

E-Halal as Method and Apparatus for Halal Product Detection in Malaysia

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Abstract

Malaysian government has established State Islamic Religious Council (JAKIM) to monitor the halal products in local market. Numerous methods have been taken by JAKIM in order to make Muslim in Malaysia consume a pure halal product in Market. One of the methods that have been established to help the users to check the status of the halal product in local market is by using E-halal system. The objective of this paper is to discover the advantages and disadvantages uses of E-Halal in Malaysia. E-halal is system that allowed buyers to check the status of the halal certificates of the products in Malaysia. By smartphones and other latest gadgets, users can easily check the halal status of the products. Among the advantages of E-halal system is, it can help users to choose halal products in a short time, used to detect the halal status of the restaurants and not only the products in the local market, user friendly, ease consumer and manufacturing. Even though the E-halal system give Muslim a lot of advantages but this system also has its own disadvantages.

Keyword: E-Halal, JAKIM, Halal Certification.

1. Introduction

It has been record that, 24% of world populations are among Muslim. It is compulsory for the Muslim people to choose Halal products in their daily life. Thus, most of them emphasized on the halal products. This circumstance has created demand on halal certificated all over the world (Sawari, Mustapha, & Ghazali, 2014; Ghazali & Sawari, 2104; Sawari, Ghazali, Burhan, & Mustapha, 2014). The circumstance also occur in Malaysia. As one of Islamic country in the world, "The market for certified halal food and products is growing robustly, both domestically and internationally" (Zalina, 2008, p. 604).

Even though, Malaysian citizen are concert by Muslim, But there are still percentages of none Muslim living in this country, thus other non-halal products are also allowed to be sell in the local markets to meet the demands of other non-Muslim users. "The halal ingredients must not be combined, or come into contact with haram materials such as pig, swine, dog either during storage, transport, cooking, and serving" (Nawai, Nooh, Ridzwan, Dali, & Mohammad, 2007, p. 14). So, Muslim users must be careful and be smart in choosing their products and make sure that the products are halal and save to be eaten. It is really important for the Malaysian government to ensure that the products sell in the local markets are halal because most people in Malaysia are Muslims. Thus, Malaysian government has established State Islamic Religious Council or well known as JAKIM to monitor the products in local market whether it is halal or not.

JAKIM is responsible to monitor the products in the local markets and have the right to summon the manufacturers that sell the products on the local market without the legal halal logos. Many methods have been taken by JAKIM to monitor the halal status of the products in the local market. JAKIM have a high responsibility to ensure that the products in the local markets are halal and save to be consumed by the consumers. "Every Muslim must ensure that what they eat comes from a halal source" (Zalina, 2008, p. 606). Moreover, JAKIM is very strict in giving the halal certificates to the manufactures in Malaysia. There are many steps that have to be taken by the manufacturers to obtain the halal certificates from JAKIM. This is because JAKIM wants to make sure that the users get their right to choose the halal products. In the past, if the manufacturers want to obtain the halal certificate for their products, they must fill in various

forms in order to get the halal certificates. However, in the era of globalization, many work is done only at the tip of the finger and this makes the thing easier for the users and manufacturers. One of the methods that have been established to help the users to check the status of the halal product in local market is by using E-halal system.

2. E-Halal

E-halal is system which allowed the buyers to check the status of the halal certificates of the products that they are buying in local markets. By using their smartphones and other latest gadgets, users can easily check the halal status of the products that they want to buy. According to Najmuddin (2013), this program has been established since 8 February 2006 by Dato' Dr. Abdullah bin Md. Zin, the honorable minister in Malaysia. Through this system, users can easily identify the halal status of the products in their local market in a simple and easy step. By using Short Message Services (SMS), users can simply type 'halal' and the the bar code of the products to the JAKIM to check the status of the products that they want to buy. Furthermore, by using this system, it is time saving since the users do not have to line up in row to fill in the form to check the halal status of the products. Besides that, by using E-halal system, they can get various description about the products in a short time and they can easily decide on the spot whether they what to buy that product or not. This E-halal system can help the users to choose wisely and become a smart users.

