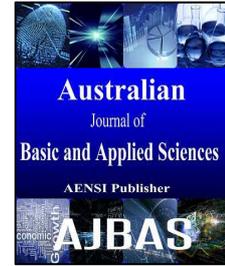




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Enhancing Halal Practices Integrity in the Malaysian Halal food industry

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ABSTRACT

To consume food, Muslims follow strict dietary laws enshrined in the holy Quran, more commonly known as *halal*. However, the intensifying number of food safety scandals and withdrawals of *halal* certification in recent years has led to the increased uncertainty about food consumption choices. The uncertainty of *halal* food may affect the image and reputation of the Muslim integrity as *halal* is part of a belief system and moral code of conduct of the Muslim consumers. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to review current literature and practices concerning the *halal* food practices integrity for *halal* food industry. Additionally, it is expected that the *halal* practices integrity, namely, compliance, coordination, control, cooperation and communication, will serve as a basis for more effective *halal* food operations and practices in Malaysia by ensuring the sustainability of the *halal* food manufacturing. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on *halal* food business performance and can help managers to react accordingly as to ensure that their *halal* food integrity is sustained and maintained by providing a quality and safe *halal* food.

INTRODUCTION

Consumers' lifestyle, culture, religion, diet and health concerns influence their food choice. In religious aspect, Muslim consumers, for example, decide and choose one food over the other depending on its *halal* status (*Shariah*-compliant). They must follow a stringent food laws stated in the holy Quran by adhering the standards and stay away from *haram* (non-*halal*) foods (Marzuki, Hall, & Ballantine, 2012; Mukhtar & Butt, 2012). It is clearly assured, in the laws, that the Muslim consumers can only consume products with a proper description of its *halal* status. However, *halal* products have often been found as *haram* (non-*halal*) in the market and many countries (van der Spiegel *et al.*, 2012) and an increasing number of products recall by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) due to non-*halal* compliance requirements (JAKIM, 2014a; Zurina *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, the food sector has been connected with a number of food-related crises, scandals and affairs, such as dioxins in chicken, Enterohaemorrhagic Escherichia Coli (EHEC) in vegetables, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in beef, salmonella in eggs, melamine in baby formula and the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. Besides, the detection of pig-DNA, an invalid *halal* logo and non-compliance to *halal* requirement in some cases have shaken the confident of the Muslim consumers.

The advancements of information technology and highly competitive worldwide marketplace have built the immense consumers' demand for food quality, safety and authenticity than ever before for their daily consumption (Marzuki *et al.*, 2012). Growing consumers' expectations and concerns on *halal* food quality, safety and authenticity have forced many companies to enhance and enrich their products through the implementation of the *halal* requirements. To build and maintain trust of the Muslim consumers as well as to

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prevent any liability claims, the food manufacturers must preserve and sustain the integrity of *halal* food by providing assurance of their *halal* products. There are various ways in protecting the *halal* food integrity, but for a most, the manufacturers must comply with the Islamic rules and regulations, i.e. MS1500:2009 in Malaysia. The rules enclose practical guidelines for the food industry on the preparation, handling of *halal* food and aims to set the ground rules for food products or food businesses in Malaysia. It is supported by other quality and safety assurances such as good manufacturing practice (GMP), hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP), international food standard (IFS), and international organization for standardization (ISO).

Once the manufacturer complies with MS1500:2009, *halal* certification will be issued by JAKIM upon its approval with certified *halal* logo (JAKIM, 2014b; Rezai, Mohamed, & Shamsudin, 2012). The *halal* certification is not only limited to the food ingredients and materials but encompasses all aspects in the food supply chain, which includes personal hygiene, clothing, utensils and working area. *Halal* certification is an examination of food processes in its preparation, slaughtering, cleaning, processing, handling, disinfecting, storing, transportation and management practices (JAKIM, 2014b; Mohd Yusoff, 2004). Nevertheless, the food industry is widely alarmed on the exploitation of *halal* logos and certificates in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Tieman, 2013a; Zakaria, 2008). As Tieman (2011) asserts that it is essential to preserve the integrity of the *halal* food and keep *haram* out along the *halal* food supply chain.

Within an intensively competitive market, it is becoming more difficult for the *halal* food manufacturers to take advantage of mere common *halal* offerings such as *halal* products with *halal* logo. Together with the ever-demanding customers, it is becoming more difficult for the *halal* food manufacturers to isolate and focus on strategic production elements that will establish their competitive edges in the *halal* competitive environment. This implies the need to study the adherence to the level of *halal* food practices integrity in a more structured manner.

