

**EXPLORING THE MALAYSIAN LAW ON HALAL IMPORTED PRODUCTS
MENEROKAI UNDANG-UNDANG MALAYSIA BERKENAAN
PENGIMPORAN PRODUK HALAL**

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Abstract

At the end of 2020, Malaysia was slapped with the issue of imported frozen meat from countries not certified halal by Foreign Halal Certification Bodies (FHCB) recognised by the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia (JAKIM). Regrettably, that was not the first time of such an incidence as there were many cases before that involving misleading halal logos. Indeed, many laws were introduced by the government and JAKIM has taken numerous steps to curtail such an issue from recurring. However, there are still cases reported on the misused of halal logos. Therefore, the first objective of this study is to explore the Malaysian laws, guidelines, and procedures on halal certification for foreign halal logos. In addition to that, the awareness of foreign recognised halal logos is important as a self-protection mechanism to avoid purchasing products with misleading halal logos. Thus, the second objective of this study is to assess the awareness level among consumers toward foreign halal logos attached to imported products marketed in Malaysia. This study is social legal research using content analysis to achieve the first objective and the quantitative method adopted was the descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to achieve the second objective. This study found that the existing laws on the foreign halal logo are comprehensive, but they need to be supported with stringent implementation and enforcement. Also, there is a high level of awareness among respondents toward halal food products but there is less awareness concerning foreign halal logos. Thus, there should be an active awareness campaign regarding foreign halal logos to Malaysians so that self-protection could be enhanced to avoid misleading foreign halal logos.

Keyword

Halal import; Halal law; Foreign halal logo; Halal certification and Consumers

Abstrak

Pada akhir tahun 2020, Malaysia dikejutkan dengan isu daging beku yang diimport dari negara-negara yang tidak diperakui halal oleh Badan Pensijilan Halal Luar Negara (FHCB) yang diiktiraf oleh Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM). Malangnya, kejadian tersebut bukanlah kali pertama berlaku di Malaysia kerana terdapat banyak kes sebelum ini yang melibatkan logo halal yang mengelirukan. Kerajaan telah banyak memperkenalkan undang-undang berkenaan halal

dan perbagai langkah telah diambil oleh pihak JAKIM untuk membendung masalah tersebut dari berulang. Walau bagaimanapun, masih terdapat kes yang dilaporkan mengenai penyalahgunaan logo halal. Oleh itu, objektif pertama kajian ini adalah untuk menerokai undang-undang, garis panduan, dan prosedur yang sedia ada di Malaysia berkenaan pensijilan halal luar negara. Selain itu, kesedaran mengenai logo halal yang diakui oleh negara luar adalah penting sebagai mekanisme perlindungan diri untuk mengelakkan pembelian produk dengan logo halal yang mengelirukan. Oleh itu, objektif kedua kajian ini adalah untuk menilai tahap kesedaran pengguna terhadap logo halal luar negara yang terdapat pada produk import yang dipasarkan di Malaysia. Kajian ini adalah penyelidikan undang-undang sosial yang menggunakan analisis kandungan untuk mencapai objektif pertama dan kaedah kuantitatif yang menggunakan analisis deskriptif dengan menggunakan *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)* untuk mencapai objektif kedua. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa undang-undang yang ada pada logo halal asing adalah komprehensif, tetapi memerlukan sokongan dengan pelaksanaan dan penguatkuasaan yang ketat. Juga, terdapat tahap kesedaran yang tinggi di kalangan responden terhadap produk makanan halal tetapi kurang kesedaran mengenai logo halal luar negara. Oleh itu, haruslah ada kempen kesedaran yang aktif mengenai logo halal luar negara kepada rakyat Malaysia agar perlindungan diri dapat ditingkatkan bagi mengelakkan kekeliruan terhadap logo halal luar negara.

Kata kunci

Import halal; Hukum halal; Logo halal luar negara; Pensijilan Halal dan Pengguna.

1. Introduction

The demand for halal products increases significantly leading to the growth of the halal industry all over the world not only in Muslim countries but also in non-Muslim countries. This motivates many traders and manufacturers to adopt the halal built-in concept in the processing and production of their products due to their future potentials (H. Musa & Fam, 2018).

