

The Need for Halal Assurance Management Systems: An Analysis in Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract

COVID-19 which is caused by SARS-Cov-2 is a zoonotic respiratory epidemic that has been declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global public health emergency. Although there is no evidence associating food with the transmission of the virus causing COVID-19, yet people are very concerned with their consumption intake. Therefore, an abundance of precaution for this exposure have been taken which one of them is Halal Assurance Management System (HAMS). HAMS is one of the ways of mitigating the risk of a future outbreak like COVID-19 by ensuring all ingredients that are used in the products and the process from beginning to end is halal compliant. Hence, the aim of this study is to address the need for HAMS to be introduced in Brunei Darussalam for the halal industry. This study will focus on analyzing population awareness of the implementation of HAMS in halal service industries especially in the food and beverages (F&B) sector. The study is conducted using an online questionnaire comprising 100 local Muslim participants, and collecting secondary data through reliable documents, articles, and sources. Based on this study, it is found that despite 94% respondents being aware of the halal industry in Brunei, only 46% of them are aware of the importance of HAMS in the halal industry. Therefore, it is expected that relevant authorities and parties promote awareness of this system among the public.

Keywords: *halal assurance management systems, halal industry, Brunei Darussalam, COVID-19, halal certification*

Introduction

The unrestricted and frequent movement of commodities and people across geopolitical borders has given global opportunities for improved living while also creating public health implications, as evidenced by infectious disease epidemics (Salem & Jagadeesan, 2020; Kadirov et al., 2020b; Kahiya and Kadirov, 2020; Kowalik, et al., 2020). Since the end of December 2019, the world has been in a prolonged crisis as a result of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified SARS-CoV-2, also known as COVID-19, a worldwide pandemic because it has posed an unprecedented threat to human life all across the world (Jawed, et al., 2020). So far, the COVID-19 has been confirmed in more than 90 nations (Salem & Jagadeesan, 2020). More than 224,901,000 confirmed cases had been reported worldwide as of 11 September 2021, with the total death toll of 4,633,912 people. It is difficult to determine the COVID-19's eventual global impact at this time because it is a massive problem and a tragedy for people all over the world (Kadirov et al., 2020b; Wei, 2020).

Despite the absence of evidence tying food to the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, many people are very concerned about what they consume (Omar, 2020). However, it is critical to ensure that food-industry employees are not infected with COVID-19 or are carriers of the virus, as a COVID-19 pandemic might endanger the supply of food indefinitely and without warning (Jawed, et al., 2020). Food intake is closely related to population health dynamics (Mandlik et al., 2021).

Therefore, Jawed, et al., (2020) emphasized the importance of the food sector developing and implementing enhanced food system models that can address broader food-related challenges. The stakeholders should not only extend their contribution to maintain continuous and safe food supply, but also to develop and install systems which are resilient against situational anomalies (Jawed, et al., 2020; Kadirov, 2019). As food production chains changed, Muslims have had to pay heightened attention to labelling of products across the value chain, with concerns spanning non-ritually slaughtered meat to pork gelatine, additives, and colorings (DinarStandard, Dubai The Capital of Islamic Economy & Salaam Gateway, 2020; Kadirov et al., 2020a). Besides, traceability is integral to halal food, which needs to not only be permissible, but wholesome, pure and clean (DinarStandard, Dubai The Capital of Islamic Economy & Salaam Gateway, 2020; Khan et al., 2019).

Brunei has a competitive advantage in the halal market since it is known for adhering to Islamic laws and principles. Therefore, Brunei has an excellent opportunity to expand its Halal industry, necessitating the establishment of the Halal Assurance Management System (HAMS) to ensure that all food produced is halal, safe, and wholesome to eat. The risk of transmission of COVID-19 to the food cannot be ruled out, hence, Brunei should expedite the establishment of HAMS in every halal company in Brunei Darussalam.

Overview of Halal Certification in Brunei Darussalam

Overview of Halal Assurance Management Systems in Brunei Darussalam

There are no specific manuals or guidelines of HAMS that have been introduced in Brunei Darussalam. However, there are some companies that implement it, for instance, Simpor Pharma Sendirian Berhad (henceforth will be referred as Simpor Pharma). Simpor Pharma is considered as the first Brunei's halal pharmaceutical plant. In addition, this company also has

established its own Halal Assurance System (HAS) to monitor and maintain a system to assure consistency in halal production. This will be done with the help of the halal management team or halal committee led by experienced Muslim personnel (Simpor Pharma Sendirian Berhad, 2015).

