, 2023; Olivier, 2020). At the level of ideas, thinkers such as Abul A‘la al-Mawdudi, Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb presented Islam as a comprehensive system governing social, political and moral life (Ali, 2023; Murkilim, 2017; Pervaiz, 2024). Ali (2023) further observes that revivalism became visible in public life through Islamic dress, halal food and halal signs, and the growth of Islamic schools and banks. Taken together, these strands show that revivalism was not confined to theological renewal. It sought to reorder everyday conduct, including what Muslims ate and how they conducted business.

In Southeast Asia, and particularly in Malaysia, revivalism followed a distinct path shaped by local conditions (Lee, 2011). Gauthier (2021) places Malaysia within the same processes of re-Islamisation seen in neighbouring Indonesia, led by new urban middle classes, while Mohamed Nasir (2022) notes that members of ABIM later worked within the state apparatus in support of the government's developmental vision. Three movements were central during the 1970s. ABIM, was established in 1971 by alumni of the National Association of Malaysian Islamic Students (PKPIM) and its support base came primarily from university-educated Malay youth. Darul Arqam, founded in 1968, built disciplined Islamic communities as a model for wider society. Jamaat Tabligh, rooted in the Deobandi tradition, emphasised personal piety through preaching tours (*khuruj*) (Ab Ghani et al., 2019; Sarif et al., 2013). Their strategies differed, but together they intensified public religiosity and promoted Islam as *al-Islām al-shāmil*, a comprehensive way of life (Anwar, 1987; Mutalib, 1993; Nagata, 1984; Yousif, 2004), contributing to what Muzaffar (1987) describes as a moral reorientation of Malay-Muslim life.

The growing influence of these movements also created tension with the state (Lee, 2011). ABIM's cooperation with PAS in the late 1970s, including members standing as PAS candidates in the 1978 general election, widened the party's appeal among urban and educated Malays (Jomo & Cheek, 1988; Sarif et al., 2013). Malaysia's constitution recognized Islam as the official religion, but this status operated mainly at the ceremonial level (Fernando, 2006). Revivalist groups found symbolic recognition insufficient, pressing instead for genuine institutional authority over Islamic affairs. ABIM called for Shariah-based reform and for zakat to replace the existing tax system, while Darul Arqam sought change through model communities rather than direct politics (Jomo & Cheek, 1988; Sarif et al., 2013). In response, UMNO moved from symbolic engagement with Islam towards more systematic institutionalisation (Lee, 2011; Liow, 2009). Revivalism therefore worked at once as a moral movement, a social project and a source of pressure for institutional change.

This literature shows that revivalism in Malaysia changed social expectations about how Islam should be practised, governed and made visible in everyday life. However, scholarship has examined its political and cultural dimensions far more closely than its effect on consumption. The exceptions point in the same direction. Fischer (2008) links halal consumption to middle-class Malay self-discipline, Hasbullah et al. (2018) connect halal institutionalisation to the 1970s revival, and Kirihara (2021) reads Malaysian halal standards through Shariah morality. Yet these studies do not fully explain how revivalist concern became tied to formal certification, standards and state administration. This omission matters, because the heightened concern for

religious authenticity created the social conditions under which halal assurance could no longer rely on informal trust alone. The present study therefore treats revivalism as part of the social context in which formal halal assurance became increasingly meaningful, rather than as the sole cause of later institutionalisation.

Islamisation and Institutional Development in Malaysia

Islamisation refers here to the process through which Islamic values were given more explicit institutional form in law, administration, education and economic policy. Scholarship broadly agrees that this process accelerated in the early 1980s, although scholars differ over its main drivers. Some emphasise political competition with PAS, others the reorganisation of religious authority in a plural society, and others a wider piety-driven transformation (Abbott & Gregorios-Pippas, 2010; Aziz & Shamsul, 2004; Liow, 2009; Mutalib, 1993). For this article, the point is not to select one motive as the complete explanation. What matters is that Islamisation expanded the state's ability to act in explicitly Islamic terms.