The term "Halal" denotes something permissible, lawful and allowed under the Shariah law. It relates to human consumptions and human acts that must be in line with the Shariah principles. As Allah said, "... So eat of the lawful and good (clean) food [*halalan tayyiban*] which Allah has provided for you, and thank the bounty of your Lord if it is Him that you serve or worship..." (An-Nahl 16:14). The term halal is always accompanied by the term "*toyyiban*" which means wholesome (Amin & Aziz, 2015). The products should be clean, safe and of good quality and this would cover the whole process of manufacturing products until they are handed over to the customer. Therefore, it includes the process of handling the products, packaging materials, storing, warehousing which must be according to the Shariah ruling (Zainuddin & Shariff, 2016).

Malaysia as the pioneer in halal certification, not only encourages the exports of local halal products abroad but also imports halal products from other countries. Raw materials to be used in food processing and manufacturing include basic commodities, semi-processed food materials and highly processed materials are among the imported materials from other countries (<https://wedc.org/export/market>). Not only that, the consumer-oriented food and beverage products and other halal products comprise of personal care, cosmetics and pharmaceutical products are also imported as supplements to the Malaysian domestic market (<https://wedc.org/export/market>).

Currently, there are about 46 countries with 84 Foreign Halal Certified Bodies (FHCB) that are recognised by JAKIM (www.halal.gov.my). The varieties of halal logos attached to many imported halal products might confuse the consumers and this could easily lead them to be misled with unauthorised halal logos. To add, the misleading halal logos reduce the confidence and reliability of consumers for halal products, and this showed that there is a deficiency in the issuance of halal certificates (Abdullah, Rahman, & Thalbi, 2018). Sometimes the demand for halal foods creates an ambitious attitude among food traders and manufacturers to supply food with halal logos, and this causes traders and food manufacturers to take advantage by abusing and misusing the halal logo. Table 1 below shows the cases of misleading halal logos from 2017 to 2020.

Table 1: Misleading Halal Logos

Date/year	Cases
10 January 2017	Fish Ball - misleading by using the unauthorised halal logo
12 January 2017	Processed chicken - misleading by using the unauthorised halal logo Japanese Tofu - misleading by using the unauthorised halal logo
30 July 2018	Food imported from China, India, and Thailand but packed in Malaysia (20 snacks, sweet preserved fruits, and chocolates) – misleading by using the unauthorised halal logo
3 September 2018	41 products seized - misleading by using the unauthorised halal logo
23 January 2019	Coffee factories - misleading by using an expired halal logo
23 April 2019	27 tonnes of packets of imported dates used a halal logo that was not approved by the JAKIM
3 October 2019	401 packets of snack food, 360 boxes and 91 plastic packaging with fake halal logo
29 December 2020	A frozen meat importer (meat cartel) using the fake halal logo on its vehicles.

Authors adopted from varieties of online newspapers and past studies

These cases of the misleading halal logo showed that there is lacking in the procedures of determining food products as halal certified (Abdullah et al., 2018). Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the Malaysian laws, guidelines, and procedures on halal certification for foreign halal logos.

Furthermore, there is a lack of concentration on halal imported products. Indeed, many past studies concerning the legal aspect of halal matters. For example, a study conducted by Noradha Ab Hamid, Norazla Abdul Wahab, Farah Shahwahid and Surianom Miskam (2015) on the issues and challenges of Malaysian Halal law, the study by Faridah Jalil and Nurhafilah Musa (2014) on the possibilities of cooperation between federal and state agencies as concerning the administration and enforcement of halal certification in Malaysia and the study proposing a legal framework for halal logistics in Malaysia by F. Ahmad, MZ. Shah, Z. Junaida, Yazid. MT, Rozelin. A, Donn. T, R. Shima, Mohd Al' Ikhsan Ghazali and M. Ramzi (2020).