This study is to review literature on the adherence to the level of *halal* food practices integrity as to provide not only consistent product quality and safe but also different elements that can be used to sustain and maintain the integrity of the *halal* food. It introduces the elements of *halal* practices integrity as a guideline of preserving and maintaining the integrity of *halal* food. Next section will discuss the concept of *halal*, Islam and Muslims related to *halal* food. The following section will share the elements of *halal* practices integrity in greater details, which is followed by a section on the conclusion of this study.

Halal, Islam And Muslims:

Generally, all foods are prescribed *halal*, i.e. pure and clean, except for those that are specifically mentioned as *haram* in the Quran or in an authentic Hadith for Muslim consumption. *Halal* originates from the Arabic word namely *halla*, *yahillu*, *hillan*, *wahalalan* and a Quranic word linked to the Islamic faith and translated as lawful, permissible, or permitted and allowed by the lawgiver (Allah) (JAKIM, 2014b). *Haram* means unlawful or prohibited, which is the opposite of *halal* in Arabic. It is also called as non-*halal* in Malaysia. It can be seen as a signage of non-Muslim products such as non-Muslim restaurants. In Islam, the term *halal* encompasses safety, cleanliness and hygiene in food preparation because cleanliness is part of religion. Allah (God) only permits hygiene, safe and *halal* foods for Muslims' consumptions. It indicates that all foods are *halal* and *thoyyib*, i.e. *halalan-thoyyiban*, to be consumed by Muslim consumers.

Halal addresses issues regarding the religious, faith and spirituality. On the other hand, *thoyyiban* means good in quality, safe, hygiene, clean (sanitation), nutritious and authentic. Thus, it represents the symbol of intolerance in the hygiene, safety and quality in Islam. *Halal* certified products are products that not only abide by the religion aspect but include hygiene, sanitation, nutritious and safety qualities as to maintain the quality aspects of *halal* food (Ambali & Bakar, 2014; Lam & Alhashmi, 2008). Consequently, it is no longer viewed as a mere concept, but rather treated as a basic need and necessity detrimental to the well-being of the users particularly in the related of *halal* issues. Conversely, the foods befallen unlawful (*haram*) if the foods derived from and contaminated with the followings (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004):

- Carrions or dead animals,
- Flowing or congealed blood,
- Swine, including all by-products,
- Animals slaughtered without pronouncing the name of God on them,
- Animals killed in a manner that prevents their blood from being fully drained from their bodies,
- Animals slaughtered while pronouncing a name other than God,
- Intoxicants of all types, including alcohol and drugs,
- Carnivorous animals with fangs, such as lions, dogs, wolves, or tigers,
- Birds with sharp claws (birds of prey), such as falcons, eagles, owls, or vultures, and
- Land animals such as frogs or snakes.

Hence, the consumption of *halal* food is not only an obligatory in serving Allah and it indicates that material and ingredient in the food production are not harmful to the consumers' health. In fact, hygiene and

health are the basis of *halal* aspect. Intrinsically, Muslim consumers must be aware about what they consume as regulated in Islam.

Islam is derived from the Arabic root word "Salama", which literally means peace, purity, submission and obedience. In the religious aspect, Islam connotes conscious submission to the will of Allah, compliance and obedience to His law. Islam is a complete system which covers material, physical and spiritual needs of human. Accordingly, Islam is a unique and comprehensive way of life according to the guidance of Allah through al-Quran and as-Sunnah. In Islam, *Shariah* is an Islamic system of life that all Muslims have to follow and give an absolute surrender to Allah.

Islam is very concern on the *halal* food processing that comply with *halal* requirements and be lawful for eating by Muslims. In Islam, *halal* foods are those that are *Shariah*-compliant, which do not use of *haram* ingredients and are not harmful or intended for harmful use. Generally, the Food Act 1983 is in line with the *Shariah* principles, which was enacted with an objective to ensure the food produced for the public is free from any substances injurious to health as stated in Section 13 (1). Muslims are obliged in making sure that foods provided are *halal* and stay away from consumables that are doubted (*masbooh*) to guard oneself from committing actual haram.

Mukhtar & Butt (2012) emphasize that religion may influence the life of its devotees. In most cases, individual will vary in their attitudes, intentions and behavior when it comes to religion and religion implication (Rezai *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, the concept of *halal* in Islam has very definite motives, which is called as *maqasid al-shariah* that includes:

- To preserve the purity of religion
- To safeguard the Islamic mentality
- To preserve life
- To safeguard property
- To safeguard future generation, and
- To maintain self-respect and integrity.

Man (human being) has been given 'aql (mind) and knowledge. Possessing the qualities of intelligence and choice, Man is invited to submit to the good will of Allah and obey His law to become a true Muslim. It implies that Man as a servant has to submit completely to the will of Allah as his creator. As a true Muslim, economic activities are necessary to fulfill his physiological, psychological and social needs as well as to perform his religious obligation, i.e. Islam. As a Muslim, he must always aware the products description of its *halal* status in his daily life consumption and activities. However, any harmful products is prohibited and *haram* in Islam.