That expansion was visible in concrete measures. The Mahathir administration introduced the *Dasar Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam* (Policy on the Inculcation of Islamic Values), expanded federal religious administration, supported the growth of Islamic banking and established the International Islamic University Malaysia within a broader project of integrating Islamic values into modern governance and education (Abbott & Gregorios-Pippas, 2010; Aziz & Shamsul, 2004; Mutalib, 1993). The state also absorbed prominent revivalist actors, most visibly Anwar Ibrahim in 1982. These developments show why Islamisation matters to the halal story: a government that had already built religious agencies, legal authority and Islamic professional expertise was better placed to formalise halal requirements when the need for reliable assurance increased.

Halalization and the Institutionalisation of Halal in Malaysia

Halalization has been conceptualised as the expansion of formal Shariah certification into products, services and economic sectors that had not previously required such verification (Calder, 2020). Fischer (2008) approaches the phenomenon through Muslim consumption and identity, while Gauthier (2021) places greater emphasis on industrialisation and market change. These perspectives help explain the wider development of halal, but they do not fully capture the Malaysian experience, where public religious institutions became central to halal assurance. This institutional dimension is therefore important for understanding how halalization developed in Malaysia.

Yet institutional development alone does not explain the religious concern behind halal assurance. From an Islamic Studies perspective, the central question is what this system seeks to protect. The Qur'anic command to consume what is *ḥalāl* and *ṭayyib* (al-Baqarah 2:168; al-Mā'idah 5:88) places lawful and wholesome consumption within Muslim religious life, while Kirihaara (2021) reads Malaysian halal standards as a modern application of Shariah morality. As production and supply chains became more complex, maintaining halal integrity increasingly required formal assurance beyond the point of production (Zulfakar et al., 2012; Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). In this study, halalization therefore refers to the progressive formalisation, institutionalisation and extension of *ḥalāl* and *ṭayyib* assurance across modern systems of production, trade and consumption. Certification and standards are institutional means through which that religious concern is organised, rather than the religious basis of halalization itself.

Studies of Malaysia's halal system add a further layer. Historical and legal research traces the development of agencies, legislation and certification procedures (Abdullah, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2021; Sofian et al., 2023). Political economy research examines how certification shapes state authority, market access and industry participation; Abu-Hussin et al. (2026) show how centralised certification strengthens state control while creating costs for smaller firms, and Shukri (2025) highlights halal branding and soft power. Sectoral studies show how implementation differs in logistics and other non-food fields (Roslan et al., 2016; Yatiban et al., 2020; Zakaria et al., 2024). This scholarship explains the operation and variation of halal institutions well, but gives less attention to how Malaysia's model grew out of the earlier revivalist and Islamisation context.

Read together, these bodies of literature reveal a gap between three bodies of scholarship that are usually treated separately, as summarised in Table 1. The gap is not an absence of work on halal. It is the limited connection between three bodies of scholarship that have usually been discussed separately. Revivalism research explains the growth of Islamic consciousness but says less about how it reshaped everyday expectations of halal assurance. Islamisation research explains the expansion of religious administration but rarely follows halal as a distinct field in which that expansion became visible. Halal studies explain certification, regulation and market growth, but give less attention to how those developments connect historically to revivalism and Islamisation. This article brings them together to explain how a stronger concern for halal assurance became linked to the state-centred system that later developed in Malaysia.

Table 1: Literature Strands and the Unresolved Question

Strand	Representative studies	What it explains	What remains less developed
Islamic revivalism	Nagata (1984), Anwar (1987), Muzaffar (1987), Mutalib (1993), Ab Ghani et al. (2019)	Rise of <i>dakwah</i> , public religiosity, political pressure	Connection between revivalism, everyday consumption and halal assurance
Islamisation and bureaucracy	Abbott and Gregorios-Pippas (2010), Aziz and Shamsul (2004), Liow (2009), Hamayotsu (2018), Chan (2023)	Motives, co-option, growth of the Islamic bureaucracy	How halal became a distinct field of institutionalisation
Halalization (sociological and market)	Calder (2020), Gauthier (2021), Fischer (2008)	Spread of certification, market logic, consumer identity	How public religious authority shaped the Malaysian certification model
Malaysian halal governance	Abu-Hussin et al. (2026), Sofian et al. (2023), Abdullah (2019), Shukri (2025)	How the system operates, who benefits and who bears costs, implementation difficulties	Historical emergence of the state-centred institutional form
Revival and halal link	Hasbullah et al. (2018), Kirihaara (2021), Mohamed Nasir (2022), Sarif et al. (2013)	Recognises continuity between the revival and religious institutions	How revivalist concern became linked to formal halal administration

Source: Author's synthesis of the literature reviewed.

