

Governing Halal in a Non-Muslim Majority Country: The Case of Vietnam

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>Following the issuance of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP by the Government, Vietnam now has, for the first time, a unified legal framework regulating the certification and development of Halal products and services at the national level. This article analyzes Vietnam's new Halal governance structure through four pillars: the Ministry of Science and Technology acting as the focal point for state management; a certification system operating according to international technical standards (TCVN 13888); the inclusion of the Muslim community in a legally mandated consultative role instead of holding decision-making power as in some other countries; and a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) mechanism to pave the way for Vietnamese goods to access the international Halal market. Unlike models based on religious authority, Vietnam chooses a path where the secular State plays a central regulatory role. In contrast, religious legitimacy is ensured through the institutionalization of the consultation process. Based on this, the article proposes four main policy directions: strengthening religious consultation mechanisms, increasing the capacity of the national accreditation and certification system, developing scientific verification and risk management infrastructure, and promoting a transnational accreditation strategy.</i>
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Citation: Vo Trung Hau. (2026). Governing Halal in a Non-Muslim Majority Country: The Case of Vietnam. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(8), 69-71.	Keywords: Halal governance; Vietnam; Decree 127/2026/ND-CP; Halal certification; religious consultation; transnational accreditation.

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, such as 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.

The scale of development is making the Halal economy increasingly important in the global trade structure. According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy 2024/25 report, total spending by Muslim consumers worldwide on Halal products (excluding Islamic finance) reached approximately US\$2.43 trillion in 2023 and is projected to increase to approximately US\$3.36 trillion by 2028 (Dinar Standard, 2024). The continued growth of the Halal market not only creates opportunities for Muslim-majority countries but also encourages many non-Muslim-

majority countries to participate more deeply in global Halal value chains and trade networks (Wilkins et al., 2019).

In Vietnam, Halal governance has become particularly significant following the Government's issuance of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP dated April 6, 2026, on the management of quality and development policies for Halal products and services. As the first comprehensive legal document regulating the Halal sector at the national level, Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP not only opens opportunities to promote exports to Muslim markets but also raises theoretical and practical issues related to the origins of Halal legitimacy, the role of religious norms in the state governance system, and the coordination mechanisms among stakeholders involved in Halal governance in the context of a country without a Muslim majority. Therefore, the case of Vietnam provides a research context to consider the broader question of how non-Muslim majority countries establish and operate a Halal governance system that

simultaneously meets the religious legitimacy requirements of the international market and maintains the principles of a secular rule of law state in the process of integrating into the global Halal economy.

2. The process of forming Vietnam's Halal model

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 with a non-Muslim majority, maintaining the secular principles of the State and not integrating Islamic law into the national legal system. This characteristic creates a new institutional governance structure (Nguyen & Ngo, 2025), in which the State plays a central role in regulation while also establishing mechanisms to ensure compatibility with Sharia norms.

a. Halal Management Authority in Vietnam

From the perspective of the state power organization, Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP establishes the Ministry of Science and Technology as the focal agency for state management of Halal. According to Clause 1, Article 24 of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP, the Ministry of Science and Technology performs the function of state management over activities in the fields of standards, quality, and testing and certification for Halal products and services; develops, appraises, and publishes Vietnamese standards on Halal; cooperates internationally on standardization and conformity assessment in the field of Halal; signs Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) on Halal certification results; and inspects compliance with laws on standards, quality, and certification in the field of Halal. This structure clearly reflects the characteristics of the first condition in the SHGF, Secular State Legality, where all power to regulate public affairs, issue standards, and oversee enforcement is placed within the state administrative system rather than given to religious organizations (Alyaqoubi, 2024).

b. Halal certification according to international standards.

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, and 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.

c. The voice of the Muslim community in Vietnam

The most distinctive feature of the Vietnamese model is that the system does not eliminate religious elements but instead internalizes and institutionalizes the participation of the Muslim community within the framework of public administration. Clause 1, Article 5 of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP stipulates that the development and amendment of national standards for Halal products and services must ensure the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Ethnic Minorities and Religion, and Muslim experts with expertise in Halal requirements in the consultation and assessment process. Unlike Indonesia, where religious bodies directly issue Fatwas that have decisive value for Halal status, Vietnam's mechanism places religious organizations in a legally mandated consultative role. Therefore, religious legitimacy is ensured through an institutional process rather than by transferring public regulatory power to religious organizations.

d. International cooperation to get Vietnamese products Halal certified

At the international level, Vietnam has established mechanisms for recognizing foreign certifications, promoting cooperation with international Halal organizations and creating a legal basis for negotiating Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) as stipulated in Clauses 1 and 3, Article 16 of Decree No. 127/2026/ND-CP on the recognition of Halal certification results from foreign organizations. These legal provisions reflect the fourth condition of SHGF – Transnational Recognition Mechanisms, showing that the system's goal is not only to manage the domestic

market but also to build international legitimacy for Vietnamese Halal products and services.

3. Policy recommendations for developing Vietnam's Halal governance system

The research findings indicate that building and effectively operating a Secular Halal Governance model depends not only on the enactment of a legal framework but also requires the synchronized development of regulatory institutions, certification infrastructure, and international recognition mechanisms. The study proposes four main policy directions for Vietnam as follows:

Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen the institutionalized mechanism for religious consultation. Research findings indicate that Halal legitimacy in non-Muslim majority countries cannot be maintained solely through administrative tools or technical standards. Therefore, Vietnam needs to continue improving mechanisms to ensure the genuine participation of experts and organizations representing the Muslim community in the process of developing standards, assessing conformity, and resolving issues related to Sharia norms. A permanent and transparent consultation mechanism will help strengthen the system's normative legitimacy without altering the State's secular principles.

Secondly, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the National Accreditation and Certification Architecture (NAA). In the SHGF model, the reliability of the system does not depend on the power of a central religious organization but on its capacity to assess conformity, certify, and monitor quality. Therefore, Vietnam needs to continue developing its national accreditation system in accordance with international conformity assessment standards, while ensuring the transparency, independence, and accountability of Halal certification bodies. This will lay the foundation for developing a socialized certification ecosystem while maintaining effective state control.

Thirdly, developing infrastructure for scientific verification and risk-based Halal governance is crucial. One of the hallmarks of the 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 capabilities for testing, traceability, and risk assessment 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 rather to create objective verification

mechanisms that enhance the system's credibility in the international market.

Fourth, promote a strategy of transnational recognition and regulatory diplomacy. Research shows that the legitimacy of the modern Halal system is shaped not only at the national level but also significantly depends on recognition by global Halal governance networks. Therefore, Vietnam needs to participate in standard harmonization mechanisms proactively, promote mutual recognition agreements, and strengthen cooperation with international Halal standardization, accreditation, and certification organizations. This is not only a condition for expanding market access but also a crucial factor in consolidating Vietnam's position in the regional and global Halal governance ecosystem.

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