

Understanding the Development of *Halal* Food Standard: Suggestion for Future Research

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Abstract—Islam is a comprehensive religion. It urges Muslims to opt for the good and the best in every facet of life including food. Islam has outlined rules and regulations for food preparation which suggest the source, process and actors should conform to the principles of Islam. This article highlights these rules and regulation mentioned in the Quran and hadith, which are the two agreed primary sources in Islam. This article also elaborates the recent development in halal food industry which is the formulation of halal food standard gazette in 2004 by the Malaysian government. Finally, a review of the significance of halal logo is discussed reflecting a vast opportunity for future research agenda in the halal industry.

Index Terms—Halal food standard, halal logo, quran and sunnah.

I. INTRODUCTION

Establishing a *halal* hub is a concerted effort of various industry players in food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, packaging and logistics as well as services from all over the world. In fact, it has been a goal of the Malaysian government to establish Malaysia as a global *halal* hub. The phenomenon depicts that *halal* has now become a universal concept where it does no longer restricted to the slaughtering of animals or merely free from alcohol and swine, but it covers the whole process in production and services. Moreover, *halal* is no longer merely a religious obligation but beyond that, it becomes a standard of choice for both Muslims and non-Muslims [1].

As a Muslim country, Malaysia is a pioneer in introducing a comprehensive standard for halal products through Malaysian Standard: Halal Food-Production, Preparation and Storage-General Guidelines, known as MS 1500:2004. This standard was developed by a Technical Committee on *Halal* food comprises of diverse expertise in Islamic studies and pure sciences [2].

The standard prescribes practical guidelines for the food industry on the preparation and handling of *halal* food. It also serves as a basic requirement for a production of food including food trading or marketing. Besides the standard, the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), vested under the Prime Minister's Department has released Malaysian *Halal* Certification Procedures Manual containing rules which must be complied to by manufacturers, producers, marketers and sellers in the halal food industry. The application of the certificate has been widened into a hotel,

logistic and warehouse industry. The development of the standard is a response towards the rising demand for halal food among the Muslims. In fact, it is also a response towards the global awareness in food safety, which is also one of the highlights in *halal* food. Moreover, the application for halal certification is increasing due to the rising demand of consumers which can be translated into increasing profit towards the industry players [1]-[3].

The following section elaborates the fundamentals of halal food concept in Islam which act as the foundation of the standard. This is followed by a discussion on the importance of halal logo. Finally, some potentials for further research is discussed.

II. THE CONCEPT OF HALAL FOOD

Generally, *halal* is known as something that is permitted to do according to Islamic law. *Al-Jurani* in the book of *at-Ta'rifat* states that *halal* is the ability to use something that is required to meet the physical needs, including in the food, beverages and medicines. Generally, *halal* is the permissibility to eat, drink and does something based on Islamic law and principles. *Halal* is the universal term that applies to all facets of life [4]. The word *halal* is not only used in the context of consumables or products used by Muslims. It has a wide scope of application which covers from inter human relationship, clothing and manner, social and business transaction, trade and financial services to investment or any others which is parallel to the principles and guidance specified by Islam [5].

In Islam, the sphere of prohibited things is very small, while the permissible thing is vast. There are only a small number of explicit texts (in Quran and Hadith) concerning prohibitions, while whatever is not mentioned in the Quran and the hadith is considered as being lawful and permissible. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: "*What Allah has made lawful in his Book is halal and what He has forbidden is haram, and that concerning which He is silent is allowed as His favor. So accept from Allah His favor, for Allah is not forgetful of anything. He then recited, "and thy Lord is not forgetful"*". [6].

Islam requires us to keep all items that we used in everyday life clean and free from doubt. Consuming *halal* food will bring tranquility to every man. Consuming something which is *syubhah* often causes no peace and calm to our mind and soul and in fact, it is opposed to the human nature or *fitrah* [7]. *Syubhah* refers to uncertainty which Muslims are advised to avoid. This is to ensure that every deed is done with firm confidence. Hence, it should be emphasized here that the issue of food is an important thing in Islam and must be

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seriously considered by every individual Muslim because it involves physical and spiritual development. Physically, the lawful and good food ensures that our body will get enough needs to grow healthy, while spiritually, the lawful food will increase our faith, protect the purity of heart and revitalizes the body to worship Allah SWT.