Elements Of Halal Practices Integrity:

Islam has stipulated and provided clear, explicit and well-defined concepts of *halal* and *haram* that its followers must adhere to. It is important to assure that all food produced should comply with the Islamic dietary law (*Shariah*-compliant) and free contamination from any *haram* items. According to Tieman (2011), the *halal* supply chain is purely based on trust and the company will be responsible in ensuring that the food is *halal*. The *halal* trust mark gives assurance that the entire supply chain is compliant with *Shariah* (Al-Harran & Low, 2008; Tieman, 2011). All parties involved have to play an important role in preserving and sustaining the integrity of *halal* food along its supply chain till to the point of consumption. The organization and information management are resources in the supply chain. According to van der Spiegel *et al.* (2012), all resources in *halal* supply chain (i.e. upstream and downstream) must comply with *halal* dietary law. Therefore, it is crucial that in a *halal* supply chain the parties are *halal* certified, understand and comply with the requirements of *halal* supply chains for maintaining its integrity.

Halal practices integrity (HPI) can be defined as a systematic and continuous process of adherence to the *halal* integrity which affects individual and supply chain partners that contribute to the betterment of the business performance. The firms that can learn quickly about their markets and represent on the acquired HPI are posited best to compete and subsequently determine the competitive advantage of the firm. HPI provides a strategic way in developing its practices of *halal* food integrity.

Hence, this paper incorporates the following elements, i.e. compliance, coordination, control, cooperation and communication that are crucial and key practices in preserving and sustaining the integrity of *halal* food in the market.

Compliance:

Compliance has been researched from the diverse viewpoints including transaction analysis, social power, influence strategies and lateral communications (Davies, Lassar, Manolis, Prince, & Winsor, 2011). According to Tieman (2013b), *halal* compliance is viewed as opportunity and has been addressed by the industry as part of a product specification. However, Wilson & Liu (2010) claim that *halal* is not only a brand component, it is part of a belief practice and moral conduct, integral in a Muslim daily living. Muslims consider the food that endure

the *halal* label or sign as fit for consumption which compliance with Islamic rules and guidelines (Zakaria, 2008).

Generally, businesses comply with *Shariah* in meeting the emergent demand for *Shariah*-compliant products, particularly *halal* food due to the growing Muslim population and increasing awareness on the importance of *Shariah* compliance (Dawood, 2008; Nor Aziah, 2012). Through the compliance, the *halal* food manufacturers strengthen their own legitimacy in satisfying consumer needs as expected. Any food with a lower compliance with the standard and non-compliance has a negative impact on their financial performance and revenues (Lo, Wiengarten, Humphreys, Yeung, & Cheng, 2013; Nor Aziah, 2012) and any unlawful revenue earned has to be given away as donation or charity (Dawood, 2008).

Coordination:

Coordination is a common management of processes, products and services, and suppliers across the organization (Foerstl, 2013). According to Dai, Zhou, & Xu (2012), coordination is critical to supply chain performance. Coordination has been discussed greatly in the literature that facilitate supply chain coordination, especially with respect to connectivity (Holweg & Pil, 2008). According to Kanda & Deshmukh (2008), coordination is perceived as a requirement to integrate operations of supply chain entities to achieve common goals and emphasized on the advantages of coordination. Coordination also enables firms to streamline and automate their operational activities across the supply chain as well as a positive effect and improves business performance (Liu, 2013). However, Kanda & Deshmukh (2008) argue that even though coordination improves the performance of the supply chain, it may not always be beneficial to coordinate the supply members and lack of coordination may result in poor performance of supply chain.

Simatupang, Sandroto, and Lubis (2004) explain coordination as an important channel of bringing together interrelated functional groups in the firm internally and externally. As Liu (2013) emphasizes that coordination reflects the exchange of resources across the supply chain to streamline and coordinate workflow activities. Accordingly, *halal* supply chains need coordination (Tieman, van der Vorst, and Ghazali, 2012). As Huiskonen and Pirttila (2002) claim that informal coordination is the most effective in the daily operations. Moreover, coordination in the supply chain needs trust as a deterrence-based and reliability of the product (Lejeune and Yakova, 2005). Furthermore, through coordination, an integrated supply chain can only be optimized when the supply chain partners together to improve the overall supply chain and aligned to the requirements of the destination market especially for *halal* supply chains (Tieman *et al.*, 2012).