After the users send the message to DAPAT (32728), JAKIM will immediately reply the halal status of the product that has been asked by the users. In a short time, JAKIM will immediately inform the users with the details of the product such as the distributor of the product, the descriptions and the expired date of the products. This can be done in a short time and the consumers do not have to the JAKIM office and line up in the long line just to confirm the halal status of the products that they want to buy. If the product have no legal halal certificate, even though there are halal logos on that product, the users will received a message from JAKIM stated that " the products is in the list". In this case, there is high probability that the product is using a fake halal logo on his product to confused the buyers. The users of the local markets can easily avoid buying unregistered non-halal products that can waste their money. "By definition, halal consists of anything that is free from any component that Muslims are prohibited from consuming" (Zalina, 2008, p. 604). If the product is not registered with JAKIM, there is high probability that the products is not from Malaysia and the products might be halal or not. To avoid this kind of doubt, it is better not to buy the product and immediately report the product to JAKIM so that JAKIM can take immediate actions towards the manufacturers of the product.

Using E-halal system, users can immediately receive feedback from JAKIM about the halal status of the products. By using only a single click, the users of the local market can easily get various of information and description about the products in a short time. This is a really helpful application and can easily be used to all the consumers in this country. Moreover, it can prevents the consumers from buying a non-halal products that can give them negative effects in the future. Even though this system is really helpful and easy, many people in Malaysia did not realized that E-halal system is exist in Malaysia since 2006. Thus, JAKIM is trying to spread to all users in Malaysia about this system through various media in Malaysia. One of the method to spread information about E-halal system is by doing the interview by the government media (JAKIM Portal, 2014). In addition, various workshop such as Business Process Reengineering (BPR) workshop has been done by JAKIM to introduce E-halal system.

3. Save Time

This E-halal system has its own advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of E-halal system is it can help users to choose halal products in a short time. Nowadays, many technological devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptop and many more can make other people life become easier. Users can easily get information about the products in a local market by using their smartphones and other technological devices. By single click, users can easily obtain important information of the product such as the manufacturer of the product, the description and the expired date of the product. In addition, by using the technological devices, the consumers of the local market can easily up to date to the latest information about the halal status of various products in Malaysia. As example, users can send the barcode of a bar of chocalate to JAKIM and JAKIM will sent the information needed by the user about the chocolate to the user. In a short time, the buyer can decide whether the chocolate is halal or not.

4. Easily Used

Furthermore, E-halal system can also be used to detect the halal status of the restaurants and not only the products in the local market. According to Najmuddin (2013), E-halal system can detect 500 meter estimation using only the

smartphones and other gadgets. This is a very useful application, since it's not only used to detect the products in the local market but it also can detect the halal status of the nearby restaurants. Using this application, consumers can easily detect the status of the restaurants whether it is halal or not. Consumers can easily use their smartphones to confirm the halal logo in the restaurants and any other products in the local market. Besides that, the consumers can easily report the invalidity of the halal logo of the products or the restaurants to the JAKIM. If JAKIM received a non halal products or fake halal logos report from a consumers, they will immediately investigate the report and take immediate actions. Immediate action by JAKIM, can help other consumers to choose their products wisely and not to choose a non-halal products.

5. User-Friendly

Moreover, E-halal system is user-friendly system which there are various different methods to check the halal status of the products. As mention above, users can easily use SMS to check the halal status of the products. However, the users of the local markets can also checked the halal status of the products on the website that is provided by JAKIM. In addition, the manufacturers that wants to apply for the halal certificates of their products can easily apply the certificates through payment gateway, to check the halal status application through e-mail. JAKIM also used halal database ingredients to check the halal status of the products. Through this E-halal system, there is no form needed for the application of halal logos and there is no form needed to check the halal status of the products on the local markets. In addition, the Muslims foreigners that come to Malaysia can easily accessed the E-halal system to know about the halal status. "Despite being a multi-religious and multiracial country, making the country's halal industry a role model for other countries is a very ambitious aim" (Zalina, 2008, p. 605). This user- friendly system can save many of the buyers and the manufacturer's time in order to check the halal status of the products in the market.