Besides that, there are also past legal studies on halal consumerism such as consumer protection laws on halal products and its enforcement (M. A. A. Halim & Ahmad, 2014), a study of misuse of the halal logo (M. A. Halim, 2019), and consumer rights in halal products (Ab Halim & Mohd Salleh, 2020). Along with, Apnizan Abdullah and Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil (2019) also conducted a study regarding the legal outlook of halal and the proposal of centralisation of halal matters in Malaysia and the study by Norazlina Abdul Aziz, Noriah Ramli and Nurazlina Abdul Raof (2016) on JAKIM' power and jurisdiction concerning halal matters. These past studies show the emergence of halal legal studies. For this reason, the gap of the past studies on imported halal products has indeed inspired this study.

Confidence and trust in transporting the halal logo among consumers would be acquired from exposures to halal matters through personal efforts or surrounding circumstances. Consumers, particularly youth, should be made aware of halal products due to their long lifetime with big buying power (Y. Hassan & Pandey, 2019). The development in the Information and Communication Technology where knowledge is only at the consumer's fingertips will contribute toward the extensive exposure about halal matters particularly in the information on the imported halal products certified by foreign countries. In addition, youth consumers, especially due to their unlimited ability and creativity to access, can easily access online information faster rather than adult consumers (Marmaya, Zakaria, & Mohd Desa, 2019). However, without a proper guideline, youth consumers can be regarded as immature consumers (Madahi & Sukati, 2012) and their lack of experience and knowledge (Batat, 2010) in terms of consumption may lead them to mislead halal logos.

Aside from that, many past studies measured the level of awareness among Muslim and non-Muslim consumers involving adults, the youths and even the sellers' level of awareness toward halal concept and halal products either Muslim or non-Muslim halal product producers. However, there is lacking in the study of measuring awareness among young Muslim consumers towards foreign halal food products with halal logos certified by JAKIM or by recognised foreign halal certification bodies. Therefore, besides the first objective, this study also investigated the level of awareness amongst the youth towards the foreign halal logos displayed on the food packages.

Consumer awareness might be one of the self-precautionary measures to avoid them from being misled by irresponsible foreign food manufacturers and traders. However, misleading halal logos could mitigate the reliability and confidence of consumers regarding halal logos. Due to that, unscrupulous manufacturers and traders are considered as lowering the standard of halal logos in the eyes of the law.

2. Methodology

This study is social legal research that combines legal research and social research to achieve the first and second objectives of the study. The first objective of this study is to explore the existing Malaysian laws concerning imported halal products to the Malaysian market. Thus, content analysis was adopted to analyse the laws, rules, guidelines and procedures from the current legislation, journals articles and reports accessed from the online database, google scholars and internet explorer. To achieve the second objective of assessing the level of awareness among consumers, a

quantitative method was adopted. Close-ended questionnaires using the Google form were distributed to respondents through online platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. The questionnaires were divided into 5 sections, namely section A (demographic), section B (Awareness of Halal Products), section C (Awareness of Malaysian Halal Logo) and section D (Awareness of Foreign / International Halal Logos) and section E was about the awareness of 6 images of popular foreign halal logos attached to several products using a 5-point Likert scale. This study applied purposive sampling techniques in selecting the respondents where the target population of this research are youths aged between 15 to 25 years old. The sample size was based on Krejcie and Morgan where a total of 248 respondents participated, which is considered sufficient for the analysis. A descriptive analysis was employed using SPSS in order to achieve the second objective.