Across the literature, a conceptual sequence becomes apparent. Islamic revivalism acted as a societal catalyst for stronger halal consciousness, while state-led Islamisation provided the institutional mechanism for formalising that concern. Within this setting, halalization developed through the formalisation, institutionalisation and extension of halal assurance across sectors. Industrial food production, complex supply chains, consumer trust concerns, and market demand also shaped this process. Figure 1 therefore presents a conceptual sequence rather than a single-cause explanation of halalization.

From Islamic Revivalism to Halalization

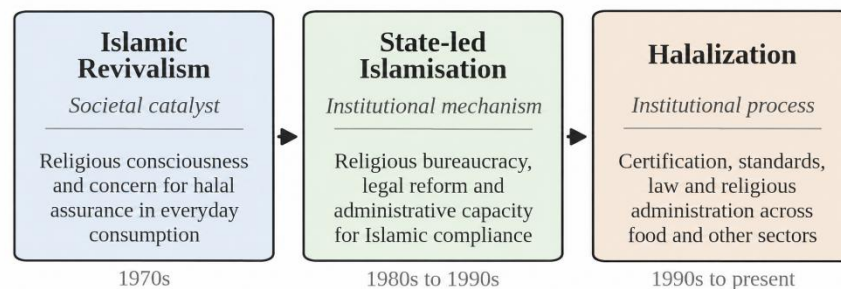


Figure 1: Conceptual Sequence: From Islamic Revivalism to Halalization

Source: Author's conceptualisation based on Nagata (1984), Mutalib (1993), Abbott and Gregorios-Pippas (2010), Kiriara (2021) and Abu-Hussin et al. (2026).

Methodology

This study uses qualitative document analysis to examine the historical and institutional development of halal assurance. Legal instruments, halal standards, policy documents and relevant scholarship were examined to trace changes in authority, regulation and administrative practice over time (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003). The analysis combined chronological reading with thematic interpretation. Qur'anic and Prophetic sources provided the normative basis for the Islamic concepts discussed, but were not treated as evidence of institutional causation.

The documentary material comprised three groups. The first embraces legal and institutional materials on Malaysian halal administration, including the Trade Descriptions Act 2011, successive versions of MS 1500 (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2019), the MS 2400 series (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2010) and the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 (Halal Development Corporation, 2023). The second comprises scholarly literature on Islamic revivalism, state-led Islamisation, halal certification and the Malaysian halal system. The third comprises selected Qur'anic and Prophetic sources used to clarify the Islamic concepts invoked in the analysis. These scriptural sources provided a normative frame for interpreting Islamic concepts and were not treated as historical evidence for why a particular policy or institution emerged.

Documents were read in two ways. Chronologically, the analysis established major changes in halal administration and cross-checked dates across sources. Thematically, the analysis compared three connected issues: changes in Muslim religious consciousness, the expansion of state Islamic institutions and the formalisation of halal assurance. The resulting interpretation was then compared with market and political economy accounts. Prime ministerial terms organise the chronology but do not attribute change to individual leaders (Table 2). Because the study is interpretive, its claims concern historical consistency rather than causation, and

documentary evidence alone cannot establish how halal administrators or consumers understand institutional legitimacy.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are organised around the two research questions. The first examines the relationship between revivalism and growing concern for halal assurance (RQ1). The second traces how state-led Islamisation provided the institutions through which that concern was formalised (RQ2). The final section brings these developments together by examining how halalization developed through the institutional mechanisms of state-led Islamisation and its wider implications.

