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SDG#4, 8 and 9 - Trends of Halal Audit Training with Blockchain Technology for Sustainable Development with Decent Job Creation

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Abstract

This paper outlines a comprehensive strategy to harness the power of integrated skills in technology, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and halal concepts to rethink the design, delivery and assessment of the impact of halal training related courses under the green econmy. Aligning with the HKSAR policy address 2025, specifically paragraph 107, which emphasizes the enhancement of the General Employment Policy and the introduction of new mechanisms to attract top-tier talent, this project aims to position Hong Kong as a global/virtual/physical hub for halal training certificates in blockchain technology for revitalization. It seeks to address the acute manpower shortages - halal audit and halal executive competency in technology related training programmes in Hong Kong to promote SDG#9 innovations in the halal economy.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Innovation, Halal Audit, Decent Job Creation.

Introduction

The halal industry has seen exponential growth over the past few years, driven by policy of HKSAR, 2024 (source: https://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2024/public/pdf/policy/policy-full_en.pdf), "developing visitor sources from the Middle East and ASEAN – We will actively encourage various sectors of the community to enhance tourism-support measures for creating a friendly environment for visitors. They include providing information at the airport in Arabic and encouraging taxi fleets to provide fleet service information in Arabic; compiling a list of restaurants offering halal food; encouraging more commercial establishments to provide appropriate facilities, such as worship facilities in hotels; and stepping up staff training to strengthen their knowledge on receiving visitors from different cultural backgrounds;" (para 130, p.8), it is realised that awareness on the demand for halal-certified products has been increasing. In Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, halal certification plays a crucial role in ensuring compliance with Islamic dietary laws. Meanwhile, Hong Kong, as a vibrant economic hub, is increasingly recognizing the potential of halal markets, catering to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. A significant part of this growth can be attributed to the trend of halal audit training, which equips auditors and businesses with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate halal certification processes effectively.

Growth and Demand for Halal Training

According to a recent publication from Alex, former Secretary-General of the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, halal certification is to ensure compliance with Islamic dietary laws. "Certification requires restaurants to separate halal food from non-halal items, including pork, in both storage and preparation. Additionally, utensils and kitchenware must be exclusively used for halal food to prevent cross-contamination. Random inspections are conducted to maintain standards, with non-compliance leading to certification withdrawal."

(source: https://english.dotdotnews.com/a/202412/24/AP676a2be3e4b079cd3fc16b55.html) Hence, a market of halal executive training and auditor may be arise.

According to UN official website, "Halal food has been around for more than 1,400 years, but only in recent decades have halal products gained global prominence. The global Muslim population exceeds 1.6 billion, is growing at twice the rate of the non-Muslim world and is expected to reach 2.2 billion by 20301.

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It is therefore not surprising that the market for halal products and services is attracting more attention." (source: https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210579070c007) It is time to re-think the curriculum on Halal training for top management, front line staff and personnel who are involved in internal and external audit practices, for example, certification body on halal practice. Based on previous study, the factors for rise of halal food are categories into the following areas:

The rising global Muslim population, estimated at over 1.6 billion, has heightened the need for halal-certified products. For example, Indonesia is a place with the world's largest Muslim population, the push for halal certification has been prioritized by the government to enter into this vast potential market. Likewise, Malaysia is also a global halal hub with growing awareness in halal training initiatives to build the capabilities in halal auditing and certification.

In Hong Kong, the halal market starts to explore via promoting halal economy and tourism. This has been supported by information released in a recent feature article found in the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce website. With a growing number of halal consumers from both local and expatriate communities, there's an increasing recognition of the need for tailor-made halal training to different service industries, ensure food safety and other industries to have compliance with halal standards, for example cosmetics.

"The global Halal market has been booming in recent years, and is currently estimated to be worth US\$2.4 trillion, according to a report by the State of the Global Islamic Economy. By 2028, growth is projected to hit US\$4 trillion, driven by the growing Muslim demographic (Muslims comprise 25% of the world's population), rising awareness of Halal products, and the popularity of Halal tourism.

However, for Hong Kong's 300,000 Muslims – who make up 5% of the city's population – the 60-odd Halal-certified restaurants offer limited choices. In fact, a large proportion of people living in this multicultural city have limited knowledge about Halal food and practices.

But there are plenty of prospects for growth: Hong Kong's thriving Muslim community, together with incoming Muslim tourists, present a significant opportunity for businesses to cater to the needs of this growing demographic."

