

Addressing Key Importance of Halal Certificate in Meat-Based Industry

Menangani Pentingnya Sijil Halal dalam Industri Berasaskan Daging

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Abstract: In recent times, the escalation of halal food fraud, involving the illicit use of halal logos and certificates, label misrepresentation, and contamination with non-halal elements, has become a pressing concern. This issue has especially impacted consumer trust, particularly among Malaysia's Muslim community, magnified by the disreputable meat cartel scandal. Safeguarding Muslim consumers' confidence in halal meat products is a significant challenge, necessitating severe measures in all aspects, including halal certification procedures. This study investigates the specific degrees of halal certification practices within the meat industry, emphasizing their pivotal role in upholding industry integrity. Employing comprehensive library research and document analysis, encompassing primary and secondary sources such as articles, journals, official portals, and conference papers, detailed insights were extracted and thematically analyzed. The research reveals how important of halal certificates towards customers to ensure the halal status of meat products in the market, aligning with Shariah requirements. The study's findings are poised to enrich current knowledge about halal certification in the meat industry, offering valuable insights for industry stakeholders, consumers, and governmental bodies. Ultimately, this study provides a robust foundation, serving as an invaluable reference point for industry players, regulatory authorities, and other relevant agencies, offering a comprehensive framework to underscore halal certification in Malaysia's meat-based industry.

Kata kunci: Halal certificate, halal, halal meat, halal industry, Malaysia;

Abstrak: Sejak kebelakangan ini, peningkatan penipuan makanan halal, yang melibatkan penggunaan logo dan sijil halal secara haram, pemalsuan label, dan pencemaran dengan elemen bukan halal, telah menjadi kebimbangan yang mendalam. Isu ini telah memberi impak besar kepada kepercayaan pengguna, terutamanya dalam kalangan masyarakat Muslim Malaysia, akibat skandal kartel daging. Memastikan keyakinan pengguna Muslim terhadap produk daging halal adalah satu cabaran besar. Ia memerlukan langkah-langkah tegas dalam semua aspek, termasuk melibatkan prosedur pensijilan halal. Kajian ini mengkaji amalan pensijilan halal dalam industri daging secara terperinci, menekankan kepentingannya dalam mengekalkan integriti industri. Dengan menggunakan penyelidikan perpustakaan yang komprehensif dan analisis dokumen, termasuk sumber-sumber utama dan sekunder seperti artikel, jurnal, portal rasmi, dan kertas persidangan, pandangan terperinci diekstrak dan dianalisis secara tematik.

Kajian ini mendedahkan betapa pentingnya sijil halal kepada pengguna untuk memastikan status halal produk daging di pasaran, selari dengan keperluan Syariah. Dapatan kajian ini dijangka akan meningkatkan pengetahuan semasa mengenai kepentingan pensijilan halal dalam industri daging, memberikan pandangan penting kepada pihak industri, pengguna, dan badan kerajaan. Pada keseluruhannya, kajian ini menyediakan landasan kukuh, berperanan sebagai titik rujukan yang sangat berharga kepada industri, pihak berkuasa yang mengawal selia dan agensi berkaitan, menyediakan kerangka menyeluruh untuk memartabatkan pensijilan halal dalam industri daging di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Sijil halal, halal, daging halal, halal industri, Malaysia;

Introduction

The halal industry, mainly encompassing halal foods and products, has seen rapid growth recently. It is no longer solely identified as a religious symbol; instead, it is highly correlated with excellence in quality assurance and lifestyle choice. It serves not only as a means of religious protection but also as a marker of quality (Muhammad et al., 2020). By the year 2030, the halal industry is expected to experience significant growth due to the projected increase in the global population of affluent Muslims, estimated to reach 29%. This expansion can be attributed to the rising demand for halal products and services across various sectors.

Currently, there is an increased level of consumer apprehension and vigilance regarding their dietary choices, particularly concerning the safety of the food they consume. Given the prevalence of food safety concerns within the meat sectors, there is a growing demand for traceability of halal certificate practices that can ensure the overall quality and safety of meat products in the local market. The importance of ensuring the integrity of halal assurance on products cannot be overstated, especially considering its significance within the halal industry. This integrity is closely tied to the promotion of social well-being, a key component of the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, as it establishes trust among consumers.