Islamic Revivalism and Halal Consciousness

During the 1970s, as Islamic revival movements emphasized Islam's comprehensive role in everyday life, Muslim consumers began demanding more than producers' verbal claims of halal compliance. Self-claimed halal labels, *ditanggung halal* no longer satisfied consumers whose revivalist consciousness had raised expectations for credible Shariah assurance. Sarif et al. (2013) similarly describe stronger concern among Muslims of the revival period to consume food assured as halal, while Fischer (2008) links halal consumption to middle-class Malay self-discipline and visible religiosity. Because much of the evidence for the 1970s is secondary, revivalism is treated as an important contributor to stronger halal consciousness, not as the sole cause of later certification.

Islamic sources explicitly provide the religious basis for halal scrutiny. The Qur'anic command *ḥalālān ṭayyiban* connects lawful and wholesome consumption to God-consciousness, *taqwā* (al-Baqarah 2:168; al-Mā'idah 5:88). Classical *fiqh* also recognises *al-ibāḥah al-aṣḥiyah*, the presumption that things are permissible unless evidence indicates otherwise. In modern food systems, however, uncertainty may arise not only from ingredients but also from processing and handling. The Prophetic guidance on doubtful matters is relevant here, particularly where consumers cannot verify these processes directly (al-Bukhārī, ḥadīth no. 52; Muslim, ḥadīth no. 1599). Revivalist concern with Islam in everyday life gave greater weight to such questions of consumption and contributed to the growing importance of formal halal assurance. These principles are used here as an analytical frame rather than as a formal juristic ruling.

The revivalist emphasis on Islam as a comprehensive way of life placed food consumption more firmly within religious practice and strengthened concern for credible halal assurance. Industrial production and imported food reinforced this concern by increasing the distance between consumers and producers, making direct verification of ingredients and handling more difficult (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026). Federal involvement in halal verification was already evident in the 1970s, preceding the later formal certification system (Abdullah et al., 2021). Halal consciousness thus provides an important link between revivalist change and the institutional development that followed, although the available documents do not establish a direct causal relationship. In answer to RQ1, Islamic revivalism contributed to the growing importance of formal halal assurance by making halal a more explicit concern in Muslim everyday life, particularly where personal knowledge and communal trust were no longer sufficient on their own.

Islamisation and Halal Institutions

Formal halal verification in Malaysia emerged within religious administration rather than as an industrial policy. From the 1970s, the Islamic Affairs Division within the Prime Minister's

Department issued halal confirmation letters, while state religious departments maintained separate systems with their own logos (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Sofian et al., 2023). As Islamisation policies took hold in the 1980s, these fragmented arrangements gave way to centralised institutional authority, shifting halal assurance from community-based oversight toward state governance. By 1994, BAHEIS issued a standardized certificate bearing an official halal logo, marking the first national commitment to formal halal assurance (Sofian et al., 2023). Halal assurance was thus institutionalised through religious administration before it acquired strategic economic significance.

Formal halal administration intensified through the 1980s and 1990s. Gauthier (2021) dates to the early 1980s the policies to certify, standardise and bureaucratised halal production, trade and consumption, and Kirihara (2021) dates the Islamisation of food products to around 1980. Gauthier links these policies to Malay nationalism, entrepreneurship and a state-led Islamisation intended partly to pre-empt Islamist opponents. Yet the development of halal administration cannot be reduced to electoral strategy alone. Under Mahathir, revivalist actors were incorporated into state institutions, the Policy on the Inculcation of Islamic Values was introduced, and the Islamic bureaucracy expanded (Abbott & Gregorios-Pippas, 2010; Liow, 2009). Halal certification was later formalised under JAKIM, established in 1997 (Shukri, 2025). Gauthier (2021) also notes that efforts to promote Malay entrepreneurship produced little significant result before the 1990s. Taken together, these developments suggest that political and economic objectives operated within a broader process of state-led Islamisation rather than fully explaining the earlier growth of halal administration.

Legislative consolidation then followed in stages. The MS 1500 standard, first issued in 2000 and revised in 2004, 2009, and 2019, codified technical requirements for halal food production, handling, and storage (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Kirihara, 2021). Food labelling legislation was amended to designate JAKIM and state religious departments as the sole certifying bodies, and the Trade Descriptions Act 2011 formally revoked private certifiers' legal recognition (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Sofian et al., 2023). Figure 2 summarises the milestones.

