

Initial Exploratory Qualitative Study on Halal Supply Chain Awareness in Hong Kong

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to share the initial exploratory study on halal supply chain in Hong Kong. The primary objective of this study was to find out the present state of halal awareness in Hong Kong. This study adopted a qualitative approach where three purposively selected informants from Islamic Community Centre of Hong Kong and one academician were being interviewed in November 2015. Transcribed analysis reveals that halal awareness in Hong Kong is generally low. Halal food and halal food outlet certification is based on Islamic Community's efforts as this country is a non-muslim country. The main perception on halal is dominantly on no pork allowed or to be served. However, the informants revealed that efforts had been made to liaise with JAKIM Malaysia for Malaysian standard procedures for halal food outlets certification but apparently no support was extended. In conclusion, even though Hong Kong has only 300,000 muslims in the country, there are efforts from the independent Islamic bodies that oversee halal matters and halal certification for food outlets. In conclusion, further collaborative studies are much needed to explore further on halal awareness and halal supply chain implementation in this country since the Hong Kong tourism body is receptive towards attracting more muslim tourists to visit the country by providing more muslim friendly hotels and halal food outlets.

Keywords: Halal, halal awareness, halal supply chain, halal certification

1. INTRODUCTION

Halal simply means "things or actions permitted or lawful" by the shariah laws. Thus, halal foods mean foods that are allowed to be consumed or used; and halal services are meant to be delivered in accordance with Islamic shariah law. The term halal covers and designates not only for food and drink but also all matters of daily life (Mohd Shariff & Ahmad, 2015). This is because matters under the Islamic law or commonly known as the shariah (Al-Shariah) denotes a moral system of living that governs every aspect of a muslim life. In other words, shariah refers to the body of Islamic laws which deals with many aspects of muslims day-to-day life from food, hygiene, family, politics, banking and business (SIRIM, 2015).

Apart from halal, the Islamic religion also places strong emphasis on cleanliness (toyyiban) (Mohd Shariff & Ahmad, 2015). The Malaysian Standard MS2400 (2010) defines toyyib as the basic standards on hygiene, safety, sanitation, nutrition, risk exposure, environmental, social and other related aspects in accordance with application needs. In other words, toyyib refers to wholesomeness. Aggregating halalan-toyyiban connotes the assurance and guarantee; both aspects of halal and toyyib are integrated into holistic and balanced requirements that fulfil the condition, situation or application needs as stated in the MS2400 (2010) Halalan Toyyiban Assurance Management System.

Generally when people speak about halal, it is only halal foods that register in the minds of people. It has to be noted that halal governs not only for food production or manufacturing but halal management also covers sourcing or origin of raw materials (halalness), movements, transportation and distribution processes from the upstream (origin) and downstream to the market (end users) that involves transporters, containers, modes by road, air or

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sea, warehouse and distribution centers owners and operators and their operations; wholesalers and retailers and their business in hypermarkets, supermarkets and small retail outlets (Mohd Shariff, Jaafar & Muhammad, 2014). In one simple word halal also refers to all services that are related to halal foods and businesses. This refers to halal supply chain management.

1.1 Halal supply chain management

Halal supply chain is now the latest emerging business that has captured global attention. It has not only attracted food industry practitioners to practice and comply with the halal concept, but other sectors such as cosmetics, pharmaceutical, health care products, tourism and hotel services; coupled also from academicians and researchers from institutions of higher learning also need to know and understand the halal supply chain in order to support halal integrity of the halal products (Mohd Shariff & Ahmad, 2015).

There are indeed many literary references for halal supply chain and halal supply chain management. Bahrudin, Illyas & Desa (2011) described halal supply chain management as “the process of managing the procurement, movement, storage and handling of materials, parts, livestock and semi-finished inventory, food and non-food, and related information together with documentation flows through the organization that comply with the general principles of shariah Law”. Ngah & Zainuddin (2012) added on by stating the activities in the halal supply chain are warehousing, sourcing, transport, handling and delivery of halal products, inventory management and other business management strategies such as lean management and value-based management.

Additionally, halal supply chain adopts the conventional supply chain but with imposed shariah law requirements. The imposition of the Islamic laws in supply chain management acts as the basic requirements for a shariah-based halal management process: meaning everything must be halal (permissible) and *toyyib* along the whole chain (Omar, Jaafar & Osman, 2012).