Moreover, the halal committee will monitor and make improvements to the HAS for better compliance to the halal guidelines according to the Islamic Law. Simpor Pharma's target is to obtain and maintain Halal certification from various national agencies and currently in the process of obtaining Halal certification for pharmaceutical products, health supplements and cosmetics. Additionally, the company's focus is to assure the Halal status of production from the beginning to the end of the production (Simpor Pharma Sendirian Berhad, 2015). Hence, it is expected for Brunei Darussalam to enhance the implementation of HAMS in organizations in order to gain consumers' trust and credibility to promote this country as a global halal hub.

Halal Certification in Brunei Darussalam

Application for the halal certificate is made mandatory for food company owners, but on a voluntary basis for non-food products such as medicines, cosmetics, consumable goods and services (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021). The applicants who wish to apply for a halal certificate must go through Halal Food Control Division (HFCD), Department of Shariah Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), Brunei Darussalam who is given the power of handling the process of halal certification which acts as a secretariat in handling the halal certification process (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021). Meanwhile, Brunei Islamic Religious Council is ultimately the last to give approval (Haji Sulaiman, 2020) or rejection (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021). In short, halal certification is performed solely by the officers of the HFCD starting from application to site auditing to certification and follow-up audit (Haji Kifli, 2019).

Upon receiving the application form, the HFCD will conduct the oral and written tests for Halal Food Supervisors of the applicant's company. Once passed for both tests, then the Halal Certification and Halal Label Inspection Committee (henceforth will be referred as Inspection Committee) which comprises of MoRA, Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT), and Ministry of Health (MoH) will go through an adequacy audit which is conducted once a week. The Inspection Committee will review the completed form and if they are satisfied, they will ask the Chief Inspector and the Auditor to do the on-site audit by inspecting the premises or producer (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021).

Then, the Chief Inspector and Auditor, and staff conduct inspection and supervision on the premises of the applicant. Subsequently, the audit team will prepare a report to submit to the Inspection Committee, which will then be submitted to MUIB. MUIB will give the final decision of either approved or not (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021).

Finally, if supported, a Halal Certificate will be issued for the premises once payments are made. Approved applicants will be required to make a payment to MUIB of BND 90 for each halal certificate which will be valid for three years. The halal certification process from the start until the issuance of halal certification takes only 45 days in calendar days if the process is clear, all the pre-requisite requirements are met and inspection does not have any non-conformance (NC) (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021).

In addition, a surveillance audit will be conducted at any time in order to make the premises always comply with the halal food standards requirements. If the premises were caught to have committed an offense, the halal certificate will be revoked (Sulaiman & Hashim, 2021). Therefore, in order to make sure that halal certification will not be revoked and the application of halal certification will not be rejected, the company especially halal companies should apply and implemented HAMS in their operation and production. This is because HAMS will make sure that every operation from selection of raw materials to the distribution of the products are halal.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this study is to determine the importance of HAMS in halal business and to assess public knowledge and awareness of HAMS, particularly in the food and beverages (F&B) sector. HAMS can be viewed as a means of reducing the likelihood of a future pandemic similar to COVID-19. This notion of causality must be understood from the Islamic perspective (Kadirov et al., 2021).

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the research. In order to acquire a better understanding of the importance of HAMS in halal business, qualitative data was gathered through a literature review of associated documents, journals, books, newspapers, brochures and authoritative websites.

Meanwhile, quantitative data was obtained through survey as a tool to obtain primary data. The questionnaire was aimed at Muslim respondents about 100 respondents in Brunei Darussalam. The selection of respondents is done randomly or using random sampling but exclusively for Muslims by spreading out the survey via Google Form.

Respondents were given a closed-ended questionnaire to fill out in order to assess their awareness of HAMS. Closed-ended questions are preferred because they are easier and faster for respondents to respond to, as well as easier to code and statistically evaluate the responses provided.