6. Better Muslim Country

Besides that, by using E-halal system, we can be a better Muslim country. "This appears to be one of the initiatives the government has implemented to raise Malaysia's standing as a major player in the world halal industry" (Zalina, 2008, p. 603). As a user of the products, we have the right to choose the best. By using E-halal system, we can choose the product that is really halal and has been certified by JAKIM. It is compulsory for the Muslims people to consume only the halal products and to leave any foods that they have doubt with. At the same time, it is responsibilities as a Muslim as Islam encourages us to choose only the product that is halal and pure from any dirt. It is stated in the Quran to eat only halal and pure foods. "O ye people! Eat what is on earth, lawful (halal) and good (tayyib)..." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:168) Besides that, the foreigners from other country especially a Muslim country will not have doubt to buy any products from Malaysia, as they know that Malaysian are very strict in halal issues. According to Dierks (2011), with a global Muslim population of 1.8 billion, the market for halal food is estimated at US\$547 billion a year. By introducing this E-halal system to them, it can improves Malaysian relationship with other Muslims country. According to Ehmke (2008), failure to respond to this challenge may erode Malaysia's competitiveness of a halal food enterprise as a global player.

7. Ease the Consumer

The other advantage of E-halal system is, it can help the consumers of the local market to choose their product wisely. Nowadays, many of the people in Malaysia used smartphones in their daily life. E-halal system is easily can be used to check the halal status of the products in the local market. If they have any doubt in whatever products that they want to buy, they can just get the information easily by sending the Short Message Services (SMS) to JAKIM. They will received an immediate reply from JAKIM about the halal status of the products that they want to buy. In this way, this E-halal system can help them in becoming a better consumer by only buying the products that they really need in their life and save their money by not buying the unwanted products in the local markets. Besides that, in this technological era, most of the smartphone user have the internet connection used along with their gadgets. By having internet connection that is used along with their gadgets, they can easily accessed the JAKIM website to know the information about the products in the local market. "JAKIM has taken a step to caution and Muslim consumers by publishing a directory of halal food, creating e-halal website and establishing an SMS (Short Message Services) network for the Muslims to solve their doubt in purchasing activities" (Zakiah, Amal Hayati, & Nurul Himmah, 2014, p. 485). They also can update their knowledge about the new products in the local markets that already received the halal certificates. By doing this, they can be a more smart user and buy only necessary things.

8. Ease the Manufacturers

Moreover, this E-halal system can make the manufacturers work easier. This E-halal system not only can be used by the consumers of the local markets but it also can be used by the manufacturers to obtain the halal certificates of their products. According to Mukhtar (2009), halal certificate is not simply concerned with the content of products but also involve the production of hygiene and safety. In the past, if the manufacturers want to obtain any of the halal certificates for their product, they have line up in a very long line just to fill in the form. In addition, they have to go to the office several times to get the halal certificates. Nowadays, the manufacturers in Malaysia do not have to line up in a very long line just to fill in the form to get the halal certificates. What they have to do is, just sitting in front of their laptop or computer to get the work done. Besides that, they also can used smartphones and other gadgets to fill in the form to get the halal certificates. With a single click and using only their tips of the finger, they can easily fill in the form and check for the result online mainly through e-mail. They do not have to waste their time just to fill in the form and can only use their gadgets to fill in the form and do other work at the same time. This can save their time and make their work a lot easier.