Control:

Consumers are slightly concerned about lack of control especially on the *halal* food, where Muslims relate positively to the safety and wholesomeness of *halal* food (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008; Verbeke, Rutsaert, Bonne, & Vermeir, 2013). According to Bonne and Verbeke (2008), control is a potential reason for not eating *halal* food. Control is the most important factors of *halal* food offered by a Muslim, and organizations are always to be trusted even when the information about the *halal* status is not directly available (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008; Verbeke *et al.*, 2013).

According to Mahama (2006), control includes all those organizational arrangements and actions designed to facilitate the achievement of performance goals with the least unintended consequences. As Lavelli (2013) emphasizes that control through traceability is to improve the effectiveness, productivity and profitability of the organization, and to meet customers' requirements. Therefore, *halal* control activities are fundamental in establishing a robust *halal* food supply chain (Tieman & Ghazali, 2014). Besides, that *halal* control activities need to be formulated to extend the *halal* integrity from the source to point of consumptions by the manufacturers in handling the *halal* products throughout the supply chains (Tieman *et al.*, 2012). Salam (2011) asserts control through power can force supply chain partners to commit (e.g., continuance commitment).

Cooperation:

According to Heavey & Murphy (2012), numerous authors emphasize the importance of cooperation in business relationships that contribute to organizational performance and business success. Previous studies have also suggested that cooperation is a key factor of organizational effectiveness because it increases satisfaction, wherein the crucial element is the willingness to cooperate among team members (Lee, Stajkovic, & Cho, 2011). Nevertheless, despite this argument, cooperation is often taken for granted and not always given the attention (Heavey & Murphy, 2012).

According to Ming, Grabot, and Houé (2014) and Wilson & Nielson (2000), previous studies have used many terms to explain the relationship between supply chain partners include "coordination" and "cooperation" with the different meaning and cooperation has been conceptualized as multi-dimensional. Wilson and Nielson (2000, p.3) define cooperation as "a set of specific firm-level behaviors directed toward advancing the individual and/or mutual goals of the firms within the context of an association with a customer".

Cooperation with other firms is a underlying competency for a valuable relationship and a success business (Wilson & Nielson, 2000).

In the context of HPI, cooperation is an agreement between supply chain partner, i.e. inter-and-intra firm, to work together via integrated activities for maximum effectiveness and efficiency. Cooperation is considered as a higher level of relationship, which determined by the degree of information sharing and results in the companies are more tightly tied together (Ming *et al.*, 2014). Thus, *halal* food can be sustained and maintained by having good and close information sharing through cooperation among the supply chain partners.

Communication:

According to Chen, Li, & Arnold (2013) and Mohamad, Abu, Halim, & Rageh (2014), communication between buyers and sellers plays a key element in developing and maintaining mutual relationships as well as in organizational success. Consequently, interorganizational relationships is broken not only due to lack and poor communication, but also impedes information exchange between the customer and the firm (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Mohamad *et al.*, 2014). Empirical evidence reveals that communication is positively correlated with organizational performance (Mohamad *et al.*, 2014) and customer performance (Chen *et al.*, 2013).

Communication refers to the sharing of meaningful and timely information between firms and as the “key to vitality” of a partnership (Salam, 2011). Supply chain partners will be motivated to commit to a relationship via an open sharing of information. An increases understanding among buyer and supplier through an effective information sharing will result in a more committed relationship between both parties (Carr & Kaynak, 2007). Furthermore, suppliers to be more “fitting” to share information about product use, predicted future requirements, and proprietary information by having an effective communication (Carr & Kaynak, 2007). Communication also enhances confidence in the continuity of the relationship and lessen dysfunctional conflict, which should boost commitment (Salam, 2011). Therefore, communication is important as part of the practices in ensuring all *halal* food fulfill the Islamic dietary law along the supply chain.

Conclusion:

Halal food consumption is an important factor in fulfilling the demand and needs of Muslim consumers. As many companies today are *halal* certified, the integrity of *halal* food should be taken care especially when they are dealing with the complexity of *halal* requirements in sourcing of products and services. As *halal* is part of a belief system and moral code of conduct of the Muslim consumers, an effective alignment is required along the *halal* food supply chain. This research paper proposes the five elements for the development of the *halal* practices integrity within an organization, namely, compliance, coordination, control, cooperation and communication in preserving the integrity of *halal* food. According to Tieman (2013b), compliance and coordination are the pivotal element in the *halal* supply chains.

Halal needs a stronger partnership with suppliers and adopting various strategies to secure continuity supply of *halal* materials and other sources. Although this research paper provides a better understanding of the *halal* practices integrity in a *halal* food supply chain, more empirical research is needed in *halal* practices integrity to better understand the challenges and solutions surrounding the practices of *halal* certified companies. Quantitative study and qualitative study, i.e. case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1984) and focus groups (Ho, 2006; Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999) can be an effective instrument for further study.

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