1.2 Halal business

Malaysia is regarded as one of the leaders in the global halal marketplace. The global market value for trade in halal foods and non-food products is estimated at US\$2.77 trillion annually (STARBIZ, 2015). Quoted also from Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MARTRADE) report “the growing muslim population which is estimated at 1.83 billion people has accelerated halal products and services development; and pushed the acceptance for halal standards among non-muslims”. Halal is now seen as the new source of economic growth for Malaysia with the emergence of potential growth of halal market from China, Japan, Thailand, India, Australia and Middle East countries (HDC, 2013). For Japan, halal food products are gaining popularity due to the high quality standards set upon on these products. “Malaysia’s processed food exports to Japan amounted to RM654.7 million in the first 10 months of the year 2014, a 25% increase more than a year ago” (New Straits Times, 2015). The Tokyo Olympics in 2020 will bring the world together for all potential buyers who are keen on halal products and services.

Halal is now recognised by both muslim and non-muslim consumers as a symbol of quality, safety and wholesomeness (quoted from HDC, 2013). It is also known that Malaysia’s halal certification is well-accepted internationally for the past fifteen – twenty years ago (end of 1995). In fact, Malaysia is also the global pioneer in halal certification system for halal foods and halal food outlets. JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) is the government authority spearheading and overseeing on halal policies, halal certification processes and halal auditing, halal enforcement of the Malaysian halal standards for halal food industry that includes abattoirs, food manufacturing, foods and beverages outlets, pharmaceutical, healthcare and all imported food products from other countries (JAKIM, 2015).

1.3 Malaysian Halal Standards

The Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM) together with JAKIM, Halal Development Corporation (HDC) Malaysia and pioneering multi-national halal food manufacturing industry players have successfully established thirteen halal standards for the nation. These authorities had shared and exported their knowledge and expertise to other countries that are seeking guidance in setting up their own halal certification process. Non-muslim countries such as Thailand, Singapore and Japan are now competitively placing greater emphasis and strategies to develop their local producers to increase market and export of halal producers and services overseas as they see the vast global opportunities in halal products at global level (STARBIZ, 2015). It was reported that these countries are modelling against our Malaysian halal standards. The Malaysian MS1500: 2009 standard for halal

food production, preparation, handling and storage has being referred by many countries towards supplying of halal food products to the muslim market. Additionally, Malaysia has created another impact in introducing the MS2400: 2010 standards for Halal Assurance Pipeline Standards (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2010) for halal supply chain assurance or halal assurance pipeline. As on Jan 2016, Malaysia has established 13 halal standards as shown on in Table 1: Malaysian Halal Standards (DSM, 2015).

Table 1: Malaysian Halal Standards.

MS Standards	Description
MS1500:2009	Halal Food – Production, Preparation, Handling And Storage – General Guidelines (Second Revision)
MS1900: 2014	Shariah-Based Quality Management Systems
MS2300: 2009	Value- Based Management System – Requirements from An Islamic Perspectives
MS2393: 2013	Islamic and Halal Principles – Definitions and Interpretations on Terminology
MS2424: 2012	Halal Pharmaceuticals – General Guidelines
MS2594: 2015	Halal Chemicals for use in Portable Water Treatment – General Guidelines
MS2610: 2015	Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services - Requirements
MS 2200:2008	Islamic Consumer Goods – Part 1: Cosmetic And Personal Care – General Guidelines
MS2200: 2013	Islamic Consumer Goods – Part 2: Usage of Animal Bone, Skin and Hair – General Guidelines
MS 2424: 2012	Halal Pharmaceuticals – General guidelines
MS 2400-1: 2010 Part 1	Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline: Management System Requirement for Transportation of Goods and/or Cargo Chain Services.
MS 2400-2: 2010 Part 2	Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline Management System Requirements for Warehousing and Related Activities.
MS 2400-3: 2010 Part 3	Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline Management System Requirements for Retailing.