9. Limited Use of the Gadgets

Even though the E-halal system give us a lot of advantages but this system also has its own disadvantages. It is true that E-halal system make people work easier as they can only check the halal status of the products at their fingertips by using the technological gadgets. However, not all people in Malaysia are equipped with those technological gadgets. There are still some people in Malaysia that are living in poverty and do not have enough money to buy all those kind of gadgets. Most of the people that living in the urban area might have a smartphones and other technological gadgets that they can used to check the halal status of the products in the local market. However, for those who are living in the rural area and poor might not have the opportunity to access to E-halal system since they do not have any smartphones or gadgets that they can used to access E-halal system. "Having mentioned that there is an authoritative body to check and monitor the halal status, it is the inherent duty of every Muslim to ensure that what they eat and consume comes from halal sources" (Zalina, 2008, p. 609). Even though, E-halal system can help many people and help them to become a smart user of the local market but there are some of the consumers in Malaysia cannot accessed to this system since they do not have any smartphones or any other gadgets.

10. Bad Internet Connection

Besides that, E-halal website and e-mail can only be accessed if there are good internet connection. The users can used Short Message Services (SMS) to check the halal status of the products. However, it is easier if they just go to the E-halal website and check the lists of the products on the website. Even though we are the developed country that used smartphones and other technological gadgets in daily life, but not all of us have the good internet connection all the time. Sometimes, the router of the internet might just broke down and this make it hard for the user to accessed to the E-halal system and to check the halal status of the products that they want to buy. In addition, internet connection might be good in the urban area but when it comes to the rural area the internet connection might be worse and cannot be used at all. If there are no internet connection, it is hard for the user to visit JAKIM website to check the halal status of the products. Besides that, it is also hard for the manufacturers to register their products and get the halal certificates online if there are no internet connection since they cannot accessed the website and e-mail. Then, they have to go to the JAKIM office to do it as manual and have to wait for a long time to receive the halal certificates for their products.

11. Older People Lack of it Knowledge

Basically, using E-halal system can help the consumers to choose their products wisely and help them to save their time. They do not have to fill in the form in the office and have to wait for a long time to know the halal status of the products. By accessing E-halal system, they can get immediate feedback from JAKIM about the products and can easily decide whether to buy that products or not. However, we must remember that to use the E-halal system, we must at least have phone to send Short Message Services (SMS) to JAKIM to know the halal status of the products but not all older people in the country have phones to use the E-halal system. This E-halal system is suitable for the young people that living in urban area and have smartphones and other gadgets with internet connection but it's not really suitable for the seniors that living in the rural area and do not have knowledge on how to use the E-halal system. It might be hard for them to understand the E-halal system and they might not be interested to know about this system since they cannot use it in

their life.

12. Lack of Knowledge about the System

Next, not many people in Malaysia know and understand the E-halal system. Even though, there are various methods that have been used by the governments to introduce the E-halal system to the society through various media, but not all the Malaysian citizen know about this system. Even though E-halal system has been established since in 2006, most people barely know about this system even though it is a very effective and useful system to help the consumers to choose the right products especially Muslims citizens. "It is not easy to check on food or other goods when they are bought from the market, especially when it concerns pre-packaged items or processed food" (Zalina, 2008, p. 608). It is a pity that many people do not understand E-halal system since most of the consumers of the local market have little knowledge about this system and they do not really know how to use this system in their daily life. Some of the manufacturers in Malaysia use fake certificates to deceive the consumers. "It can be seen that the current practice of many manufacturers, distributors and operators of premises is to put a halal label, sign or mark on various foods, products and premises" (Zalina, 2008, p. 608).

13. Conclusion

As consumers, we should aware of the importance to buy halal products in their daily life. Some consumers just easily buy anything that they think it is halal without checking the halal status with JAKIM. Sometimes, some consumers just too lazy to check the halal status of the products that they are buying because most of them want to be hurry in their daily life. Even though it is compulsory for the Muslims to eat halal food that is clean and pure from any dirt, they still take the matters lightly as they thought any products that have halal logos are considered as halal without having to confirm it with JAKIM.

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