3. Exploring Malaysian Laws on Foreign Halal Logos

Malaysia became the pioneer in the issuance of the halal food certification in 1974. Since that year, there are many laws, rules, standards, and procedures that have been introduced by the government. Halal is not only a matter of faith, but it is now extended to industries, and it is considered a regulated matter. The first parliamentary Act introducing halal related law was the Trade Descriptions Act 1972 (TDA 1072). Pursuant to TDA 1972, the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (MDTCA) published the Trade Description (Use of Halal Expression) Order 1975 and the Trade Description (Marking of Food) Order 1975. Due to many setbacks as regards TDA 1975 and the two Orders, the laws were repealed and replaced by the new Trade Descriptions 2011 (TDA 2011). However, not all provisions in the TDA 1975 have been repealed where part of the provisions in the TDA 1972 was maintained and another part of them have been replaced with the new provisions to suit the current situations and challenges. The TDA 2011 was introduced to prohibit false trade descriptions or misleading statements on goods, products, or services by promoting good trade practices. So that, both consumers and traders would benefit from the new TDA 2011. The word "halal" is not mentioned in the TDA 2011 however, section 28 of the TDA 2011 gives power to the Minister to define any expressions to be used in the course of trade or business as, or as part of trade description applied to the goods or services. Therefore, from this section, the MDTCA introduced the Trade Description (Definition of 'Halal') Order 2011. Meanwhile, section 29 of the TDA 2011 gives power to the Minister to introduce the Trade Description (Certification and Marking of 'Halal') Order 2011. This means that halal is parked under these two Orders and the Orders recognise JAKIM and the State Islamic Department (JAIN) as the competent authorities to certify halal and to monitor the compliance and preservation of halal certification to all applicants that have fulfilled the required conditions. While the main controller for the Trade Description Act 2011 is the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (MTDCA).

Halal refers to foods or goods that can be consumed or used by Muslims, in which it does not consist of non-halal ingredients that are prohibited by *Hukum Syarak*. Also, the processed foods or goods must abide by *Hukum Syarak* that are free from intoxicated, poisonous, hazardous to health ingredients and are safe to be used and consumed (Paragraph 3 of the Trade Description (Definition of Halal) Order 2011 (TDA)). Furthermore, Paragraph 4 of the TDA 2011 (certification and marking of halal)

Order 2011 provides that all food products can only be considered as halal when they have been marked with a halal logo that has been certified by JAKIM/JAIN.

The application for the halal certification is voluntary basis. According to clause 34 of the Malaysian Manual Procedure for Halal Certification (Domestic) 2020 (MMPHC 2020), the applicant who wants to market the halal product locally can apply for the certification of halal through MyeHalal at www.hal.gov.my that managed by JAKIM and the process of certification, auditing and monitoring will be made by JAIN of the applicant State. This shows that there is a harmonization of jurisdiction between JAIN and JAKIM when dealing with the certification of halal.

Nevertheless, for exported products, the application for halal certification can only be made through JAKIM (Soraji, Awang, & Mohd Yusoff, 2017). Then, JAKIM will issue the certificate of halal Malaysia (CHM) based on the list of approvals officially decided by the Halal Certification Panel Malaysia (MMPHC 2020). The authority granted to JAKIM to issue CHM is very significant to ensure the standardization of the CHM throughout Malaysia.

As for the imported food products, Paragraph 5 of the Trade Descriptions (Certification and Marking of 'Halal') Order 2011 stipulates that the imported food products can only be regarded and marketed as halal in Malaysia if they have been certified by the FHCB recognised by JAKIM and the recognition is depending on the capability of the foreign certification bodies to comply the procedures and guidelines specified by JAKIM. The JAKIM website provides a list of certified foreign bodies that are recognised by JAKIM, and it is updated annually.

On 2nd November 2017, JAKIM introduced the Procedures for Appointment of Foreign Halal Certification Bodies (PAHCB 2017). Item 6 of the PAHCB 2017 stipulates the requirement to become the Foreign Halal Certification Bodies (FHCB) where the organization should be owned by Muslims, the organisation should be recognised and registered according to the country of origin, shall have its own halal logos and for Muslim countries which have no FHCB, the government shall appoint a body to verify the halal certificates, the FHCB should identify the top management having authority to supervise the structure, operation, implementation of halal policies and procedures in the production activities of the halal products to safeguard the integrity of the halal certification, the FHCB must at least 6 months operating their halal certification with documented halal policy, programme or procedures and the FHCB personnel should be appointed from a person who practices Islamic values and competent Muslim personnel, the FHCB should always maintain records, monitor and supervise on the processing and premises. Notwithstanding this PAHCB 2017, the new Procedures for Appointment of the FHCB 2021 is currently in the stage of drafting by JAKIM and is yet to be published.

Apart from the above laws and guidelines, the followings are other legislations that are relevant in the imported halal products:

- a- The Food Act 1983- provides general import requirements of food.
- b- The Animal Ordinance 1953, the Animals Importation Order 1962 and other related legislation provides specific legislation concerning the import of animals and animal products.