2. LITERATURE

2.1 Halal awareness

Halal food industry is gaining attention across the world as nations and manufacturers realised its great potential and halal assurance on food hygiene, cleanliness, safety and well-being of human beings with regards to consumptions, usage and purchase. Manufacturers are obliged to act responsibly to maintain the halal status of the products in compliance with halal requirements (Hussain, Mehad, Ab Ghani & Mohammad, 2012). In major muslim countries, halal awareness among the muslim consumers is on the rise as they are now more particular on the halalness of the food products and food outlets (Zulfakar, et al., 2014). Even the non-muslim consumers are slowly getting to know and understand on what is meant by halal foods. There is a strong demand for halal products in non-muslim countries for both groups of people (muslim and non-muslim). The halal products are growing in popularity among the non-muslim consumers due to human animal treatment concerns and the perceptions that halal products are healthier and safer (Canadian Agri-food Trade Service Report, 2008; Golnaz, Zainal Abidin, Mad Nasir & Chew, 2010).

2.2 Halal integrity

The scope of halal products or services does not mean halal is deemed only at the selling points, or at the point of consumption and purchase by end users. Instead, halal products or services involves every aspect, process step and activities along the supply chain which is from the origin (source) or farm and all the way to the end (consumers or at the eating tables) (Tieman, 2011). In halal supply chain processes, it involves transporters, manufacturers, distributors, warehouse operators, workers where handling, carrying, placing, moving, processing and stacking take place together with the use of equipment, vehicles, forklifts, stackers, facilities in handling all goods and cargo regardless of halal and non-halal products. Hence, there exist some forms of break chains along these processes from one point to another; and there may exist vulnerabilities and potentials of cross contamination among the halal and non-halal products (Curseu, Van Woensel, Fransco, Van Donselaar & Broekmeulen, 2009). Thus the concern for assurance of halal integrity is upmost important for halal supply chain. In order to protect the halal integrity of halal foods, all parties that are involved in halal supply chain must have good understanding and adequate awareness on halal (Zulfakar et al., 2014). Likewise, Jaafar et al., (2011) posited that halal supply chain services offered by logistics service providers is guaranteed only when the products are within their custody;

however, once the products are transferred to the custody of another party or the next custodian, there is a tendency of breakage in halal supply chain when the other party does not practice or adopt halal supply chain.

2.3 Halal certification

Halal certification is a formal systematic audit process that evaluates a management system that encompasses intensive examination of managing of processes and activities, people and resource management, infrastructure and facilities management; from inputs, processes to outputs in an organization. Halal food manufacturers or halal service providers seeking for halal certification aimed that their products and services are in compliance with the imposed halal management standards and meeting all related legal and requirements governing the respective industry either food, food outlets, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, health care, hotel and tourism. Additionally, halal certification is done by recognised halal certification body or a government authority that is entrusted with halal certification approval. For Malaysia, JAKIM (Malaysia Islamic Development Department) under the Prime Minister Office of Malaysia is the halal certification body. Apart from that, the State Religious Authorities (JAINS – *Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri*) also manage religious and halal matters in each thirteen states in Malaysia. Additionally, JAKIM also recognises 56 halal certification bodies from other countries with regards to halal certifications and halal recognition (JAKIM, 2015).

Ab Talib et al. (2013) reported that there are more than 122 halal certification bodies and agencies comprising government agencies, non-government bodies, Islamic societies from non-muslim countries (IHIA, 2011). To attain and sustain halal certification, the scope of halal certification must be clearly defined by the organization so as to prevent “the abuse of halal certification” and misconstrued perception from the public; and to uphold the halal integrity and trust after the halal certification is being achieved. Halal certification is a proof that the products and services have been verified and validated in compliance with halal manufacturing or transport standards and shariah compliant; and provides assurance to the consumers that the products or services are safe and halal for muslim consumption and use (Marzuki, Hall & Ballantine, 2012).

It is worthy to highlight that halal certification is carried out by competent and qualified halal auditors who are not only well-versed with the technical aspects of managing business and operations but also conversant with shariah law and requirements. Halal training is important for human resource development in the halal industry. As consumers for halal products, we must have basic education and knowledge pertaining halal so that we are aware and understand halal issues in the halal industry such as unauthorized or dubious halal logo. As employees for halal organization, we must be able to advise the management on how to address and resolve halal and contamination issues (Che Hashim & Mohd Shariff, 2015). As for halal auditors, one must be well-trained not only in auditing skills but must possess in-depth understanding, knowledge and skills in the respective manufacturing or transport operations and its critical control points. Additionally, auditors possessing the shariah knowledge and principles do not suffice towards shariah deployment, but the competencies to integrate the spirit or essence of religious values into the workplace itself is a challenging task for shariah compliant implementation.

3. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Hong Kong is a non-muslim country with a population of 7.2 million (Hong Kong Census Report, 2014). The major official languages are Chinese Cantonese and English; and their major religions are Buddhism and Taoism. Hong Kong has 4 main districts namely: Hong Kong Island, New Territories, Kowloon and Lantau Island. Its main currency is Hong Kong Dollar. The muslim community population in Hong Kong is estimated at 300,000; with a breakdown of 30,000 are Chinese; 30,000 are from Pakistan and 150,000 are Indonesians. The others are mostly non-chinese born in Hong Kong. There are also Muslims from India, Malaysia and Middle Eastern and African countries (Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, 2015). The Islamic matters and muslim community welfare are overseen by the Board of Trustees (BOT), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong which is recognized by the government of Hong Kong SAR. There are 4 constituent bodies sitting in the Board of Trustees (hereafter termed as BOT) namely: Islamic Union of Hong Kong, Pakistan Association of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Dawoodi Bohra Association and Indian Muslim Association of Hong Kong.

BOT being a charitable organisation, their main functions of the BOT are 1) managing the 5 mosques and 2 muslim cemeteries in Hong Kong; 2) managing the madrassas & makhtabs in the mosques; 3) employing imams, quran teachers and office staff; 4) making arrangements for funerals and burials of deceased Muslims; 5) undertaking Dawah work for the muslims and non-muslims and carryout programs in the general interests of the Hong Kong muslims and propagation of Islam; and last but not the least 6) carrying out halal inspections and issue

halal certificates in Hong Kong and some parts of China (Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, 2015).

This study was carried out in Hong Kong in November 2015 as part of a halal supply chain research collaboration effort of a research centre in Malaysia. A four day visit to two institutions of higher learning and the Islamic Community Office was facilitated by Chartered Institute of Transport Hong Kong (CILTHK) Office. The research adopted qualitative approach using semi-structured and informal interviews with two purposively selected members of Office of Board of Trustees (BOT), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, and one local Hong Kong academician. All informants are muslims; and that two are Chinese and one is an Indian. The primary objective of this study was to find out the present state of halal awareness in Hong Kong. This paper presents the initial exploratory findings on halal awareness and halal supply chain in Hong Kong.

4. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was adopted and justified for this study in order to understand halal; and halal supply chain in Hong Kong. Qualitative design was relevant as this was an exploratory and preliminary study that attempts to explore the individual experience of the informants being interviewed, represented through narrative analysis and interpretations (Churchill, 1998). Qualitative methodology was appropriate because of the nature of the research questions with what and how; further more to gain an understanding for this case halal awareness and halal supply chain in Hong Kong (Creswell, 1998). This research topic needed to be explored as halal is new to Hong Kong being a non-muslim country. Lastly, justification for this research is to study the selected individuals in their natural settings in their office: gaining access and gathering direct primary information from the informants themselves about halal state in Hong Kong, particularly in halal foods and outlets.

The targeted informant was purposively selected as they possessed specific halal knowledge and information in Hong Kong. Henceforth, the three purposively selected informants were identified for this study: an office bearer (OB) working actively in halal certification in Hong Kong; an imam (IM) from one of the mosque in Hong Kong and one academician (AC) in one institution of higher learning in Hong Kong. All three informants are muslims and they are Chinese except for OB (Indian).

The methodology adopted one – to – one and face – to – face interview for primary data collection to allow for free flow of information with semi-structured interview guide prepared by the researchers. Interview guide or protocol enables the researcher to remain focus towards the meeting the research objectives; and also to guide the informants towards deliberating on the research topic; and also time management for the interview. The interviews were carried out in the Islamic Community Office, Hong Kong and also during the research collaboration-discussion. The interview questions were open ended questions that were purposively done so as to allow the informants to narrate their rich experiences, thoughts and emotions, perceptions and institutional knowledge on halal supply chain. Interview notes were written down immediately (not tape recorded) as the researcher felt that it was inappropriate at that time as the informants might feel uneasy towards us as strangers; and also the subject matter is sensitive in nature.