It is essential to note that this trust extends not only to Muslim consumers but also to non-Muslim consumers, as highlighted by Sungit et al. (2020). Proper description of the halal status upon halal certification is crucial for customers to make informed decisions and to promote fair commerce, especially in the halal meat-based industry (Nakyinsige et al., 2012). Generally, the key importance of halal certificate integrity concerns the health, quality, control, and safety of consumers, as it is also associated with trust and confidence.

Consumers, especially in developed and developing countries, have lost confidence in mass-produced food

due to numerous food crises and issues that have reduced its consumption rates (Maifiah et al., 2022). The halal meat cartel scandal has created confusion among Muslim consumers, influencing their confidence and purchase patterns due to the questionable status of the implicated items. The meat-based business in Malaysia presents a significant challenge for authorities in ensuring the protection of Muslim consumers from consuming haram and dangerous meat-based products. The local community has been informed about the existence of non-halal imported meat fraudulently labeled as halal through the distribution network of a meat cartel. According to Yaacob et al. (2016), this situation has persisted for the last four decades due to a lack of efficient enforcement or oversight from halal governance organizations. Malaysia was shocked by the apprehension of an illicit meat syndicate weighing 1,500 tonnes, which operated across multiple countries, including China, Ukraine, Brazil, and Argentina, in the latter part of 2020 (Ariffin et al., 2021).

The discovery of concerns and controversies surrounding the halal meat-based industry has attracted significant attention from various stakeholders due to its alleged long-standing operation in Malaysia. The earlier incident has incited a significant public outcry, with demands for the administration of justice against an individual implicated in the distribution of counterfeit halal meat to the Malaysian population.

The contentious debates and concerns surrounding this issue have led to the following inquiries: Does the meat business adhere to the norms of halal certification? Does the implementation of these requirements guarantee a sufficient and secure halal meat supply to the Muslim population in Malaysia? The concept of Halal embodies Islamic principles. In light of a recent incident involving counterfeit certification within the meat sector, there is a growing need for both local and international consumers to trust in the country's adherence to halal certificate standards.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to discuss the importance of halal certification practices in Malaysia's halal meat-based industry, aiming to protect the interests of all Muslim and non-Muslim customers. Many non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia have begun purchasing and consuming halal products because they believe halal meat is a healthy choice, leading to the emergence of a broader halal-conscious community in the country (Aliff et al., 2015; Masudin et al., 2021).

Literature Review

An Approach to Halal and Halal Meat

Halal is an essential part of the Muslim faith. The halal food industry increasingly receives an encouraging response from consumers. The awareness of the Malaysian community especially Muslims towards the importance of halal food consumption leads to a lifestyle change that increases halal product demand. The term '*halal*' originates from the Arabic word denoting things and actions that are permissible, allowed, and lawful according to Shariah, or Islamic law. It is a fundamental concept in Islamic beliefs (Rejeb, 2018) and is an obligation that every Muslim should fulfil. On the contrary, 'haram' signifies what is prohibited for use or consumption.

Moreover, the concept of *halalan tayyiban* plays a crucial role in determining the physical and spiritual benefits of food for humanity. In this context, *halalan tayyiban* can be defined as food that is both permissible to eat (halal) and beneficial for the human body (Arifin et al., 2021). Essentially, *halalan tayyiban* food meets two criteria: it is halal and sourced from a halal origin, and it is of high quality, providing health benefits to those who consume it. Both the concepts of halal and *tayyib* encompass aspects of nutrition, quality, and safety, benefiting not only the Muslim community but also all of humanity. The term *tayyib* also includes considerations regarding the impacts of using or consuming the substance (Mustaffa, 2019).

An approach to halal and halal meat involves adhering to Islamic dietary laws and regulations, ensuring that all aspects of the production, processing, and consumption of meat align with Islamic principles outlined in the Shariah, or Islamic law. Here's a breakdown of the key aspects of this approach (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2019):

1. It excludes any animal parts or products that are not halal according to Shariah law or have not been slaughtered in accordance with Shariah law.
2. It does not contain impurities according to

Shariah law.

3. It is safe for consumption, non-poisonous, non-intoxicating, and non-hazardous to health.
4. It has not been prepared, processed, or manufactured using equipment contaminated with impurities according to Shariah law.
5. It does not contain any human parts or derivatives that are not permitted by Shariah law.