Institutionalisation of halal practice in Malaysia

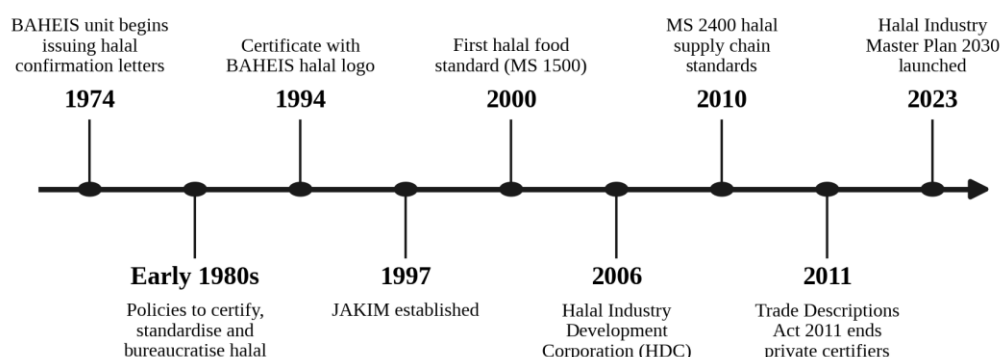


Figure 2: Institutionalisation of Halal Practice in Malaysia

Source: Author's compilation from Abu-Hussin et al. (2026), Department of Standards Malaysia (2010), Gauthier (2021), Halal Development Corporation (2023), Kirihara (2021), Shukri (2025) and Sofian et al. (2023).

Read chronologically, these measures show a gradual shift in halal authority. Before formal certification became established, halal assurance relied more heavily on personal knowledge, seller reputation and local religious judgement. By the 1990s and 2000s, certificates, technical standards and public agencies had become increasingly central. The significance of this shift lies in the movement of halal assurance into formal state administration.

Malaysia's state-centred certification model was not the only possible arrangement. Elsewhere, halal certification has been organised through non-governmental certifiers, Islamic councils or more decentralised systems, as seen in Europe, Thailand and Indonesia before its 2014 halal law (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Sofian et al., 2023; Shukri, 2025). Malaysia followed a different path, where halal assurance developed alongside the wider expansion of Islamic administration. By the time certification expanded, federal religious agencies had grown, revivalist actors had been incorporated into state apparatus (Abbott & Gregorios-Pippas, 2010), and Islamic values had acquired a larger place in public administration. Similar shifts from personal religious obligation towards organised administration can be seen in zakat and the Islamic courts (Sarif et al., 2013; Hamayotsu, 2018). Halal can therefore be understood as one field within this broader institutionalisation of Islam.

Continuity across political administrations is also evident. Mahathir expanded Islamic bureaucracy and established JAKIM, while Abdullah Badawi added an industry-development layer through the Halal Industry Development Corporation and the first Halal Industry Master Plan. Najib Razak extended halal assurance into logistics and strengthened central certification through MS 2400 and the Trade Descriptions Act 2011, while Anwar Ibrahim's administration aligns HIMP 2030 with Malaysia Madani (Halal Development Corporation, 2023; Shukri, 2025). Table 2 illustrates how this institutional base was retained and extended across successive administrations, suggesting that halalization developed beyond the policy of any single leader. In answer to RQ2, state-led Islamisation provided the religious bureaucracy, legal authority and technical standards through which halal requirements were formalised and subsequently expanded.

Table 2: Leadership Periods and Their Relation to Islamisation and Halal Institutions

Period	Public framing	Selected institutional developments	Relevance to halal institutions
1981–2003 (Mahathir administration)	Institutional Islamisation through the inculcation of Islamic values	Policies to certify and standardise halal from the early 1980s, JAKIM (1997)	Built the bureaucratic base and federal authority for halal governance
2003–2009 (Abdullah Badawi administration)	<i>Islam Hadhari</i>	Halal Industry Development Corporation (2006), first Halal Industry Master Plan (2008)	Added an industry development agency to the religious regulator
2009–2018 (Najib Razak administration)	<i>Wasatiyyah</i> (moderation)	MS 2400 supply chain standards (2010), Trade Descriptions Act 2011	Extended standards to logistics and centralised certification authority

2022–present (Anwar Ibrahim administration)	Malaysia <i>Madani</i>	Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 (2023)	Aligned industry strategy with the Madani pillars, including Bumiputera participation
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Source: Author's synthesis from the sources cited in the text. The period 2018 to 2022 is not tabulated.