Observations were also carried out in and around Hong Kong city itself; the Office of Board of Trustees, the Islamic Kitchen and the mosque which are in the same building; and observing a few muslim food outlets along Wan Chai Road.

Secondary data was used to support and complement the study and the write up for this paper. Several websites related to Hong Kong were referred for updated information; journals and publications related to halal supply chain were used to enlighten the insight of the research.

Analysis was done using the basic analytical methods by identifying similar and repeated key words and clues; formation of basic coding was then carried out by grouping identified key words; and lastly categorisation of categories of findings on halal supply chain.

5. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This research was done in Hong Kong Island, specifically at the Office of The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong (hereafter termed as the Office) located at 40 Oi Kwan Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong. Interviews with the first two informants were carried out after the Asar prayers in the evening for about

two hours with a small tea break in between. The third informant is an academician from one of the institution of higher learning in Hong Kong. The interview with the third informant was carried continuously as she was the gatekeeper and key liaison person for this collaborative halal research project in Hong Kong.

i. Informants background

Mr OB (Office Bearer) is one of the Office Bearer in the Office (BOT). Mr OB, a non-chinese muslim is an experienced manager with more than 25 vast working years of experience from hotel and tourism, manufacturing, business and consultancy. He had worked in Malaysia for more than 15 years before residing in Hong Kong and working with the Office. He has good command of Bahasa Malaysia and speaks well in English and Cantonese Chinese.

Mr IM (Imam), a muslim Chinese is the second informant in this study. He is an imam for the one of the mosque and his origin is from China; a retired principal of Islamic Kassim Tuet Memorial College and a council member of United Muslim Association of Hong Kong. He is also the editor of "Light of Islam in the website for Islamic Organization of Hong Kong.

Ms AC (Academician) is the third informant who is the gatekeeper assisting the 2 Malaysian researchers in this research in contacting the Office and seeking permission for the interviews and meetings with the the relevant informants. Additionally, the researchers have also contacted the Office personally seeking support for the research in halal supply chain in Hong Kong. Ms AC is an assistant professor in department of supply chain and information management of one institution of higher learning in Hong Kong. Being the Director for the Centre for Corporate Sustainability and Innovations, she is also an active member of UNESCO in education, particularly on environmental and sustainability. She is a muslim chinese.

ii. Overview of Muslims in Hong Kong

Mr OB described the roles of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and Islamic Union; and also elaborated on the layout of the BOT Building located in Wan Chai Road. Quoted:

"The Trustee Office manages all the mosques and education centres here; the Islamic Unit takes care of the muslim societies; and if someone dies, the muslim contacts the manager in charge and we will send our Trustee officer".

Based on secondary information obtained from the BOT website (2015), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong Office is an eight storey building which is owned by them; and its management is the Islamic Union of Hong Kong who manages the Masjid Ammar (mosque) and Osman Ramju Sadick Islamic Centre as well as provide services to the needs of the muslim community. The ground floor houses the muslim community kindergarten; the first floor is the ablution facilities for men and women; the second floor is the mosque; and the third floor is the prayer hall for ladies. The fourth to eight floors are the administrative and communal facilities including classrooms, Islamic canteen, library, offices for imams & qur'an teacher and Islamic organizations, conference and seminar rooms and a medical clinic. The fifth floor is the Islamic Kitchen (cafeteria) that provides economical muslim and halal chinese foods. The Centre can accommodate more than 1500 people (Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, 2015).

Based on the researchers' observation, the facilities and environment in BOT building were well-maintained with good housekeeping. The researchers had their dinners at the Islamic Kitchen which was being operated by muslim Chinese. In fact, it was observed throughout the four days Islamic Kitchen was patronised by regular muslims who either to come to pray; dropped by the Islamic Center to send their school children or to the library. They served a variety of muslim chinese foods, rice and curry.

iii. Halal industry in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is an island with limited land. Hong Kong does not have large or commercial plantations or animal farms in Hong Kong Island; but there are very few small scale individuals who planted crops and rear livestock animals for personal and local market needs near their own locations. Quoted Mr OB:

“In Hong Kong, there are also no slaughterhouses. All our meats are imported from China; in fact, there are only one to two butchers in Hong Kong. There is one meat shop in down town Hong Kong. The butchers are certified butchers; our imam had verified that...”