(source:https://www.chamber.org.hk/en/information/the-bulletin_detail.aspx?id=1130)

Halal Audit Training in Indonesia

Indonesia, a country with a rising number of muslim population and focus on supporting halal audit training, propelled by a formal regulatory framework established by the Indonesian government through the Halal Product Assurance Law, which became effective in 2019. The government mandates that all food and beverages, as well as products in other sectors, must obtain halal certification. This change opens up business opportunities and education needs on nurturing professional and competent halal auditors. According to the paper in Inkwood Ressearch, "The Indonesia halal food & beverage market is predicted to record a CAGR of 6.78% during the forecast period, 2023-2030, and is estimated to garner a revenue of \$258.02 billion by 2030."

(source: https://www.inkwoodresearch.com/reports/indonesia-halal-food-and-beverage-market/?srsltid=AfmBOor6if3s2XTfwOB5sh9umWynyzgAc9HklA0qtR5KhecCD3xcT7bP)

As Indonesia is one of the Asia-Pacific's largest Muslim population country, there is a great potential for the halal products market. With 12.7% of the global Muslim population residing in the country and 87.5% of its population following the Islamic faith, Indonesia offers a substantial consumer base for halal products and halal audit training. Business and learning opportunities are, hence, for example, application of blockchain technology for halal audit related training certificates for traceablity and authenticity.

'Indonesia stands as the vibrant core of the global Halal economy, boasting an impressive 229 million Muslims, the largest Muslim population worldwide. In 2023, Indonesia's Halal market was valued at approximately US\$279 billion. This figure underscores the country's pivotal role in the global Halal industry, with projections indicating a staggering growth trajectory. By 2030, the market is expected to soar at a CAGR of 14.2 percent, reaching around US\$807 billion. As the largest market

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for Halal products, Indonesia offers expansive opportunities in sectors like food and beverages, modest fashion, and Halal tourism, positioning itself as a crucial player in the Halal economy."

(source: https://www.thailand-business-news.com/asean/199236-unlocking-opportunities-in-indonesias-thriving-halal-economy# google_vignette)

"Based on the Law concerning halal product assurance Chapter 1 on General Provision, Article 1 that 1. Products are goods and/or services that are related to food, beverage, drug, cosmetic, chemical product, biological product, genetically engineered product, as well as consumer goods that are worn, used, or utilized by the public. 2. Halal Product is a Product that has been declared halal (lawful) according to Islamic sharia. 3. Halal Product Process hereinafter abbreviated as PPH is a series of activities to ensure the halalness of the Product including material procurement, process, storage, package, distribution, and presentation of the Product." (source: https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/ins139990.pdf, p.2) When searching in the internet, there is an organization which show commitment of halal audit training "To realize Halal Product Guarantee, Competent Human Resources are needed in their fields such as; Halal Auditors, Halal Slaughterer, and Halal Supervisor. To obtain the intended Human Resources, continuous training is needed by the mandate of the law. Here PT. KAYAMA AMANAH SEJATI through Accredited Halal Training Institutes and licensed Professional Certification Institutions play an active role in conducting Training and Certification of Human Resources in the Halal Field, besides that PT. KAYAMA AMANAH SEJATI also places competent Human Resources in their fields

both domestically and abroad." (source: https://halalkayama.com/about-us/).

When searching from the websites on halal training and relevant halal executive training and professional development courses in Asia for the past 10 years, The Dawah Halal Foundation (DHF for short), Taiwan, established in September 2018 has been found. In the website, the foundation mentions that the importance of halal verification and the role of Indonesian BPJPH Halal Certification Bureau.

"The Indonesian BPJPH halal certification is valid for four years, and requires manufacturers not only to comply with the Halal certification standards for product terminals, but also to import the halal quality assurance system (Halal Assurance System, HAS system) in the production process. In view of this, the foundation will not only conduct halal testing for end products, but also assist manufacturers to introduce the HAS 23000:1 supervision system, and implement halal from warehousing and purchasing, manufacturing, distribution and packaging, logistics, air transportation and other aspects. Certification specifications and requirements. If the owner wants to know more about the relevant laws and regulations of BPJPH halal certification in Indonesia, the foundation also provides the Chinese and English translation versions of Law No. 33 of Indonesia's "Halal Product Certification Law", so that manufacturers can quickly understand the Indonesian halal certification system. "