Islam also provides specific guidelines for consuming animal-derived foods. According to Hashim et al. (2019), all permissible livestock must be slaughtered properly before consumption. Allah prohibits His followers from consuming carrion, which refers to animals that have died before being slaughtered or killed, as stated (Tuan Sidek and Ridzwan, 2018). Muslims are restricted in their choice of ingredients; the definition of what is permissible (halal) and what is prohibited (haram) for them to eat (Fuseini et al., 2016). In surah al-Baqarah- 168, Allah clearly stated that provisions of halal food are one of the religion's requirements. Allah mentioned: Meaning: "*O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy*" (al-Baqarah: 168).

The halal meat-based industry has undergone industrialization and must comply with specific halal regulations to guarantee that its products are halal and *tayyib* within contemporary methods (Ruzulan et al., 2021). Recently, Malaysia experienced a scandal involving halal meat, causing distrust and uncertainty among the Muslim community regarding the safety of available halal meat products in the market (Daud et al. 2023). There is no doubt that issues related to halal approach on halal meat have frequently been discussed in the public domain, particularly concerning the halal status of both locally produced and imported meat (Ruzulan et al., 2021).

Halal Certificate and Halal Meat Industry

Halal certification is the process of approving goods or services in accordance with Islamic law. A process of halal certification and verification is viewed as a critical aspect in giving confidence to Muslim customers on halal quality. Halal certification as a sign of value, health, and the ecosystem not only verifies a product's compliance with Islamic dietary requirements, but also assures that it contains all the permissible ingredients (Asa & Azmi, 2017). The halal certification system, which originated in the United States in the 1980s, has a relatively short history but has since expanded to encompass various countries and a wide range of products and services (Khan and Haleem, 2016).

According to Buang and Mahmud (2012), in Malaysia only the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), halal logos are authorized for use on any product or service. Halal Certificate lets consumers know that the product meets Malaysia's standards for a halal product. JAKIM has recognized 84 Islamic bodies from 46 countries that adhere to the same halal certificate requirements as Malaysia, as of December 1, 2021 (JAKIM, 2020).

The halal certificate is one of the Malaysian government's initiatives designed to help Muslim consumers. The success rate of the government initiative, however, relies on the social responsibility needed to ensure the integrity of halal certificate practice among key players in halal meat meat-based industry ecosystem. Undeniably, halal certification serves as a crucial requirement for accessing the global halal market. It plays a significant role in establishing the recognition of quality and safety in products, aligning with the principles of *halalan toyyiban* throughout the entire supply chain, from farm to fork. This certification serves as a valuable asset in promoting market competitiveness and expanding market opportunities for halal products worldwide. Consumers often interpret the presence of the halal logo on products as a guarantee of their purity, ensuring they are free from impurities (*najis-free*) and align with the concept of *tayyib* (wholesomeness) (Tieman et al., 2012). This association offers confidence to Muslim consumers, assuring them that the products they buy adhere to the necessary halal standards and fulfil their religious dietary requirements. The halal logo functions as a symbol of trust, empowering consumers to make well-informed choices when selecting halal-certified meat-based products (Tieman et al., 2012).

Research Methodology

The study explores the practice of halal certificate in halal meat-based industry in Malaysia to gain a deeper insight related to issues involved in this industry. Employing a qualitative research design, this study utilized a library research approach to extract relevant data from authoritative sources. Supplementary materials, such as articles, journals, books, and conference papers, were also incorporated into the research. The collected data were analysed from the perspectives of consumers, halal industries and regulatory agencies, with a specific focus on halal certificate practice. Following this analysis, the study delved into discussions regarding the importance and needs of implementation on halal certificate to overcome the issues in halal meat-based industry. Prior to the final analysis, the data were theoretically examined and

highlighted key factors related to protecting the integrity of halal meat-based products. By analysing the opinions of scholars, researchers, as well as reporters in disseminating information the analytical approach was used to develop an understanding on how importance of halal certificate in Malaysia's meat-based industry.

Result and Discussion

The Emergence of Halal Forensic Fiqh

Malaysia, a global leader in the halal industry, is actively pursuing evidence against meat cartel syndicates. The issues of meat syndicates and the falsification of halal labels, as mentioned earlier, are highly relevant and necessitate laboratory research and forensic studies to authenticate them. A new approach, combining Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and science to address crimes related to consumer products like meat, has been introduced: Forensic Fiqh (Baharuddin, 2017). This concept contributes to safeguarding the safety and integrity of the local and global halal ecosystem. In some cases, meat cartel syndicates exploit the halal certification process. They might adulterate halal meat with non-halal meat or engage in fraudulent practices to obtain halal certification for their products, deceiving consumers who rely on these certifications for religious reasons. Combating meat cartel syndicates and ensuring the integrity of halal certification processes are crucial for consumer safety, fair market practices, and upholding the religious beliefs of individuals who follow halal dietary guidelines. Regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies play a vital role in investigating and prosecuting those involved in illegal activities related to the meat industry and halal certification.