Before the advent of Islam, the pagan Arabs permitted many kinds of impure foods, such as flesh of dead animals and flowing blood. Then Allah SWT addressed to all human by saying: *“O Mankind! Eat of what is permissible and good on earth, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; truly he is an open adversary to you”* [8].

In another verse, Allah SWT addressed the believers by saying: *“O You who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be thankful to Allah if it is He alone whom you worship. Indeed, what He has forbidden to you is the flesh of dead animals and blood and the flesh of swine, and that which has been sacrificed to anyone other than Allah. But if one is compelled to anyone by necessity, neither craving (it) nor transgressing, there is no sin on him; indeed, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful”* [9]

In the above verse, Allah SWT explains that there is no *haram* food except the four kinds mentioned. This means that generally, all foods are *halal* except those that are specifically mentioned as *haram* (unlawful or prohibited). Further details about four kinds of *haram* food are mentioned in another verse: *“Forbidden unto you (for food) are: carrion and blood, and swine flesh, and that which hath been dedicated unto any other than Allah, and the strangled, and the dead through beating, and the dead through falling from a height, and that hath been killed by the gorging of horns, and the devoured of wild beast saving that which ye make lawful and that which hath been immolated to idols, and that ye swear by the divining arrows. Forbidden to you is anything that dies by itself, and blood and pork, as well as whatever has been consecrated to something besides Allah, and whatever has been strangled, beaten to death, trapped in a pit, gored, and what some beast of prey has begun to eat, unless you give it the final flow; and what has been slaughtered before some idol or what you divide up in a raffle; (all) that is immoral”* [10].

Based on the above Quranic verse, there are four categories of animals that are banned; 1) animals which are killed by strangulation, 2) by a blow, 3) fall, 4) being gored or which are partly eaten by wild animals all belong to the category of dead animals. Animals sacrificed to idols are also *haram* since it is dedicated to anyone other than Allah.

There are some rationales of this prohibition. Eating the flesh of dead animal is repugnant to civilization and contrary to human dignity. The significance of slaughtering is to remove the slaughtered animal from the category of “dead animal”. Slaughtering is a purposeful act with the intention to take the life of the animal and to use it as food, with certain ethical guidelines which aim to get the slaughtering done in the best practical way. Interestingly, the advance of science has proven that slaughtering is a method which is able to flush out all the filthy blood which is not healthy to be consumed by man [11]. The flesh of swine is prohibited since it is filthy and able to contaminate man. Recent medical research shown that eating swine-flesh is injurious to health

in all climates. In fact it was proven by a wide range of scientific research that swine- pig carries a deadly parasite known as *Trichinella* and it will cause injury to health. [12]

The above Quranic verses have set the foundation for *the halal food definition* as gazette by the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM). JAKIM defined *halal* food as permissible food according to Islamic rules and principles with additional certain conditions. This means, *halal* food must not contain any part of the non-*halal* animal products. In addition, it also must not contain any ingredients of (*najis*) filth material, safe and not harmful and it must be prepared, processed or manufactured using the equipments that are not contaminated. Due to economies of scale, attention is given to the whole process of production including selection of raw materials, preparation, processing, packaging, storage and transportation [3].

In a nutshell, Islam generally has laid down the general guidelines on *halal* food: 1) All raw materials and ingredients used must be *halal*, 2) All the permissible animals to be eaten in Islam should be slaughtered according to Islamic rites and ethics of slaughtering, must be performed by a mentally sound Muslim, using a sharp cutting tool and last but not least; 3) the *halal* ingredients must not be combined, or come into contact with *haram* materials such as pig, swine, dog either during storage, transport, cooking, and serving [1].

III. MALAYSIAN STANDARD OF HALAL FOOD

In 1982, Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), was established vested the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister’s Department with the responsibilities to check and instill *halal* awareness among food producers, distributors, importers including food premises, restaurants and hotels. Ever since, the enforcement of *halal* regulations has become the responsibility of JAKIM.

MS 1500:2004 (Malaysian Standard: *Halal* Food-Production, Preparation and Storage-General Guidelines) was launched in August 2004, depicting clearly the government’s commitment to formulate a precise and clear guideline for *halal* food. Among the agencies that involved in the formulation of this standard are Federation of Manufacturers Malaysia, Malaysia Quality Institute, Agricultural Research and Development Institute of Malaysia, Department of Standards Malaysia, Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Veterinary Services, Ministry of Health Malaysia, National Body of Standardization and Quality (SIRIM), International Islamic University (IIUM), University Putra Malaysia (UPM) and University Teknologi MARA (UiTM). This standard is developed in accordance with ISO methodologies and it was observed that this standard has been widely recognized and globally accepted by *halal* certification bodies in other countries. It is also the first *halal* standard to be developed by a Muslim nation [13].