(source: https://halal.org.tw/en/node/454)

From the above, the trend of Indonesian halal audit and executive management training has been moving towards partnerships between training institutions and industry players to create professional halal related training programmes to meet the talent needs under the muslim friendly economy. Though workshops and seminars conducted by industry experts or recognized halal authorities are becoming increasingly popular. Universities and dedicated halal training centers are now offering specialized courses focusing on halal auditing, ISO 22000 HACCP food hygiene and Integrated Management System (IMS) for food hygiene, safety practices, and compliance with religious requirements. However, the integration of practical experiences through blockchain and non fungible token (NFT) technology for authenticity, traceability and decentralization on the issuance of halal certificates offered by halal-certified companies for professionalism in the rising training market for quality management perspective has not been explored. These initiatives not only impart technical skills of the application of blockchain technology for membership and admission of halal related community activities, but also promote the best practices in halal supply chain management, ultimately enhancing the overall integrity of the halal market in Indonesia and S.E. Asia.

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Futures of Education – Self Management, Resiliency, Critical Thinking and Creativity (SRCC)

The Education Forum on Futures of Education 2021 was organized by the UNESCO HK Association/Glocal Centre on 10th November, 2021. This has brought the key stakeholders from a diverse background together with inspiring learning outcomes on knowledge, skills, attitude and values for the future under COVID-19 with uncertainties. The key players in fields including education, consultancy, information & technology had delivered speeches and joined the panel discussions during the forum. They had laid out the challenges we are facing nowadays and provided multifaceted insights on the potential means to tackle these challenges.

The focus of the forum was on how the future of education in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area could be reframed in response to the comprehensive findings of the survey conducted prior to the forum, for example: the issues of climate change, environmental crises, and an aging population. The top-ranked purposes of education 2050 were namely scientific innovation, health & well-being, personal sustainability, and peace.

Blockchain NFTs in STEM Competitions

The convergence of blockchain technology, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), and the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) landscape represents a transformative shift in how value is created, shared, and recognized in the digital age. This paper explores the feasibility of applying design thinking and enquiry thinking approach with blockchain technology for sustainable training business.

Blockchain Technology / NFTs and STEM related Competitions

Blockchain technology is a decentralized ledger system that ensures transparency, security, and immutability of data (Yli-Huumo et al., 2016). NFTs, which are unique digital assets validated through blockchain, allow creators to tokenize their work—ranging from art to scientific data—guaranteeing its authenticity and ownership (Catalini & Gans, 2019). These attributes of NFTs open new avenues for innovation in STEM fields, providing solutions for data integrity, funding, and intellectual property protection.

STEM competitions have historically fostered innovation by providing platforms for students and professionals to showcase their skills and ideas (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). Recently, these competitions have begun to incorporate blockchain technology and NFTs, creating new pathways for interaction and validation of innovative projects. For instance, organizations like XPRIZE have explored the use of NFTs to represent participation and achievement in their competitions (XPRIZE, 2021).

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 interconnected global objectives designed to address pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030. The application of blockchain and NFTs in STEM competitions can potentially contribute to several SDGs.

- SDG 4: Quality Education: Blockchain can enhance educational experiences by validating skills
 and achievements through NFTs, providing students with verifiable credentials. This is particularly
 beneficial for marginalized groups, including women, who may lack access to traditional
 educational pathways (Bansal et al., 2022).
- SDG 5: Gender Equality: The encouragement of female participation in STEM disciplines is crucial
 for achieving gender equality. NFTs can help recognize and celebrate women's contributions in
 STEM fields, enhancing visibility and opportunities (Zou et al., 2021). By creating more inclusive
 environments through decentralized platforms, blockchain can empower women to engage in
 STEM competitions without traditional barriers.
- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: Integrating NFTs and blockchain in STEM competitions can drive innovation while providing a decentralized approach to funding projects.

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Crowdfunding through NFTs allows students and innovators to secure resources for their projects more efficiently than traditional models (Ma et al., 2023).

Women Empowerment in STEM Through Blockchain and NFTs

Women are underrepresented in STEM fields, which presents significant challenges for global development and innovation. The application of blockchain and NFTs can empower women by improving access to resources, networks, and recognition.