In fact, JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) and the Department of Chemistry Malaysia have accredited laboratory facilities for authenticating halal products. The results of scientific laboratory research on the falsification of halal products can be used as evidence (*bayyinah*) or forensic evidence (*qarinah*) for legal action (Baharuddin, 2017).

In the past, religious scholars did not use the term 'forensic' to examine issues that fundamentally involve scientific evidence due to the lack of technological sophistication and no need at that time (Muhammad et al., 2019). The Arabic language used by ancient scholars employed terms like '*al-tibb al-shar'i*' and '*al-tibb al-qada'i*' which are closer in meaning to 'forensic' in terminology (Almaany, n.d.). The term 'forensic' is commonly associated with scientific investigation and argumentation in legal contexts. Ahmad et al (2019) quoted that Forensic Fiqh is defined as the knowledge and understanding of Islamic legal rulings related to the

practice of forensic science in the lives of Muslims, based on detailed evidence. Clearly, discussions on the halal forensic concept serve as a method to protect consumers' rights under the Consumer Protection Act 1999 (Act 599) in cases involving halal syndicates or the falsification of halal certificates and labels.

Fulfil Demand and Religion Compliance

In Islamic communities, devout followers adhere wholeheartedly to the teachings outlined in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, embracing profound religious values. The halal industry primarily operates on the fundamental principle that Muslims should consume halal food and beverages, rooted in faith and conviction (Nassir et al., 2021).

According to Talib et al. (2010), following the Halal guidelines, especially in daily dietary choices, serves several purposes. It preserves the core principles of Islam, upholds Islamic values, ensures sustenance, protects wealth and future generations; and preserves dignity and integrity. In the Islamic faith, meat stands out as one of the most rigorously regulated food items (Daud et al., 2023). Among Muslim consumers in Asia, the Middle East, and European nations, there is a notably high awareness and demand for genuine Halal meat compared to other Halal products (Khan and Haleem, 2016).

Muslims firmly uphold the belief that consuming halal food is crucial for safeguarding both their physical health and spiritual faith. In the halal meat industry, the presence of a halal logo is crucial as it signifies that the meat products have been certified by JAKIM (Daud et al., 2023). This logo or labeling indicates that the relevant department has certified the products, confirming that they meet the standards of Islamic values. In Malaysia, JAKIM serves as the official authority responsible for issuing certificates for halal food and services (Fahmi et al., 2019).

The increasing knowledge and awareness levels of halal and *toyyib* concepts have shifted the perceptions of halal food products among Muslims and a growing number of non-Muslims. Confidence in these products stems from the assurance regarding the source of materials and the manufacturing processes employed. Numerous studies have explored various indicators influencing consumers' confidence in halal food products, including the presence of halal logos, ingredient details, country of origin, physical appearance and packaging, label information, manufacturer identity, and other factors (Daud et al., 2023; Nurhazirah et al., 2020). Asian nations such as Malaysia and Indonesia have implemented initiatives like creating Halal

standards through halal certification systems and practice, traceability systems, and Halal science centres. Consequently, the rise in supply and demand for Halal products and services, particularly in the food industry, appears inevitable in the coming years (Maifiah et al., 2022)

Expansion of Halal Meat Industry

In recent years, researchers have explored aspects of the halal meat industry from different angles. Studies have delved into areas such as the characteristics of halal products, consumer awareness, perceptions, and buying behaviors related to halal meat products. These investigations underscore the significance of halal certification, which not only acknowledges quality but also provides assurance to consumers to buy halal meat products.

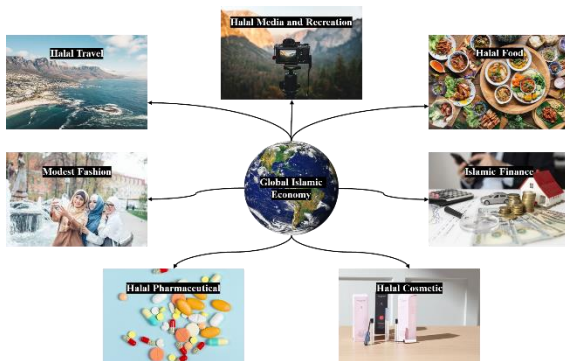
Moreover, the halal meat market represents a substantial segment within the global halal industry. The burgeoning Muslim consumer market worldwide demonstrates double-digit growth, offering abundant opportunities for halal products and services. Numerous countries with significant Muslim populations mandate halal certification for imported meat products. Possessing a halal certificate enables businesses to access international markets and participate in global trade. Since 2010, Malaysia has aimed to become a leading global hub for halal food. To achieve this goal, the Halal Development Corporation (HDC) has proposed that the country's halal food sector should comprise a minimum of 10,000 competitive firms with a global market presence (Noor and Wahid, 2015).