The standard prescribes practical guidelines for the food industry on the whole process preparation and handling of *halal* food, starting from the selection of raw materials until the distribution and marketing activities. It is the basic requirement for food production process in Malaysia. In general, there are seven basic requirements for the

preparation of halal food based on MS 1500: 2004/2009 as below: a) Sources of halal food and drinks should be halal animal and plant based, b) Slaughtering for example *halal* and non- *halal* animals must never slaughtered together, c) Product processing, handling and distribution should comply with halal regulations, d) Product storage, display and serving for instance equipments, machineries and other materials used must not be made of non- halal materials, e) Hygiene, sanitation and food safety should comply with the concept of *halalan tayyiban*, f) Packing and labelling must be carefully evaluated by JAKIM, g) Legal requirements which in line with MS 1500: 2004 revised 2009.

The MS 1500:2004, which has been revised in 2009, added compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP). To strengthen its application, this standard is recommended to be combined with MS 1480 and MS1514. MS1480 is the standard in food safety according to hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) system, while the MS 1514 is the general principles of food hygiene. Both standards cover issues of hygiene, sanitation and food safety aspects in the food processing and preparation chain. Apart from that, this standard also considers the permissible sources of *halal* food, which include animals (either land or aquatic), plants, mushrooms, microorganisms, natural minerals, chemicals and drinks.

Besides, requirements for a permissible genetically modified food are also covered in this standard. The requirements are found based on principles laid down by the Quran and the hadith in determining the permitted sources of food, while ensuring the food is safe and not poisonous, intoxicating or hazardous to health. The standard also lay out the slaughtering requirements for the poultry and ruminant animals. It also requires the physical separation of *Halal* and non-*halal* food production, preparation, handling activities and storage. The separation needs to be clearly labelled [2].

However, even Malaysia is an Islamic country, yet it does establish and apply a specific *Halal* Act. However an attempt has recently been taken by the government to introduce *Halal* Act in the future. In relation to halal product, Malaysian government through the Parliament enacted certain Act such as Trade Descriptions 2011, Food Act 1983, Animal Rules 1962, Consumers Act and Customs Act 1998 which contains a description of the import and export of *halal* meat. Generally, these Acts were enacted as a protection to consumers in terms of trade or business practices which violate *halal* procedures. MS 1500:2009 is the recent standard applied by the legal authority such as JAKIM and State Islamic Religious Council.

As far as Malaysia halal certification is concerned, the usage of halal logo and certification system in this country seems to be in the interest of Muslim consumers. The certification enables them to select goods without doubt in their halal status. The non-Muslim trading companies are now beginning to realize the importance of halal certification. Therefore, Malaysian Islamic Development Department Malaysia (JAKIM) as a coordinating body of halal certification in Malaysia introduced a standard halal Malaysia logo which is intended to solve the confusion and misconception in halal certification.

JAKIM or State Islamic Religious Council was the only authoritative bodies to issue a *halal* certificate for food which has been recognized and recommended in the international market [6]. This is supported by the Trade Description Act 2011. Hence, any other private halal logo or certificate or those who display 'artificial' *halal* certificate or logo on a food product or premise will subject to punishable offenses [14], [15]. The *halal* certification of JAKIM covers the application procedure, inspection, monitoring and enforcement which includes guidelines for food producers.

In response to that, prior to delivering the *halal* certificate, reference will be made to the MS 1500: 2009, which involves several elements [15]; a) The applicants and holders of halal logo need to conform to the provisions and regulations endorsed by JAKIM, b) The halal certificate for premise covers the processing and storage area, dining space and toilet of any cafes or restaurants, c) The premise' food staffs should be predominantly Muslim and are required to be well dressed in clean and proper clothes or uniforms during preparing and serving food. They also should be in a good condition of health and are required to behave in a proper manner.

