

Thailand's Technological Path – Instructions for Vietnam's Halal Industry

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Citation: Vo Trung Hau. (2026). Thailand's technological path – Instructions for Vietnam's halal industry. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(8), 66-68.	<i>Thailand is one of the rare success stories of a non-Muslim-majority country building an internationally reputable Halal industry, not by granting administrative authority to religious organizations but by relying on scientific and technological capabilities. Besides the Central Council of Islamic Organizations of Thailand (CICOT) acting as the religious certification body, institutions such as the Halal Science Center at Chulalongkorn University have integrated DNA analysis, chemical testing, and traceability systems into their certification processes, transforming many religious requirements into objectively verifiable technical criteria. This article analyzes Thailand's "hybrid technocratic" model and compares it with Vietnam, where Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP also places a strong emphasis on standards and quality control systems. Based on this, the article suggests that Vietnam needs to continue investing in developing testing, traceability, and risk management capabilities within the Halal supply chain to enhance credibility in international markets.</i> Keywords: Halal management; Thailand; Vietnam; Decree 127/2026/ND-CP; technical certification; traceability.

1. Introduction

In the early decades of the 21st century, the Halal economy has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of global trade. Originating from Islamic religious regulations (Sharia) concerning food and services, its scope today is vast. Halal has expanded into many other sectors, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, logistics, tourism, finance, and e-commerce (Fischer, 2011, 2016). This expansion reflects Halal's shift from a religious requirement for the Muslim community to a global economic ecosystem.

Vietnam has just issued Decree 127/2026/ND-CP, for the first time institutionalizing Halal governance at the national level. While Indonesia has chosen the path of empowering religious organizations, another model more noteworthy for Vietnam is found in Thailand — a country that is not predominantly Muslim yet has successfully built a science-based Halal industry.

2. Governance Model in Thailand: The Technocratic Path

Thailand developed its Halal governance system in the context of a country that is not predominantly Muslim but has a relatively stable, organized indigenous Muslim

community with legal status recognized by the state. (Mohd Nawawi et al., 2020). The Islamic Organizations Administration Act establishes the legal basis of this system, BE 2540 (1997), under which the Central Islamic Council of Thailand – CICOT is granted the highest authority to certify and monitor the Sharia conformity of Halal products nationwide.

However, the distinctive feature of the Thai model lies not in CICOT's role but in the formation of a multi-stakeholder governance structure that combines religious authority, scientific infrastructure, and state economic development policies. Alongside CICOT, institutions such as the Thai Halal Standards Institute and, especially, the Halal Science Center (HSC) at Chulalongkorn University are directly involved in testing, risk assessment, traceability, and verification of the integrity of the Halal supply chain through modern scientific tools. The integration of DNA analysis, chemical testing, and quality management systems into the certification process has enabled Thailand to transform many religious requirements into objectively verifiable technical criteria. (Mahama et al., 2020).

From the perspective of regulatory governance theory, the Thai model reflects a shift from a governance mechanism based solely on religious authority to a multi-centred network governance model. In this model, religious legitimacy continues to be guaranteed by CICOT, but the system's regulatory capacity and reliability increasingly rely on scientific institutions and technical standards. The state does not directly perform the function of certifying or promulgating Sharia standards. However, it mainly plays a supporting role within institutions, investing in infrastructure, promoting scientific research, and implementing trade and diplomacy strategies to expand access to global Halal markets.

Compared to the Secular Halal Governance Framework (SHGF), Thailand largely meets the conditions for institutionalized religious consultation, technocratic certification capacity, and transnational recognition mechanisms. However, unlike the SHGF model, the source of Halal legitimacy in Thailand remains primarily under CICOT's authority rather than being internalized within a fully state-controlled public regulatory mechanism. Therefore, the legitimacy of the secular state in the Halal field remains more in a supportive, indirect coordinating role than in a central regulatory power. Thailand is considered a typical representative of the hybrid-technocratic Halal Governance Model. This model shows a different development path from Indonesia: instead of increasing the role of administrative institutions in establishing Halal legitimacy, Thailand chose to strengthen scientific capacity and technical infrastructure to enhance the system's reliability. This has helped Thailand achieve a high level of international recognition while maintaining the central role of Islamic institutions in certification activities.

3. Vietnam is pursuing a technocratic path

Vietnam's issuance of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP on April 6, 2026, effective from June 1, 2026, marks a significant step in the institutionalization of Halal governance in Vietnam. For the first time, Vietnam has established a unified national legal framework for the certification, conformity assessment, and development of Halal products and services. Unlike Indonesia and Thailand, where Halal legitimacy is closely tied to historically authoritative Islamic institutions and large communities of believers, the Vietnamese model is shaped by a country without a Muslim majority that maintains its secular principles and does not integrate Islamic law into the national legal system. This characteristic creates a new institutional governance structure in which the state plays a central role in regulation while simultaneously establishing mechanisms to ensure compatibility with Sharia norms.

Furthermore, Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP establishes a governance infrastructure based on internationally recognized conformity assessment standards. Clause 2, Article 11 of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP requires organizations conducting Halal certification activities to have a management system and operational capacity that meet the requirements stipulated in the national standard TCVN 13888, or in equivalent international, regional, or national standards of Islamic countries regarding the requirements for accredited Halal certification organizations. Organizations conducting Halal product testing activities must apply control measures throughout the process from receiving, storing, processing, to analyzing test samples to prevent the risk of cross-contamination with non-Halal components or products; Using published or recognized testing methods, in accordance with the requirements of the standard to which the product is declared, as stipulated in Points b and c, Clause 2, Article 9 of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP. These regulations demonstrate that Halal status is not only guaranteed by a declaration of standards but is also supported by objective assessment mechanisms, traceability, and quality control. This is a manifestation of the third condition in SHGF – Technocratic Certification Capacity.

4. Conclusion

Thailand developed a hybrid model that combines the religious legitimacy of CICOT with the scientific capabilities of specialized research and testing centers. Meanwhile, Vietnam opted for a more technocratic regulatory structure, focusing on standards systems, conformity assessment, and supply chain risk management, while maintaining the participation of the Muslim community through legally mandated consultation mechanisms.

Vietnam can learn from Thailand in developing infrastructure for scientific verification and risk-based Halal governance (SHGF). One of the hallmarks of SHGF is the shift in focus from control based on religious authority to evidence-based governance and risk management. Accordingly, Vietnam needs to invest in developing testing, traceability, and risk assessment capabilities in the Halal supply chain to ensure the integrity of products and services. Integrating scientific tools into the certification process is not intended to replace Sharia standards but to create objective verification mechanisms that enhance the system's credibility in the international market.

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