Halalization through State-led Islamisation

The preceding analysis suggests a broader way of understanding halalization in Malaysia. At its religious core lies the need to safeguard halal and *halālan ṭayyiban*, a concern that became more difficult to verify directly as production and distribution grew more complex (Kiriara, 2021; Mohamed Nasir, 2022). In Malaysia, state-led Islamisation provided the institutional and regulatory setting through which this concern could be formalised in certification, standards, law and specialised institutions. Within this framework, halal assurance extended beyond food production into logistics and other sectors. Calder (2020) shows that halal logistics developed amid concern over contamination across supply chains, while Malaysia addressed this through the MS 2400 series (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2010; Abu-Hussin et al., 2026). Figure 3 illustrates this sectoral extension.

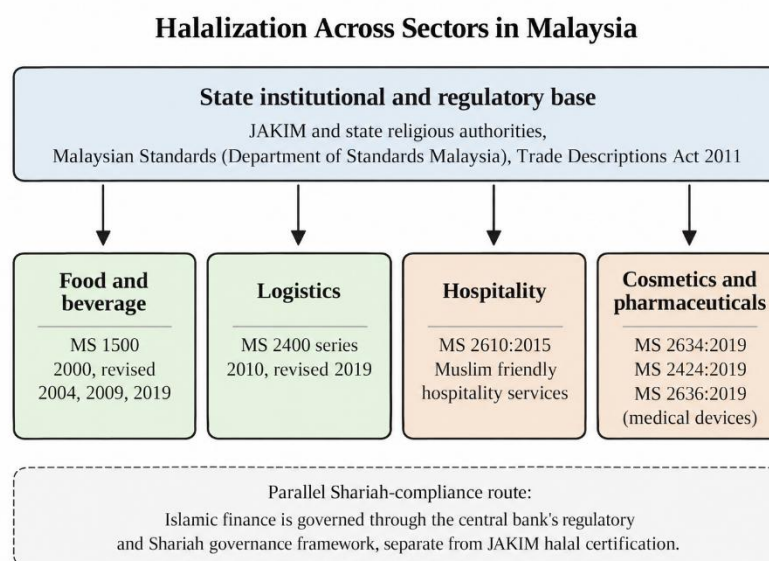


Figure 3: Halalization Across Sectors in Malaysia

Source: Author's compilation from Abu-Hussin et al. (2026), Calder (2020), Department of Standards Malaysia (2010) and Engku Ali and Oseni (2017).

Figure 3 shows that sectoral expansion involved more than adding new products to a certification list. It widened the scope within which halal integrity had to be protected, from food production and supply-chain movement to service and non-food domains. Islamic finance sits close to this discussion but should not be treated as a JAKIM halal-certification sector. Calder (2020) places Islamic finance within a broader family of Shariah-compliance certification, yet in Malaysia it operates through a separate central-bank regulatory and Shariah governance structure (Engku Ali & Oseni, 2017).

Halalization holds religious and economic significance simultaneously. It consolidates Islamic identity and Muslim confidence in halal consumption while also supporting Malaysia's position

in the global halal economy (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Shukri, 2025). Its reach is also international, since JAKIM certification is recognised in 47 countries (Shukri, 2025) and JAKIM in turn recognises 88 foreign halal certification bodies (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026), so a system built on domestic religious administration now functions as a benchmark in the global halal economy. The Malaysian case shows that halalization took shape through the interaction of religious concern and institutional development. Its commercial significance became more pronounced later, building on a system of religious administration that was already in place. This chronology does not establish that religious motives caused subsequent market expansion. It does, however, indicate that Malaysia's economic halal strategy emerged from an existing religious-administrative base. Taken together, these findings support the working definition set out in the literature review, with one refinement: in Malaysia, the formalisation and institutionalisation of halal and *ḥalālān ṭayyibān* assurance were substantially enabled by state-led Islamisation, while its wider expansion was also shaped by industrial and market developments.