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to collect the socio-demographic information about the respondents, such as their gender, age and level of education. The second and third part was dealt with Halal knowledge and awareness, as well as the awareness on the need for HAMS in Brunei. A brief definition of HAMS is also provided in the online questionnaire in order to guide respondents.

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies table, which shows the number and percentage of observations in each variable category. SPSS frequency tables are preferred by researchers because they allow them to arrange and summarize survey data in a tabular style that is simple to interpret.

Results and Discussion

Based on the literature analysis and data collection, the needs of HAMS in Brunei Darussalam were identified, which addresses (1) the importance of HAMS in halal business, and (2) HAMS awareness in Brunei Darussalam. The study finds that the HAMS has been implemented in some halal companies in Brunei, but the relevant authorities have yet to gazette it and that few people are aware of it. The findings are discussed in the sections below.

The Need for Halal Assurance Management System

The majority of the data gathered in this study come from a literature review of relevant documents, journals, proceedings, books, and related authority websites, all of which were analysed in order to have a better understanding of HAMS. Since the emergence of the Halal food sector in Malaysia in the 1970's, the phrase Halal Assurance Management System (HAMS) has been used in most enterprises in ASEAN nations such as Malaysia and Indonesia (Mohd Hasli Ramli, 2020). HAMS is a system that ensures food safety, quality, and cleanliness at each step of production in order to meet the legal requirements of Halal certification. This system aids in the elimination of any potential food-borne or production-related hazards, resulting in high-quality products that are Halal-compliant. Any microbiological, chemical, or physical contaminant in food might be considered a food hazard. Awareness, persistent attention, timely reporting and, last but not least, swift and effective responses are four elements to responding to these threats (Hickman, 2012).

Furthermore, this system is built on the principles of effective recall procedures, traceability, and the availability of a proper file system for halal applications, documents, procedures and records, as well as a quality management system that runs throughout the supply chain. It is a Halal control system extension, which is a system that adds another level of Halal safety control to improve the control of non-compliant of contamination from Haram material and prospective Haram material, activities and processes. Moreover, because this system is designed, implemented and managed by a Halal certified company, it should be adopted.

In order to maintain a company's long-term viability in this competitive Halal market, HAMS must be implemented, particularly to ensure a company's Halal integrity for Halal certification purposes. The reliability and consumer confidence of products and services rise with a well-organized and structured HAMS, while Halal risks are reduced.

Furthermore, the Halal food sector is gaining momentum due to the expanding Muslim population and increased interest in Islamic lifestyle (e.g., dietary rules, dress codes) among Muslims around the world (Khalid, et al., 2018). According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2019/20, the halal food business saw a 5.1 percent increase in top-line consumer spend on food and beverage from 2017 to 2018, with Indonesia, Turkey and Pakistan being the top three nations by spending (DinarStandard, Dubai The Capital of Islamic Economy & Salaam Gateway, 2020). This growing demand for halal foods and beverages necessitates genuine Halal certification based on Islamic laws. This necessitates a thorough understanding of Shariah compliance and related regulatory structures, as well as a pressing need to make such regulations more business friendly.

However, amidst of COVID-19, most of the countries that produce these measures have experienced a major economic crisis, wreaking havoc on businesses and industries, including the Halal industry (Khalid et al., 2018). As a result, one of the recommendations for the industry to improve is to establish and develop the HAMS among the premises to recover.

Brunei intends to reap the benefits of the halal industry by promoting Halal certification and exporting Halal meat products. In order to accomplish this, the government issued the first enactment of Halal Certificate and Label Order 2005. As the global demand for Halal products has grown, Brunei introduced its own halal branding called 'Brunei Halal' in July 2009, which is considered as a global halal brand to meet to the needs of Muslims all over the world.

Furthermore, Brunei Halal certification is recognized for its credibility and reliability. Brunei's Ministry of Religious Affairs is the only authority in the country with the jurisdiction to decide whether or not a company should be certified as Halal. As a result, it is very significant to recognize the awareness and understanding about the implementation of HAMS in Brunei, particularly in the food and beverages sectors, in order to meet their needs and boost the Halal industry's economy.