Despite the strict criteria before releasing *halal* certificate and JAKIM's *halal* logo, it is highly recommended to especially Muslim entrepreneurs to take this as an opportunity. They need to realize and understand the importance of *halal* certificate and logo in their business strategy. This recognition is important since without the *halal* certificate and logo, it is difficult to penetrate into the international market. Previous trend shows that the application for a certificate and *halal* logo is dominated by non-Muslim entrepreneurs.

Halal certificate is not simply concerned with the content of products but also involve the production of hygiene and safety [16]. It is also agreed that the *halal* logo acts as signals of permissible outlets to be patronage by the Muslim. This absolutely will add value to players in the *halal* industry [17].

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HALAL LOGO

A research conducted by Mohd Hapiz [17] depicted that Malaysian Muslims are highly confident with JAKIM's *halal* logo. They even would not proceed any transaction if they discovered the food have no *halal* logo imprint on it. Similarly, Abdul Basit et.al. [19] found that Muslims will not buy anything from a non-Muslim premise even though *halal* logo is displayed at the premise. This is considered as a precautionary act acknowledging cases of fraud *halal* logo displayed merely to attract consumers and popularized food products and premises. This shows that consumers are becoming more careful in their purchasing behavior, thus giving advantage towards *halal* logo holders. Hence, the *halal* logo plays a significant role in purchasing decision.

The consumers' caution may be a response to various alarming cases of contaminated *halal* food. For instance, there were cases where factories producing sausage raided for using pig intestines as sausage skin casings, the use of fruit labels for alcoholic beverages and catfish fed with pig intestines, which have been gazetted as not permissible for the Muslims as it contains filth (*najis*) [20]-[22]. JAKIM has

taken a step to caution and Muslim consumers by publishing a directory of *halal* food, creating *e-halal* website and establishing an SMS (Short Message Services) network for the Muslims to solve their doubt in purchasing activities. In order to assist the Muslim consumers, formulation of the *halal* food standard is an accurate action.

The significance of *halal* logo is undeniable towards the producers as well as the customers [23]. Producers with *halal* logo will have the opportunity to market their product via a *halal* hub, while at the same time increase loyalty and repeat purchase among the purchasers. This will further contribute to the sustainability of a food manufacturer or premise as satisfied customers will recommend more purchasers. As Muslims purchasing power increases, the opportunity to be recognized with *halal* logo should not be left behind by the food manufacturers and premises. Besides, Islamic principles in food preparation, handling and transportation involving the aspects of hygiene and safety, are agreed to be the demand of every consumer, either Muslim or non-Muslim.

V. FUTURE RESEARCH POTENTIALS

The concept of *halal* food has paved way for future research either in pure sciences or humanities. This section will suggest some potential area of study in *halal*. The development of *halal* standard should not be confined only in food and beverages. As the concept of *halal* in Islam is comprehensive, *halal* standard can also be formulated in the tourism industry which is gaining worldwide interest recently. This is due to the vast Muslim buying power based on the increasing number of Muslim population. Further research on consumer attitudes should also be conducted in order to understand consumers' awareness, need and wants, buying trends or sensitivity regarding *halal* issues. Comparative study is also worthy to be steered since such study is beneficial for producers and marketers of the *halal* industry. Comparative study can be based upon demography, nation or region. As for the consumers, studies on their perceptions will provide insights to improve the current standard (for countries with *halal* standards) or bring a new standard into existence (for countries without *halal* standards). Apart from that, in pure sciences, laboratory based research in *halal* also provides opportunities for scientists. From research on food DNA to the invention of DNA food detector, there is a vast opportunity to further enhance and improve current the discovered technology.

VI. CONCLUSION

Islam is a comprehensive religion which provides rules and guidelines in life. All the rules have their own wisdom which is once unknown to man. However, with the advent of technology, some of the wisdom has been unravelled. And nowadays, Islamic primary sources have been studied to integrate its principles into a human's life. For instance, the development of *halal* food standard in Malaysia translates all rules regarding food and beverages into a standard to be adhered to by food producers and marketers. The standard has given an advantage to Malaysia in promoting Malaysia in

the global arena as well increasing the country's receipts. As a pioneer in *halal* industry, the Malaysian government has been seriously planning, develop, facilitate the industry to encourage participants in the industry. As for the general consumers, the standard guarantees quality in food and beverages while for the specific Muslim consumers, the standard solves their doubt in food purchasing. Meanwhile, in the academic arena, both pure science and humanities can venture into *halal* research as both sciences have different significance in developing the *halal* industry.

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