Broadly, Malaysia's meat industry revolves around two key products: the production of beef, buffalo, mutton, and sheep (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries, 2021). The growing population will result in an increased demand for halal meat-based products, necessitating efforts to enhance food production and meet the country's food requirements.

Malaysia's halal industry, particularly in halal meat production, plays a pivotal role in the nation's economic growth and significantly impacts the global economy (Noor et al., 2016). In 2020, Malaysia exported halal products worth RM 30.5 billion with the assistance of 1507 halal certified exporters, securing the top rank in the Global Islamic Economic Indicator (GIEI).

Figure 1 illustrates the sector of halal industry and halal food as one of major sector major sector in global Islamic economy.

Figure 1. Global Islamic Economy



The growth of halal food industry has been supported by various stakeholders, from business entities to the government and consumers. According to Arifin et al (2021), the presence of a halal logo on a food product indicates genuine adherence to the *halalan-toyyiban* principle. Having a precise understanding of the halal and *toyyib* concept enables individuals to delve deeper into its fundamental values, fostering trust and integrity as we progress in building a comprehensive halal food ecosystem.

Thus, ensuring effective law enforcement is essential to ensure that halal food producers adhere to legal requirements. More importantly, it helps boost the confidence of Muslim consumers in halal food products (Rahman et al., 2018). The standards and guidelines for halal certification are outlined in the Malaysian Halal Certification Procedure Manual 2020 (MPPHM 2020), MS1500:2009 Halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling, and Storage - General Guidelines (Second Revision), Food Act 1983, and Trade Description Act 2011. Malaysia planned to create a global halal centre to manufacture and advocate for the significance of halal products and services. Given that the majority of Malaysia's population is Muslim, the government actively supports the halal market. Malaysia is recognized for its heightened sensitivity concerning halal and haram matters.

Conclusion

The primary issues related to food fraud in the meat industry include cases of meat adulteration, mislabeling of meat products, and manipulation of meat, such as replacing beef with buffalo meat in sausage production. Additionally, there have been instances where forbidden meats like pork are illegally substituted for beef, or dog meat is falsely presented as mutton. Furthermore, meat

from animals not slaughtered according to halal requirements might fraudulently enter the market. These challenges underscore the difficulties in ensuring the integrity and compliance of meat products within the industry. However, there is limited research on halal certification practices in meat production, despite various problems faced by the halal industry in Malaysia.

An effective regulatory framework plays a crucial role in overseeing the safety and quality of halal meat throughout the supply chain within the halal meat industry. Matters related to halal certification and compliance primarily focus on ensuring product safety and quality assurance. Maintaining the safety and quality of halal meat products necessitates adherence to standards and regulations throughout the entire supply chain process. To obtain halal certification, the entire supply chain, from farm to fork, must adhere to halal principles. The halal meat supply chain, including raw material acquisition, production, packaging, transportation, and storage, is effectively governed and controlled by a robust regulatory framework.

However, inadequate enforcement and monitoring by local authorities can lead to non-compliance with regulations, potentially compromising the halal status, safety, and quality of products. Moreover, industry players in the halal meat sector often lack understanding and exposure to the proper regulatory framework governing halal operations. Therefore, improving how importance of halal certificate practice within the halal meat industry requires increased awareness and preparedness from all stakeholders involved.

The study's findings are expected to contribute to current knowledge on halal certification practices in the meat-based industry, benefiting consumers, both industry players and the government. This study aims to highlight on major key importance of halal certificate and proposes enhancements to halal as it able to strengthen the assurance of halal status in certified products and increase confidence among consumers and stakeholders in the halal industry.

In summary, identifying the key importance of halal certification in research provides a comprehensive understanding of its multifaceted impact on consumers, businesses, regulatory bodies, and society at large. It aids in making informed decisions, fostering ethical practices, and promoting a trustworthy and inclusive marketplace.

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