From the time raw ingredients are obtained until finished products are shipped to clients, this system comprises the application of a commitment to ensure the Halal integrity of products. Some of the advantages of HAMS are as follows:

- To ensure that there are no potential hazards or Haram sources in the raw materials or substances used in the production.
- To prevent and minimize the risk of food contamination and eliminating by non-Halal ingredients, as well as to eliminate contamination
- The company will be guided in preserving the Halal production process's long-term viability.
- Prevent any situations of non-conformity that resulted in the product of not being halal.

Awareness of Halal Assurance Management in Brunei Darussalam

This study involved 100 respondents who are Muslim communities in Brunei Darussalam. Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the respondents that were sample as research data.

Table 1. Demographics of Respondents

Variable	Description	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	42	42
	Female	58	58
Age	18-29 years old	58	58
	30-40 years old	25	25
	<40 years old	17	17
Education	High School	27	27
	Graduate		
	Diploma	33	33
	Bachelor	40	40

Based on the table above, it can be seen that male respondents were 42 percent, and women were 58 percent. The age of respondents between 30-40 age group was 25 percent, and the biggest domination was the 18-29 age group, which reached 58 percent, and the age group above the age of 40 years was as much as 17 percent. Respondents with high school education were 27 percent, diploma were 33 percent and the rest were bachelor students with a percentage of 40 percent.

The majority of the public is aware of the Halal industry in Brunei, according to the public responses which illustrated in Table 2 below, with only 6 percent of respondents unaware of Halal industry in Brunei. As a result, the general public in Brunei appears to be aware of the Halal industry.

Table 2. Awareness of Halal Industry in Brunei

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	94	94.0	94.0	94.0
	No	6	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

However, as indicated in Table 3 below, only about half of the respondents were aware of the HAMS. This indicates that not all Muslims in Brunei are aware of the situation. It is the obligation of the parties to educate and raise awareness about this issue. Hence, based on this research, food establishments in Brunei should implement this system in order to preserve Halal integrity of their products.

Table 3. The Awareness of Halal Assurance Management System in Brunei

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	46	46.0	46.0	46.0
	No	54	54.0	54.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 reveals that the majority of respondents with 65 percent believed that having a HAMS is critical for food and beverages establishments in Brunei Darussalam. Furthermore, just 10 percent of respondents felt that implementing this system was not important, while 25 percent was ambivalent.

Table 4. The Need of Halal Assurance Management System Implementation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Agree	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
	Neutral	25	25.0	25.0	90.0
	Disagree	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

According to the statistics above, the vast majority of Brunei's Muslim population is aware of country's Halal industry. Nonetheless, not all Bruneian Muslims are aware of the HAMS and have not been exposed to it. Hence, it is the responsibility of the relevant authorities to raise knowledge about the HAMS and urge the Halal premises in Brunei to apply it, as it is important and beneficial to all the businesses in the country, not just the food and beverages industry.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that HAMS is important in the halal industry since it ensures that the food produced is not only halal but also *thayyib* to consume. Muslims are advised to follow the *Halalan Thayyiban* diet, which is mentioned in Surah al-Baqarah verse 168. As a result, Muslims must take special care to avoid contamination that could threaten their Halal status, especially in a multi-cultural and multi-religious environment. If a business employs HAMS, the halal status of a product will not be affected because every operation will be scrutinized from start to end (Kadirov, 2014; 2019).

Even when the pandemic has passed, people should not simply relax; instead, they should consider how to avert future tragedies (Kadirov et al, 2020b). We should follow comprehensive and meticulous recommendations in all elements of food control and food safety. For the sake of a better future for humanity, all parties involved should work together to address issues that have been overlooked.

Furthermore, based on this study, despite 94 percent of respondents being aware of halal industry in Brunei Darussalam, only 46 percent are aware of the importance of HAMS in the halal industry. As a result, it is intended that relevant authorities and parties to raise public awareness about this system and encourage industry players to use it in their production activities.

This research only focuses on consumers or public in Brunei Darussalam. Hence, this study recommends more research needs to be done to reach different aspects or results. For instance, further investigation study should study on stakeholders' knowledge and perception towards HAMS. Also, new niche spheres of halal certification need to be explored. For instance, food as part of halal maternity services can be considered (Krisjanous et al., 2021).

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