

The Adherence of Malay Traders to Halal Laws in Muallim District, Perak

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Abstract

Halal is a critical issue in society due to the rise of awareness and significant alertness among consumers in getting halal food resources. Therefore, the concept of halalan toyyiban is used as a benchmark to determine the halal status of food products especially for Muslims. This study was aimed to examine the levels of adherence of Malay traders to halal laws which was focused on the Muallim district of Perak. Using a combined method, this study that involved 40 Malay traders, focused on the traders' knowledge regarding the halal concept and halal laws. The hygiene and safety practices among Malay traders when handling food were also examined. Information and views from Perak Islamic Religious Department (JAIPK), Tanjong Malim District Council (MDTM), Muallim District Health Office and Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) Tapah, were taken into consideration as the main terms of reference in this study. The findings showed that 80% of the respondents had high levels of adherence while the remaining 20% of respondents had moderately high levels of adherence. In the aspect of theme, nine out of 11 themes had high levels of knowledge and only two themes obtained moderately high levels. This means that the levels of adherence of the Malay traders to halal laws in Muallim, Perak were high. However, improvements still need to be done to increase the adherence of Malay traders to halal laws.

Keywords: Adherence, Malay Traders, Halal laws.

Introduction

The halal aspect has become an important component in today's business. The products or services that receive halal certifications provide assurance that the products are safe, clean and have quality, based on the guidelines that have been stipulated. Halal certificate is a commercial tool used to promote businesses as consumers prefer to buy products or services that are provided by food premises with a halal certificate. In 2016, JAKIM/JAIN received 10,115 halal applications through the MYeHALAL system. This figure showed an increase of 677 applications compared with the previous year with only 9,438 applications in 2015 (2016 Annual Report, JAKIM). The concept of halalan toyyiban is not merely in the absence of najis mughallazah, but this concept also emphasises on the safety, hygiene, nutrition and quality aspects of food preparation. However, it was found that the Malay traders were not interested in applying for halal certificate for their food premises because they had a

perception and assumption that the products they were producing were guaranteed to be halal even without the halal certification.

In order to prove this common perception and assumption among the Malay society, the elements contained in the concept of halalan toyyiban need to be studied. The concept of halalan toyyiban is used as a benchmark to measure the levels of adherence of Malay traders to the halal laws. This is reflected in the understanding, knowledge and practices of Malay traders in relation to the concept of halal and the practices that they must follow when handling food. These practices include the hygiene of food operators aspect, cooking utensils, food storage, food packaging and provision of pest control system. The result of this observation is important so that the common perception of halal in the Malay society can be corrected, that it is not merely perceived as the non-existence of najis mughallazah (severe contaminant) elements.

Study Methodology

The design of this study was a survey study using a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies. The quantitative study was conducted using a questionnaire while the qualitative study was conducted through interviews. This study was conducted on Malay traders in the Muallim district, focusing only on the traders running a restaurant or an eatery. The restaurant or eatery premises were chosen as samples for this study since the number of eateries or restaurants in Muallim was significantly higher than other categories (Tanjong Malim District Council, 2016). The criteria of the survey respondents included traders who have a fixed, immobile business and have been in business for at least over 12 months as these traders have passed the license renewal level and they have undergone regular inspections by the authorities.

This study used the sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan to determine the sample for the study. A total of 48 samples were selected from 52 Malay traders population who ran restaurant businesses in the Muallim district. However, only 40 out of 48 respondents returned the questionnaire. A total of eight others did not do so due to several reasons. The reasons being that the shop owners were busy with business matter, shop owners did not come to the shop because the shop was managed by employees and shop owners did not know how to answer the questionnaire.

As for the qualitative data collection, interviews were conducted on a number of Malay traders and related authorities. This study took five Malay traders as samples for the interviews. This determination was based on sample selection of 10% of the population is considered enough to represent the population (Gay, 2006). These five interview samples were not involved in the questionnaire. The authorities selected for this interview were the Assistant Environmental Health Officer, General Health Division, Tanjong Malim District Council (MDTM), Assistant Food Technology Officer, Halal Management Unit of Research Section of Perak Islamic Religious Department (JAIPk), Assistant Health Officer Environment, Food Security and Quality Unit, Muallim District Health Office and Senior Assistant Enforcement Officer, Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) Tapah.

Literature Review

Halal means something that is unrelated to anything that is haram (forbidden). Both of these are in separated and opposite positions. In Islam, there are food and drinks that are permissible as well as food and drinks that are forbidden, especially in terms of eating meat. Apart from that, Islam does not forbid plant products except plants such as grapes, dates and grains that are processed into wine (Yusuf al-Qaradhawi, 2014). The aspect of halal is not limited to food and drinks, but it is comprehensive which includes pharmaceutical products, consumer goods and other items (Talib & Ali, 2008).