- c- The Fish Marketing Regulations 1973 and Fisheries Development Authority Act 1971 provides the regulation on the importation of fish and fisheries products
- d- The Plant Quarantine Act 1976 and the Plant Quarantine Regulations 1981 provides legal control on the import of agricultural produce.
- e- The Poisons Act 1952 provides the licence to import veterinary drugs to pharmacists.
- f- The Customs Act 1967.

In addition, various safety programmes are conducted by the relevant agencies such as:

- a- The Safe Food Certification Scheme Industry Responsibility (MeSTI) certification. This certification scheme is conducted to motivate the food manufacturers to develop and implement the Food Safety Assurance Program before recognition is granted.
- b- Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) is a system to ensure the products are consistently produced and controlled according to the quality standard.
- c- Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Certification Programme (HACCP) to grant recognition to premises that have effectively implemented and maintained the HACCP system for their food products; and
- d- Food Safety Information Malaysia (FoSIM) to ensure coordination and real-time monitoring of over 30 import points in the country to curb importers from “port hopping” (using different ports after the initial refusal)

4. Awareness of Halal Products

Awareness denotes understanding and consciousness to perceive and, in the context of awareness of halal, means that a person has the knowledge and understands the religious orders (H. Musa & Fam, 2018). In other words, a person is said to be aware when he/she understands and is conscious of the things that are permitted and/or prohibited to be used and consumed according to the *Syariah* law. The awareness of halal means that a person having a unique experience, interest, understanding, conscious and being well informed on what food and drinks are permitted by the *Syariah* ruling to be consumed (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). Therefore, it can be said that awareness relates to knowledge that leads to a particular attitude or behaviour of a person and it influences the consumer buying choice (Bashir, 2019).

Many factors would contribute to the awareness toward halal products. The exposure to halal matters within Muslim families and consumer seeking behaviour influenced the awareness toward halal products (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017). Not only that, the level of religiosity or strong religious belief among consumers contribute to consumers' awareness of halal products when they could determine their decision to purchase the halal products and they can differentiate between halal and non-halal products (Hasan, 2016). Moreover, the high level of awareness among consumers about halal products is also due to health reasons, logo certifications and good exposures to halal matters (Kurniawati & Savitri, 2019).

Awareness among youth on halal products is crucial due to their ability to purchase products particularly buying a product through telecommunication services. It is at their fingertips to buy whatever they desire especially during this pandemic covid-19 time.

Therefore, awareness and knowledge about halal products are important particularly among Muslim youths to avoid buying harmful or non-halal products. The lifestyle and perceived behaviour control among youths could cause them to be less aware of halal food (Marmaya et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the extensive exposure of the practice of the halal concept among the society and taking into consideration the demography of youths shows that there are high awareness, understanding and knowledge among respondents either from the Muslim or non-Muslim students about the halal concept (Mohamad Parhan & Risyawati, 2015).

In Malaysia, many food products are packaged by non-Muslim manufacturers and certified halal by JAKIM. Some Muslim consumers were sceptical when they saw food products that were packaged by non-Muslim and believed the products are probably contaminated with non-halal ingredients. However, the awareness of halal logos certified by JAKIM and the food ingredients among Muslims have motivated Muslim consumers to purchase non-Muslim halal food (Yunus, Rashid, Ariffin, & Rashid, 2014).

5. Result for the Second Objectives

Questionnaires were divided into five sections that are; A- The demographic profile of the respondents which depicts that the majority are female and most of the respondents in the survey are in the range of 20 to 25 years old (96.4%), followed by 2.8% aged less than 20 years old, and only three respondents (1.2%) aged less than 15 years old and all of them are Muslims and have experienced in purchasing halal food with a foreign halal logo.

Section B- consists of 5 items on the awareness of halal food products. There is a high level of awareness where the mean score is 4.51 for the "Buying the halal food product has become part of my life" item, and the lowest mean score was only 4.34 for the "I know products that are halal and non-halal" item.

