

CHAPTER

7

AWARENESS ON HALAL FOOD STANDARD IMPLEMENTATION IN MALAYSIA

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global demand for halal products has surged, driven by a variety of factors, including the growing Muslim population and an increasing awareness of halal standards among diverse consumer groups. The term ‘halal’ which means ‘permissible’ in Arabic, encompasses not only the types of food that can be consumed but also the ethical and hygienic practices involved in their production. In Malaysia, a country with a significant Muslim demographic, halal certification has become a crucial aspect of the food industry, influencing both domestic consumption and international trade.

The Malaysian government, through agencies such as the Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), has established a robust framework for halal certification that adheres to Islamic law while promoting food safety and quality. This regulatory framework ensures that food producers comply with stringent guidelines, which cover the entire supply chain starting from sourcing raw materials to processing and distribution (Hussain et al., 2021). As Malaysia

positions itself as a global leader in halal food production, understanding the level of awareness regarding halal standards among food producers becomes imperative.

Research has shown that consumer awareness of halal certification significantly influences purchasing behaviour. A study by Abdurrahman et al. (2020) highlights that both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers increasingly prefer halal-certified products, recognising them as synonymous with quality and safety. However, challenges remain in the effective implementation of these standards, particularly among smaller food producers who may lack the necessary knowledge and resources (Ahmad et al., 2019).

It is essential to enhance awareness and compliance among food producers. This chapter aims to discuss the current state of awareness regarding halal standard implementation in Malaysia's food production sector, exploring the implications for producers and consumers alike. By identifying gaps in knowledge and resources, this study seeks to contribute to the knowledge sharing on enhancing the halal food industry in Malaysia.

7.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF HALAL CERTIFICATION

Halal certification is integral to the food industry, particularly in Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia, where it serves as a guarantee that food products meet Islamic dietary laws. This certification process involves rigorous standards, ensuring that products are free from haram (forbidden) ingredients and are prepared according to specific ethical and hygienic practices (Hussain et al., 2021). A comprehensive framework established by organisations like the JAKIM not only facilitates consumer trust but also enhances the reputation of Malaysian food products on the international stage (Ali et al., 2020).

Research by Hassan et al. (2021) highlights that halal certification acts as a competitive differentiator in the market. The assurance of compliance with halal standards is not just about religious adherence; it is increasingly viewed as a marker of quality and safety. Studies indicate

that consumers, regardless of their faith, often associate halal-certified products with superior quality, leading to a growing preference for such items in both local and global markets. This shift underscores the strategic significance of halal certification in positioning products favourably amidst fierce competition.

Moreover, halal certification contributes to food safety and hygiene standards, which are critical concerns for consumers worldwide. The perception of halal foods as being healthier options can drive demand, particularly among health-conscious consumers. A study by Ibrahim and Wang (2020) found that consumers perceive halal products as fresher and more hygienic, leading to increased willingness to pay a premium for such items. This perception not only benefits Muslim consumers but also appeals to a growing demographic of non-Muslim consumers seeking quality food options. As the global demand for halal products continues to rise, understanding and promoting the benefits of halal certification will be vital for producers aiming to succeed in this dynamic market.

7.3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND PREFERENCES

Consumer behaviour towards halal products is influenced by a multitude of factors, including cultural, religious, and ethical considerations. Research conducted by Yusof et al. (2022) found that Malaysian consumers prioritise halal certification not only for religious reasons but also due to concerns about food safety and quality. This multifaceted approach to consumption reflects a growing trend where ethical considerations play a significant role in purchasing decisions. As such, food producers must recognise that appealing to consumer values, including health and ethical sourcing, is essential for capturing market share.

Furthermore, the emotional connection many consumers have with halal foods reinforces their purchasing choices. Ibrahim and Wang (2020) suggest that for many Malaysian consumers, halal food represents not just dietary compliance but also a cultural identity and heritage. This emotional attachment can lead to brand loyalty, as consumers are likely