Market and political economy explanations remain important. Gauthier (2021) emphasises industrialisation and market change, Calder (2020) focuses on certification in liberal markets, while Abu-Hussin et al. (2026) show how Malaysia's system intersects with market access and state interests. These accounts explain much of the development of halalization, but less about why halal assurance acquired stronger religious significance and why Malaysia institutionalised it through a state-centred rather than a more pluralistic certification model. This study addresses that historical and institutional question through Islamic revivalism and state-led Islamisation. The two perspectives are complementary rather than competing.

Seen from an Islamic Studies perspective, however, the issue is not only how the system operates, but also what it is meant to protect. As production and supply chains became more complex, consumers could no longer depend on personal knowledge and trust alone to verify ingredients and handling. Formal assurance therefore took on part of that verification function. In this sense, halalization can be understood as the institutional translation of the religious obligation to safeguard halal and *ḥalālān ṭayyibān* within modern systems of production and supply.

Theoretical and Policy Implications

Theoretically, this study extends revivalism research beyond politics and public identity by showing how changes in religious consciousness can shape everyday economic practice and become connected to formal institutions, a pattern also visible in zakat administration (Sarif et al., 2013). For halal studies, the contribution lies in linking demand for assurance with the institutions that organise and sustain it. Political economy helps explain how the system operates, while this study adds a historical account of how that state-centred institutional form emerged in Malaysia.

In practical terms, the credibility of halal assurance depends on consistent enforcement and transparent auditing, since misuse of the halal logo can weaken both compliance and public trust (Abu-Hussin et al., 2026; Shukri, 2025). Smaller firms should be supported in meeting certification requirements without unnecessary burden, but without compromising assurance standards (Halal Development Corporation, 2023). Clearer allocation of responsibilities across agencies and levels of government could also reduce uncertainty for firms, particularly in logistics (Abdullah, 2019; Yatiban et al., 2020). Islamic finance, however, should remain

analytically distinct because it operates through a separate regulatory and Shariah-governance framework (Engku Ali & Oseni, 2017).

These implications also connect the Malaysian case to the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015). Transparent and accountable halal administration corresponds to SDG target 16.6 on effective, accountable and transparent institutions, and reducing certification burdens for small firms corresponds to target 8.3 on the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Shukri (2025) further suggests that Malaysia could extend *ḥalālan ṭayyiban* towards an "ethical halal" agenda covering environmental sustainability, labour rights and animal welfare, which would bring halal assurance closer to SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production. These links are the authors' interpretation and not findings of the document analysis.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings show that Malaysian halalization is better understood when the development of halal assurance is read alongside Islamic revivalism and state-led Islamisation. In relation to RQ1, Islamic revivalism in the 1970s helped make halal a more explicit concern in Muslim everyday life. In relation to RQ2, the expansion of Islamic administration from the 1980s provided the institutional basis through which that concern was formalised in certification, standards and law. Halalization, in this account, is therefore more than the spread of certification across markets. It refers to the progressive formalisation, institutionalisation and extension of halal and *ḥalālan ṭayyiban* assurance, substantially enabled by state-led Islamisation and further shaped by industrialisation, market demand, complex supply chains and political interests.

The contribution of this study lies in bringing together three strands that are usually discussed separately. It extends revivalism research by tracing religious change into consumption and expectations of halal assurance. By connecting halal studies with the history of state-led Islamisation, the study clarifies halalization as an institutional process through which halal and *ḥalālan ṭayyiban* assurance became progressively formalised, institutionalised and extended under modern conditions. Certification, standards and regulation are understood within this process as institutional means of organising that assurance. In practical terms, this interpretation also places religious credibility, institutional coordination and workable support for industry at the centre of halal administration.

The study is limited by its reliance on documents and published scholarship, which cannot capture how contemporary actors understand the historical relationship between revivalism, Islamisation and halal certification. Future research could address this limitation through interviews with JAKIM officers, auditors and industry practitioners, complemented by archival research on the institutional choices that shaped halal regulation. Comparative research across other areas of halal assurance, including logistics, could further examine whether the interaction between religious concern and institutional development identified in this study extends beyond food certification.

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