

Tourism in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province is experiencing increasing popularity, with a significant number of Muslim tourists traveling from Malaysia and the three southern provinces of Thailand seeking Halal-certified restaurants options. Tha Sala District has numerous local restaurants, many of which have long been established due to their distinctive and flavorful offerings, which are characteristic of the area, and, in some cases, beautiful coastal settings that attract more customers. Despite the increase in demand, fewer than ten restaurants in the area have obtained Halal certification, largely due to a lack of knowledge regarding Halal operational management, document preparation, application procedures, and associated costs.

Aligned with Walailak University's vision of being a pillar of local development, and leveraging the expertise of the Logistics Management faculty, a project has been launched to support restaurant businesses in Tha Sala District in achieving Halal certification. The primary objectives are to provide local restaurants with essential management knowledge for quality operations, prepare them for Halal certification, and enable students to apply their academic knowledge through educational outreach activities, organized as voluntary student-run schemes. This initiative aims to enhance restaurant standards, promote local development, and strengthen community self-reliance and resilience.

The project involves faculty and students organizing a programmed workshop according to the planned schedule. This workshop focuses on imparting knowledge related to Halal standards, including managing operations in accordance with Halal standards, preparing necessary documents, and understanding the steps involved in applying for Halal certification. The training is tailored to address the specific needs of local restaurants and is conducted at Lan Burger Restaurant in Tha Sala District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. Former Halal affairs officer from the Nakhon Si Thammarat Islamic Committee serves as a guest speaker.

To ensure Halal compliance throughout the supply chain, the following processes must be adhered to:

1. Halal Raw Materials: This includes Halal-certified ingredients such as vegetables, Halal seasonings, and meat approved by religious authorities and/or slaughtered according to religious guidelines.
2. Halal Production Process: The production or preparation of Halal food must be overseen by personnel who are Muslim to ensure adherence to religious guidelines.
3. Halal Storage, Handling, and Transportation: During all stages of production, products must not come into contact with or be contaminated by items prohibited by religious laws.

4. Halal Equipment and Utensils: All equipment and utensils used must be clean, compliant with religious requirements, and not used in conjunction with prohibited items.

In addition to the planned workshops, an ad-hoc project was organized to provide specialized training on the preparation of documentation and procedures for applying for Halal certification. This training targeted the curry paste production enterprise, Ka-Chuen, located in Hua Sai District, Nakhon Si Thammarat. The initiative was facilitated through referrals from local community restaurants.

This project is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on Quality Education, with an emphasis on Target 4.3.4, which focuses on conducting educational outreach activities beyond the university campus central to this initiative. Walailak University's outreach program goes beyond the traditional classroom setting by actively engaging with the local community and providing practical, real-world solutions to help improve local businesses. The university's collaboration with local stakeholders, including the Islamic Committee of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province and local restaurant owners, exemplifies how educational initiatives and partnerships can drive sustainable development.

Furthermore, the project supports Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals, highlighting the significance of collaboration among academia, the business sector, and local communities. These partnerships not only promote economic growth and self-reliance within the community but also enhance cultural understanding and inclusivity by enabling local businesses to effectively meet the needs of Muslim tourists.