- Visibility and Recognition: By tokenizing their work, women in STEM can receive deserved recognition for their inventions and contributions. This visibility can inspire other women to pursue careers in science and technology (Abubakar et al., 2022). For example, NFT platforms have allowed women artists and creators to monetize their work, bridging the gender gap in the digital economy.
- Networking Opportunities: Blockchain technology facilitates decentralized networking, enabling
 women in STEM to connect without traditional gatekeeping barriers. By participating in STEM
 competitions that utilize these technologies, women can access mentorship and collaboration
 opportunities that may have otherwise been unavailable (Sullivan & Cummings, 2021).
- Educational Pathways: STEM competitions integrating blockchain and NFTs can offer women educational resources and opportunities to gain skills in emerging technologies. Programs and platforms that provide workshops or courses on blockchain and NFTs can create a more inclusive environment for women learners (Khan et al., 2023).

Numerous initiatives globally illustrate how blockchain and NFTs positively impact women in STEM and contribute to the SDGs. For example, the "Women in Blockchain" initiative promotes female participation by providing training, networking, and funding opportunities, while using NFTs to showcase their achievements in a global marketplace (Women in Blockchain, 2022). In education, the University of Melbourne has launched an NFT platform to recognize academic achievements transparently. This innovation not only recognizes all students fairly but particularly highlights the accomplishments of women in STEM programs, fostering an environment of recognition and encouragement (UNESCO, 2022).

As blockchain and NFT technologies continue to develop, it is crucial to focus on their ethical implications and accessibility. Engaging women in the design and implementation of these technologies will ensure that they are user-friendly and equitable. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations between technologists, educators, and policymakers can lead to innovative solutions that support women empowerment and the achievement of SDGs (Liu et al., 2023). Blockchain technology and NFTs represent a significant opportunity to enhance STEM competitions and promote sustainable development. By fostering inclusivity and recognition in these fields, there is potential for increased participation of women in STEM. The impacts of these technologies on SDGs highlight the necessity of integrating innovative solutions into education and professional growth frameworks. Continued research and practical applications of NFTs in STEM sectors will be vital to achieving these goals and empowering future generations of women.

Research Methodology and Findings

Step 1 - Understanding Design Thinking

Design thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that utilizes the designer's sensibility and methods to match people's needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value (Brown, 2009). The five stages of design thinking—empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test—are instrumental in creating products that resonate with consumer needs and values (Razzouk & Shute, 2012). In the context of luxury brands, particularly halal luxury brands, design thinking can unveil consumer perceptions and emotions associated with luxury, ethics, and culture.

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 Empathize: Understanding the needs, aspirations, and concerns of potential consumers in the halal
- luxury market is crucial. Conducting interviews and observing consumer behavior helps brands align their products with the underlying values of this market segment.
- Define: The insights gathered can be synthesized into a clear definition of the challenge. For halal luxury brands, this may revolve around balancing perceptions of exclusivity and accessibility, alongside ethical considerations.
- Ideate: Generating innovative ideas that reflect the essence of luxury while adhering to halal principles is paramount. This could involve brainstorming sessions that focus on the fusion of traditional craftsmanship with modern design sensibilities.
- Prototype: Developing minimal viable products, such as limited-edition pieces that reflect both luxury and halal integrity, allows brands to assess the market's response before full-scale production.
- Test: Gathering feedback from early adopters and potential customers facilitates continuous refinement of products and marketing strategies.

Step 2 - The Role of Inquiry Learning

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Inquiry-based learning (IBL) emphasizes the role of the learner in exploring questions and problems through investigation and dialogue, making it an invaluable approach for understanding the nuanced field of halal luxury (Kuhlthau et al., 2007). It fosters critical thinking and a deeper understanding of complex issues, allowing learners and brands to unearth valuable insights.

Inquiry learning can be employed in the following ways:

- Questioning: Encouraging consumers to ask questions about the underlying ethical frameworks of luxury brands fosters a deeper connection to the products. This could include inquiries about sourcing materials, production methods, and the impact on communities.
- Research: Conducting thorough research into consumer preferences, market trends, and competing luxury brands can provide a well-rounded perspective that shapes product development and marketing strategies.
- Collaboration: Engaging stakeholders across various sectors—such as ethical fashion designers, cultural experts, and community leaders—can enrich the inquiry process, ensuring that diverse perspectives are integrated.
- Reflection: Encouraging reflection on the consumer experience post-purchase strengthens the bond between the brand and its customers, fostering loyalty and advocacy.
- Action: Enacting strategies informed by inquiry encourages brands to take meaningful action, such
 as creating limited-edition collections that support local artisans or initiatives that contribute to
 social good.