Section C- consists of 6 items on measuring the level of awareness of certified Malaysian halal logos by JAKIM. The data shows that the highest mean score is 4.51 in "*When I buy Malaysian food products, my utmost priority is to observe the halal logo on their packaging/labelling*" item. The lowest mean score recorded is 4.31, for the "*I am aware of the halal logo on Malaysian food products*" item.

Section D- consists of 5 items on the awareness level of foreign/international halal food products. Data found that the highest mean score is 4.22 for the "*I will not buy imported food products that do not have a halal logo on the packaging*" item and the lowest mean score is 3.96, for the "*I know that foreign/international halal logos must first be recognised by JAKIM before they can be sold in Malaysia*" item.

Section E- consists of six popular foreign halal logos attached to the product marketed in Malaysia, the halal logos from Thailand, Indonesia, the USA, Turkey, India, and South Korea. Data showed that most of the respondents are aware and possess good knowledge of foreign halal logos especially the halal logo from Thailand followed by South Korea and Indonesia.

6. Discussion

Each consumer has a right to purchase and consume safe products which are not harmful to the human body either in the short- or long-term effect. Halal logos attached to the products is one of the methods to ensure that the products consumed by consumers fulfil the requirements of safety, quality, hygienic and wholesomeness.

Generally, each halal product should be certified with a halal logo issued by JAKIM/JAIN as both are the competent bodies to certify halal foods, goods, or services. The halal logo has been introduced in Malaysia since the 1990s and is considered a strong brand (Wan Ismail, Othman, Md Nor, Badiuzaman, & Nik Mohd Nor, 2020). The halal logo displayed on the product packaging represents the quality of products, hygiene and guarantee that products are safe to consume (F. H. Hassan & Hanif, 2017). It also acts as a hindrance for Muslim consumers to avoid non-halal products and as legal protection (Wiryani, Najih, & Haris, 2018) for all consumers against unlawful and harmful products. Consumers typically rely on the halal logo attached to the food packaging, and indeed, it is one of the attractive factors for consumers to purchase food products (Mohayidin & Kamarulzaman, 2014). Therefore, it can be said that halal logos are significantly essential to gain the consumers' confidence in food manufacturing products.

The government has enacted many laws, the relevant Ministry has also introduced many subsidiary legislations, and indeed the halal agencies have also introduced many guidelines and procedures to regulate the halal industry in Malaysia. Due to that, halal is not just about faith or religious affairs that guide human behaviour and conduct but it is important in business, trade, and commerce. The laws, rules, guidelines, and procedures concerning halal imported products are very important because they enable the control of the import activities of the products to be marketed in Malaysia. Thus, the products are confirmed to be safe for consumption making the consumers to be safeguarded against product adulteration, fraud, and misleading product.

Although JAKIM and JAIN are the competent bodies to handle and manage the halal matters, they have limited power to restrain the issues of fraud in halal certification; thus, support is significantly crucial from various agencies like the MDTCA, Department of Veterinary Services (DVS), Ministry of Health (MOH) and other agencies to accomplish law enforcement (Zaina, Rahmanb, Ishanc, & Azizd, 2015). JAKIM and JAIN have the power in the enforcement of halal matters, however, the power of JAIN is subjected to provisions of the Syariah Criminal Enactment in each State.

As regards imported products, the existing laws and procedures on imported halal products seem to be comprehensive because they cover many aspects of the management and administration of the imported halal products. However, without stringent enforcement and regular monitoring, it will inevitably lead to the manipulation of the halal status (Golnaz, Zainalabidin, & Mad Nasir, 2012). The lack of jurisdiction of JAKIM/JAIN in handling the enforcement matters under its sole power may defeat the purpose of the laws. The case of the meat cartel showed that the law is sufficient, but simple or few mistakes and neglect can lead the scheming traders/importers an opportunity to cheat the consumers.