In the Malaysian context, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) entrepreneurs are required to have a Malaysian halal certificate to compete globally, especially with the larger food industry players and the dumping of food products from abroad. It was discovered that there were eight reasons that caused SMEs not having a halal certificate. The reasons include the cost issue, the use of third parties in the halal certification application, the unsystematic document management system, not being prepared for halal applications, not knowing the flow of work process, applying without careful planning, SME businessmen sentiment on halal certification and recall by JAKIM due to non-conformance report (Othman, 2015). "Recall" is a product recall by JAKIM, either by withdrawing or suspending halal certificates or recalling halal products from the market due to the non-compliance during the halal food process chain.

Study Findings

The questionnaire analysis was divided into three sections, namely Section A questionnaire analysis (Respondents' background), Section B questionnaire analysis (Halal concept and halal laws) and Section C questionnaire analysis (Level of knowledge, hygiene and safety practices when handling food). The majority of respondents in this study were between 30 and 34 years of age, which was 22.5%. The male respondents exceeded the female respondents by 55.0%. As for the details of business experience, the frequencies of traders who had been trading for 1 - 4 years, 5 - 9 years and over 20 years were equally at 27.5%. Merely 10% of the respondents had been trading for 15 - 19 years and 7.5% of the respondents had been in business for 10 - 14 years.

Table 1

Background of the questionnaire respondents

Item	Category	No. of People	Percentage
Age	20 - 24 years old	5	12.5%
	25 - 29 years old	6	15.0%
	30 - 34 years old	9	22.5%
	35 - 39 years old	3	7.5%
	40 - 44 years old	4	10.0%
	45 - 49 years old	5	12.5%
	Over 50 years old	8	20.0%
	Total	40	100%
Sex	Male	22	55.0%
	Female	18	45.0%
	Total	40	100%
Business experience	1 - 4 years	11	27.5%
	5 - 9 years	11	27.5%
	10 - 14 years	3	7.5%
	15 - 19 years	4	10.0%
	Over 20 years	11	27.5%
	Total	40	100%

In Sections B and C, the answers to the questionnaire were given using a Likert scale of one to five, starting from "very uncertain" to "very certain". The mean level was determined based on the interpretation of the mean score as low levels (1.00 - 2.00), moderately low levels (2.01 - 3.00), moderately high levels (3.01 - 4.00) and high levels (4.01 - 5.00) (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994). The findings in Section B show that the respondents had high levels of understanding regarding the concept of halal, the concept of slaughtering and the preparation that needs to be done in food preparation. While the respondents' understanding regarding halal certification and laws was only at moderately high levels. Table 1.2 shows the analysis of the halal concept and halal laws.

Table 2

Halal Concept and Halal Laws

No.	Theme	Overall Mean Value	Mean Level
1	Respondents' Understanding Regarding the Concept of Halal	4.37	High
2	Respondents' Understanding Regarding the Concept of Slaughtering	4.15	High
3	Respondents' Understanding Regarding Halal Certification	3.97	Moderately high
4	Respondents' Understanding Regarding the Laws	3.34	Moderately high
5	Respondents' Understanding Regarding Preparation in Food Business	4.41	High

The questionnaire results in Section C show that all themes are at high levels. This means that the respondents had good knowledge in hygiene and safety practices when handling food and culinary, food storage and packaging, pest control system and premises grading system.

Table 3

Levels of Knowledge, Hygiene and Safety Practices When Handling Food

No.	Theme	Overall Mean Value	Mean Level
1	Hygiene and Safety Practices When Handling Food	4.91	High
2	Respondents' Cleanliness and Safety Practices from the Cooking Utensils Aspect	4.40	High
3	Respondents' Knowledge Regarding Food Storage	4.53	High
4	Respondents' Knowledge Regarding Food Packaging	4.40	High
5	Respondents' Knowledge Regarding Pest Control System	4.33	High
6	Respondents' Knowledge Regarding Premises Grading System	4.06	High

The mean value of each respondent was assessed in order to measure the trader's level of adherence as a whole. Based on the mean value, a total of 32 people or 80% of the respondents obtained a mean value of more than 4.01 and the rest of eight people or 20% of the respondents obtained a value of 3.01 - 4.00. This means that 80% of the respondents had high levels of adherence while 20% of the respondents had moderate levels of adherence to the halal laws. The table below shows the adherence of Malay traders to halal laws as a whole.

Table 4

Level of Adherence of Malay Traders

Level	Frequency (person)	Percentage (%)
High (4.01 - 5.00)	32	80%
Moderately high (3.01 - 4.00)	8	20%
Total	40	100%

Discussion

Overall, 80% of the Malay traders had high levels of adherence while the other 20% had moderate adherence to the halal laws. From the thematic perspective, as many as nine out of 11 themes showed high mean values. This indicates that most of the Malay traders understood the concept of halal, the concept of slaughtering and know the preparation that needs to be done to start a business. In addition, Malay traders also had good knowledge of hygiene and safety practices when handling food, hygiene and safety practices of respondents from the cooking utensils aspect, proper food storage and packaging methods, pest control system and premises grading system. However, there were two themes that reached moderately high levels of respondents' understanding regarding halal certification and halal laws. These two themes need to be given attention to so that more Malay traders are aware of the importance of obtaining a halal certificate while gaining their interest in applying for halal certificate.

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