Step 3 - Integrating Halal Audit related Contents with Design Thinking and Enquiry Learning for Innovative Learning Outcomes

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Design I hinking	g Inquiry Learning	Наг	al Audit Conceț	ots		Inno	vations	
Empathy	Questioning	Apply	empathetic	thinking	to	ask	Innovations	from
		particip	ants: the reaso	ons for risin	g der	nand	participants	on

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		of Halal audit and executive management training in S. E. Asia	promoting halal food from a new perspective on healthiness and			
		Imagine you are muslim or halal food seekers, what kinds of food and restaurant setting you would like to visit?	hygiene for SDG#3			
Define	Research	Define the scope of halal Halal audit and executive management training in S. E. Asia, e.g. focus on management commitment with SDG and ESG in halal audit execution	Innovations from participants on conduct research on halal food and healthy food from different perspectives for SDG#4.7			
		Imagine you are non-muslims, what kinds of foods have been defined healthy for a sustainable lfestyle and invite participants to compare Halal Audit with CSR ISO 26000 implementation to locate their simialiries	knowledge transfer and #12 responsible production and consumption			
Ideate	Collaboration	Brainstorm authentic and meaningful case study (local and global) on halal food/cosmetics with good practices and non compliances for group discussion Collaborate participants to generate feasible solutions for non compliance cases with knowledge gained from halal audit/executive training for applicablity and scalability	Innovations from participants on cocreate solutions and collaborations for halal related products and industries for impacts, e.g. collaborate women for SDG#5 gender equality with blockchain technology and NFT for traceability and authenticity SDG#9, #12 and #17 partnership			
Prototype	Reflection	Set up prototype for procedures of applying design thinking and enquiry thinking into training materials design and delivery	participants and trainers on reflecting the effectiveness and efficiency on halal audit and executive training, e.g. apply reflection via using Honey Mumford's Learning Styles			
			https://www.businessb alls.com/self- awareness/honey-and- mumfords-learning- styles/ https://pmejournal.org /search?q=Bloom%E2 %80%99s+Taxonomy			

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			+of+Learning&page=1 8 for SDG#4.7 knowledge transfer and SDG#3 wellness with halal knowledge		
Experiment	Actions	Based on prototypes and reflections discussed, take pioneer and proactive actions to try the quality of innovations, e.g. halal training certificates in blockchain technology for authenticity and traceability	Innovations from participants and trainers on proposed actions with timeline to test the proposed actions for improving th learning outcomes of halal audit and executive training for sustainable business		

The concept of halal, which translates to "permissible" in Arabic, extends beyond dietary rules to encompass ethical considerations in production, marketing, and consumption. This perspective can redefine luxury brand narratives and infuse them with a sense of purity and hope, fostering inclusivity.

- Purity: Halal luxury brands must ensure that their production processes adhere to halal standards, emphasizing cleanliness, ethical sourcing, and sustainable materials. This pureness aligns with consumers' desires for authenticity in luxury goods (Hassan et al., 2019).
- Hope: Building a brand narrative around hope positions luxury products as not just indulgent, but also as conduits for positive change. This aligns with consumer desires for self-fulfillment and communal benefit (Hossain & Ali, 2018).
- Inclusivity: Luxury brands should embrace inclusivity in their marketing strategies to reach a broader audience. This promotes a sense of belonging among consumers who may feel alienated by traditional luxury marketing (Baker et al., 2017).
- Good Practice: Ethical practices, transparency in sourcing, and community engagement should be
 foundational to the brand ethos. This commitment can foster long-term loyalty among consumers
 who value corporate social responsibility.
- Cultural Respect: Understanding and respecting the cultural contexts in which halal products exist not only enhances brand reputation but also invites diverse consumer engagement (Meyer & Ali, 2020).

Conclusion

The application of design thinking and enquiry learning mode with halal audit and executive management training contents in a halal framework poses sustainable business opportunities for innovative practices. By emphasizing empathy, questioning, collaboration, and ethical practice, a more innovative training approach provide a good connection of religious related halal training with blockchain technology, fostering a sense of transformation. As global markets evolve, integrating halal principles with learning approach caters to a

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needs of diverse demographic and paves the way for a more sustainable, responsible, and professional training experience.

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