Mr OB added on “all our chickens are already slaughtered in China; frozen chicken is from Brazil; our cows and lambs (frozen meat products) are imported from Australia. However, the lamb here is very expensive in Hong Kong; in fact all foods ...here is expensive as compared to Malaysia... So, I don’t think there is halal industry in Hong Kong.”

Analysis posited that halal industry is small in Hong Kong, and halal is spearheaded and managed by the Office being the NGO (non-government organization). This is validated based on the one of the stated roles of the Office (The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong) that is to carry out halal inspections and issue halal certificates in Hong Kong and some parts of China.

iv. Halal foods and supply chain

There are 52 food outlets and restaurants with Hong Kong halal logo and certification from the BOT Office, specifically the Islamic Union (Islam Organization Hong Kong, 2015). A majority of these halal food outlets are run by mostly Indians, Pakistanese, Middle East muslims and a few muslim Chinese entrepreneurs. These majority muslim restaurants are located in Kowloon (another island) which is quite a distance from Hong Kong Island. The Islamic Union is responsible for the halal certification and halal audit of food outlets in Hong Kong.

Mr OB added on; quoted:

“All meats in Hong Kong are frozen; fresh meat is rare as it is expensive. Fresh chicken cost around RM70 (Ringgit Malaysia)...while frozen chicken cost only RM50...”

Informant Mr IM (imam) added on that the concept and practice of halal restaurant in Hong Kong and accepted by the Office is that no pork is served in that restaurant. Quoted:

“generally, the common people here don’t call halal restaurants but we called serve pork-free menu (no pork being served). The restaurants provide and serve halal foods but do serve alcoholic beverages. One more thing...majority of the restaurant operators are Hindus (Indians), they also do not serve beefand they are 60 – 70% of the food outlets operators.”

One interesting comment noted from the interview notes was that some Chinese in Hong Kong also do not eat pork for some reasons. In addition to that, the informant revealed that there were no pig farms and no slaughter houses in Hong Kong Island for more than ten years ago.

v. Halal awareness

Both informants Mr OB and Mr IM reemphasized that Hong Kong is not an Islamic country; and that the muslim communities are small in number (300,000). Findings of the analysis indicated that the level of interest and awareness in halal among the general public in Hong Kong is low as the muslim communities are within themselves. Quoted by Mr OB:

“The percentage (interest and awareness) is low; not many are interested to set up halal restaurants; or even aware about halal foods and halal restaurants”.

He stressed further by quoting “ Hong Kong is a free port; our government is liberal on the trade... thus there is no specific laws for halal...; however, Hong Kong do organize Food Exposition every year...; this year (2015) the theme is “Halal Food Expo”... I remember they set up many booths....more than 10 booths...but all are selling pistachios, nuts and grains....and MARTRADE is one of them...”

Analysis revealed that there is genuine need for halal awareness information program. This is supported by this evident statement; quoted by Mr IM:

“I think halal is slowly growing in Hong Kong as the Hong Kong government is trying to bring in more muslim tourists from Arab and Middle East, Malaysia and Indonesia; even the hotels and businesses are trying to understand halal ...; so try to get more information from our Hong Kong Tourism Board...”

Informant Ms AC described that halal and halal supply chain can be related to green management and environment and sustainability. Her perceptions towards halal is that it is not only clean aspects but the “clean” is right from the source (farm) to the table.

vi. Halal certification

The halal certification is managed by the BOT and executed by Islamic Union of Hong Kong. Three documents were given to the researchers and both informants explained the procedural for halal certification process in Hong Kong. It was observed that these hardcopy forms are printed with both English and Chinese language. Quoted:

“if someone wants to apply for halal certification, they will come to our office... there are 3 forms, Form HC-1 and HC-2. The other document is the “Guidelines for Halal Certification Process Form HC-3...”

Document analysis was carried out as shown in Table 2: Documents for Halal Certification in Hong Kong.

Table 2: Documents for halal certification in Hong Kong.