The comprehensive laws and procedures will be effective with the high awareness of consumers on imported halal products. It will act as self-protection in safeguarding consumers from consuming unsafe or misleading halal imported products. This study showed that consumers nowadays have a high awareness of halal products. The religion of respondents as Muslim professionals influenced the respondents' purchase intention, and it is a significant determinant for respondents' behaviour or attitude that becomes a practice in the respondents' way of life to purchase only halal food products. Not only that the family members of the respondents also could be another motivating factor for the respondents to have a high level of awareness of the halal products as the members in the family would frequently share and communicate about halal products either relating to what they buy or consumer (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017). This could be a hindrance to safeguarding respondents from purchasing something not permitted under the Syariah ruling.

7. Conclusion

For Muslims, halal food products are inevitably crucial to be in parallel with their belief in the religion they embrace. The existing laws and procedures on imported halal products are adequate. However, a lack of stringent enforcement and monitoring could defeat the purpose of the laws. Halal is connected to industry and regulated by certain laws and by-laws and thus, JAKIM needs to depend on the other halal agencies such as the MTDCA, MOH and state agencies to conduct the enforcement of halal certification. Therefore, there should be strong collaborations and supportive teamwork between JAKIM, JAIN, federal agencies and state agencies to carry out such enforcement. In addition, well-trained halal enforcement officers with sufficient experience from all relevant halal agencies may facilitate such execution. Also, it is time to give the mandate to JAKIM to be the sole controller of halal matters including the aspect of enforcement and prosecution of the halal case to the court apart from administering the issuance of the halal certificate but remain in collaboration with the other halal agencies.

To date, a lot of efforts have been done by JAKIM nevertheless, the cases of misleading foreign halal logos cannot be easily curbed without a high level of awareness from consumers about the unauthorised foreign halal logo. This study showed that the consumers in Malaysia do not take the halal status lightly when choosing imported products for consumption. However, there should be an extra effort from JAKIM, state authorities and halal agencies to bring more awareness to consumers with regards to foreign halal logos to food products.

Conducting extra campaigns on halal particularly on foreign halal logos would facilitate the consumers to be more aware of the halal logo. Indeed, JAKIM has conducted many programmes and campaigns about halal matters but the Covid-19 pandemic has restricted face-to-face halal campaigns and roadshows to many places like schools, universities and shopping malls. Nevertheless, JAKIM should fully make use of the advantage of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to spread awareness of halal to consumers.

Recently, JAKIM has introduced an application known as SmartHalalApps to help consumers to check the halal status of food & beverage products, food premises, slaughterhouses, consumables, cosmetics & pharmaceutical products and halal-certified logistics services by the Malaysian Halal Certification. This is a commendable

effort by JAKIM in helping the consumers to be self-protected by checking which are genuine halal claim products before purchasing them. However, this SmartHalalApp is only cover local products registered under the smart halal JAKIM and there is no study conducted to know how far the consumers are aware of the existence of the application. It is much appreciated if JAKIM could extend this application to halal imported products.

This study found that there are low levels of awareness among consumers on the validity of foreign halal logos, which could be misleading. This should not be left unattended by the respective authorities in Malaysia because the young generation today has different and variety of ways to have access to everything online, including products they wish to acquire. Besides, probably, a mechanism can be developed to ensure the so-called halal logos attached to foreign products to be a hundred per cent legitimate. Perhaps, JAKIM could follow the Indonesian steps by making a compulsory requirement for each foreign product to be marketed in Indonesia to display both the Indonesian Halal logo and the foreign halal logo on food packaging. Additionally, an investment for a scanner that could identify the halal status for imported products would certainly be applauded especially when such a machine is placed side by side with the price scanner at supermarkets and malls. Not only does such a scanner could scan the halal status of foreign products but it should be able to determine the halal status of local products.

The education system could also play a role in this matter by making it compulsory for all students at all levels to be exposed to the importance of consuming halal products. The module could be set and arranged interestingly so that everyone learning the subject or course could easily grasp and appreciate the message that is conveyed to them. On another note, there should be a programme conducted by the higher learning institutions to produce experts on halal matters so that it could be an answer to the issue of the lack of enforcement officers in each state to execute halal matters. The programme could be a short course that confers a certificate to its participants, or it could extend to a diploma or degree level depending on the demand or severity that could arise in this field. These suggestions would help to increase the awareness among consumers on halal products because halal should be our way of life so that we would be a community that is always on alert with what we consume or use.

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