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# Halal Audit Procedure in Assuring the Safety and Quality of Local and Imported Halal Meat Products: A Preliminary Study

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## ABSTRACT

Foodborne illness caused by bacteria (*Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7) and halal food fraud intensify the consumer's apprehension about halal food safety and quality. Islamic rules are not only emphasizing the halal aspect but also the *toyyiban* aspect; safety and quality. There is a necessity for a control measure to be taken to uphold not only the halal integrity but also the safety and quality of a halal product. Accordingly, this accentuates the role of halal audit. The halal audit is one of the processes of halal certification. Halal audit in Brunei Darussalam is governed by several guidelines. The existence of these guidelines is helpful in assuring that halal integrity is sustained. The main question now is on the sufficiency of halal audits in conforming the halal integrity along with the safety and quality of meat. Besides that, there is an issue with enforcing regulations by halal enforcement, whereby it is undistinguishable how these halal standards, which require a level of food safety, would be interpreted during the certification process. This study aims to investigate and assess the halal audit procedure of local and imported halal meat in Brunei Darussalam. In fulfilling these objectives, library research is adopted. The current findings from past literature show gaps in the current study, especially in matters related to halal audit procedure in assuring the safety and quality of local and imported halal meat products. This emphasized the importance in conducting this study.

**Keywords:** Halal audit; Safety and quality; Halal meat; Brunei Darussalam

## 1 Introduction

The demand for halal products has rapidly increased each year due to the growth of the Muslim population across the globe [1]. The global Muslim population has reached 1.9 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow twice as fast as the overall population and will reach 3 billion by 2060 [2]. Every Muslim is obligated to practice halal (lawful and permissible) and *toyyib* good and wholesome in act and consumption. This can be referred to Qur'anic verse of Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 168:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

"O mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and good on earth and follow not the footsteps of Shaitan (Satan). Verily, he is to you an open enemy [3].



The above Qur'anic verse above had commanded the Muslims to only consume which are both halal and *toyyib* (good). This further accentuates the significance on ensuring the safety and quality aspect in halal food products. Consumers may only be able to verify the safety and quality of a food product from what is physically visible to them. However, they may not be able to distinguish food product which is contaminated if it did not show any physical changes. To cater the Muslim consumer's needs food production must adhere to halal standards and guidelines [4]. This influenced the food production to applied for halal certification in order to have their food products be halal-certified and met Muslim's demand. Thus, this is where the important role of halal audit is further highlighted.

Halal audit is one of the activities in the halal certification process that are considered to be the most critical and complex [5]. Halal audit is deemed as important as it can prove any compliance and non-compliance with halal requirements [6]. Despite that, it is uncertain if the halal audits had incorporated the safety and quality aspects in their halal audit's assessment. The aim of this research is to investigate and assess the halal audit procedure of local and imported halal meat in Brunei Darussalam. Doing this will further enhance and significantly affect the halal audit in Brunei Darussalam. In addition to that, the safety and quality aspects of a halal product will be sustained and guaranteed. This will certainly boost the consumers' confidence especially on the safety and quality aspect in a halal meat product.

## **2 Materials and Methods**

To achieve the aim of this study, a qualitative research methodology is adopted, specifically content analysis. Using content analysis method to analyze the relevant materials (books, journal articles, proceedings, theses, newspaper articles and web articles) obtained through library research method. The findings from the materials are grouped into themes which are related to the study at hand. This helps to identify the relationship between the themes in answering the research objective, which is to assess and investigate the halal audit procedure of local and imported halal meat in Brunei Darussalam.

## **3 Results**

Using content analysis technique on the relevant materials, several themes are generated and there are: 1) the issues affecting the safety and quality of halal meat product, 2) relevant act and standard and guidelines in matters related to halal audit in ensuring the safety and quality of local and imported halal meat product, 3) halal audit procedure, 4) relevant agencies which have authority in ensuring the safety and quality of local and imported halal meat products in Brunei Darussalam, and 5) issue in matters related to sufficiency of halal audit procedure in assuring the safety and quality aspects are maintained in local and imported halal meat products. The findings showed that there are lack of study and significant gap on the subject of halal audit procedure in assuring the safety and quality of local and imported meat products.

#### 4 Discussion

The literature reviews had shown gaps in terms of halal audit procedures for assuring the safety and quality of local and imported halal meat products in Brunei Darussalam. It is established from past literature that there are valid concerns on the safety and quality issues of halal products, especially in meats, such as the prevalence of foodborne illness (e.g., *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella*) and halal meat fraud offences. There are halal standards and guidelines introduced to safeguard the halal product from being contaminated, in terms of its safety and quality. However, due to the lack of study on the topic of halal audit procedures in assuring the safety and quality of halal meat products, it is unknown how the safety and quality aspects are practiced and considered during the halal certification process. This then led to the question of the sufficiency of halal audits in assuring the safety and quality of halal meat. This is raised due to the issue of the doubtful effectiveness of Muslim authority, in enforcing safety and quality as stated in the halal standards and guidelines. In addition to that, there is also the issue in halal meat supply chain where there are concerns in lack of monitoring from the halal enforcement agencies after the halal certification is awarded despite the raising concerns in the halal meat supply chain.

#### 5 Conclusions

Issues related to meat safety and quality are imperative to be observed. These concerning issues will directly affect the consumer who consumes such meat. To explore this and affirm whether there is a presence of safety and quality aspects considered in determining the halal status of meat, a study will be conducted by focusing on the halal audit processes in Brunei Darussalam in matters related to local and imported halal meat. This study is anticipated to contribute to society, especially the halal enforcement bodies, and consumers. In addition to that, by raising awareness on the safety and quality aspects of meat, this research will solidify the halal integrity of local and imported meat products. Furthermore, it will strengthen the safety and quality (*toyyiban*) aspects. Furthermore, by studying comprehensively the halal audit procedure in relation to assuring the safety and quality of local and imported halal meat products, will help to identify the strength and weaknesses of the halal audit. By doing this, it will help to further enhance and improve the halal audit procedure, particularly in matters related to local and imported meat products, in Negara Brunei Darussalam.

#### Competing Interests

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