Document	Description
Form HC-1	Application for Halal Certification
Form HC-2	Terms and Conditions of Issuance
Form HC-3	Guidelines for Halal Certification Process

Form HC-1 is a printed form of 4 pages containing 13 items that are required for any business operators to fill in when applying for halal certification. Applicant is required to provide details of the products to be certified halal together with the ingredients that are used in the halal food products. Item 10 provides 12 options for the applicants to indicate their nature of business to be certified that are basically on food and ingredients manufacturing, food outlets, catering and bakery services, poultry suppliers, slaughterhouse and others. Item 13 request for information from the applicant to indicate either a yes or no on whether there is any muslim employee to handle the halal department. Observation done on this form reveals that this form is somewhat simpler as compared to the Malaysian online halal application form in JAKIM Malaysia website. The form is straightforward and it is one single application form for all nature of business.

Form HC-2 stipulates the terms and conditions of issuance for halal certificate. The halal certification is valid for one year from the issuance date and renewable; and that only valid original certificate must be displayed within the halal certified premises (no photocopied allowed to be displayed). Analysis of the guidelines is similar to Malaysian guidelines except that Malaysian guidelines have more explicit details.

Form HC-3 serves as the guidelines for halal certification process. Upon receipt of the Form HC-1, the Halal Inspection Team from BOT (Islamic Union) comprising the BOT Officer and Imam(s) will visit the applicant premise to audit the halal compliance. Upon compliance of the requirements, the halal certificate will be issued within ten working days. This guideline is found to be simple worded and very clear with 4 steps instructions on the halal certification process (compliance site audit). Section 2 details out the halal certification requirements and notes for a) restaurants, fast food outlets, catering service, bakery/confectionaries and small ice-cream outlets; b) slaughterhouses, meat processors, poultry farms, meat wholesalers and retailers; and c) chemicals, food coloring, flavors, fragrance and additives.

Further probing during the interviews pertaining to the references used for their halal certification procedure in Hong Kong, informant Mr OB reiterated:

“I had worked with Cathay Pacific Air for 20 odd years... and I am well-versed with the halal certification requirements and procedures. In fact, we had contacted JAKIM several times seeking for advice and guides, but there were no responses from them...”

We have many companies (in Hong Kong) interested to go for halal certification...we want JAKIM to recognise us... beginning this year (2015)...but no response...”

Upon attaining halal certification, the Hong Kong halal logo is given to the applicant; however, the intellectual property in the logo remains with the BOT (Form HC-3). Refer to Figure 1: Hong Kong halal logo.



Figure 1: Hong Kong halal logo

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the initial exploratory study has achieved the research objective to find out the level of halal awareness and halal supply chain in Hong Kong. Halal is driven by the Islam Community (Islamic Union) through the Board of Trustees (Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, 2015) which is non-government organization recognised by the government of Hong Kong. Halal awareness is present among the muslim community in Hong Kong but it is at low level among the general public based on the qualitative inquiry. However, this finding cannot be generalised as the purposively-selected informants in this study are office bearers who have knowledge in halal and halal certification. This study has not been validated through interviews from the general public; and the quantitative survey analysis done on a group of university students and business men has not been analysed yet during this paper write up. As for the halal supply chain in Hong Kong, all the halal foods such as halal meat and poultry products are imported frozen from neighbouring China and countries from Australia, Brazil, Malaysia and Indonesia. Thus, halal supply chain is not a concern as for now for the muslim community and BOT in Hong Kong. Halal and let alone halal supply chain in Hong Kong is relatively new to them. In conclusion, further collaborative studies are much needed to explore further on halal awareness and halal supply chain implementation in this country since the Hong Kong tourism body is receptive towards attracting more muslim tourists to visit the country by providing more muslim friendly hotels and halal food outlets. Last but not least, Hong Kong and its government is gearing efforts towards propagating halal tourism to lure more muslim tourists to Hong Kong and ultimately propagating halal foods and restaurants and insyallah, halal supply chain will come into reality in Hong Kong

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement goes to Malaysia Institute of Transport (MITRANS), Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia, Shah Alam for funding this halal supply chain (HSC) research with a grant under the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia; and also sponsoring this paper for this conference. Many thanks go to informants who had participated in this study; and staff in Chartered Institute of Hong Kong (CILT HK), Hang Seng Management College and Hong Kong Polytechnic University who facilitated our visit in Hong Kong.

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