

## SUSTAINABILITY OF HALAL FOOD INDUSTRY: AN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### **Abstract**

*This paper attempts to have an overview of the implementation of ethics in the sustainable halal food industry as it may affect the halal industry directly and indirectly. Ethics is a fundamental prerequisite to action as individuals and society have a belief system that acknowledges the importance of natural development to human development will they engage in actions for sustainable development. The implementation of ethics in the halal food industry is reviewed in terms of the aspects of authority, manufacturer, and consumer. There are four main aspects of ethics reviewed in this study, namely the knowledge, relation, social impact and lifestyle. Further investigation digests the knowledge and relation between halal and sustainability, analysis on social impact, and lifestyle change may contribute towards sustainable halal food industry. In short, this paper generates ideas for researchers to conduct other researches that may lead to the sustainable halal food industry in Malaysia.*

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### **Introduction**

The progress Malaysian halal industry which has successfully penetrated the global market, especially in the halal food sector has placed Malaysia among countries making it a respected and highly regarded. According to Buller (2017), the global halal food and beverage (F&B) market is set to boom in the next five years, driven by new entrants to the market. A report provided by the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2017/18 stated that the F&B sector is expected to grow from USD24 trillion in 2016 and to reach USD1.93 trillion by 2022. Muslims spend the highest in F&B sector, followed by clothing and apparel (USD254 billion), media and entertainment (USD198 billion), travel (USD169 billion), pharmaceuticals (USD83 billion), and cosmetics (USD57.4 billion). It also makes Malaysia a preferred destination for businesses to expand halal-related goods and services. The the global halal market size is estimated to be worth

US\$3 trillion currently and is expected to grow rapidly to US\$7.7 trillion by 2030 (Berita Harian Online).

Further investigation found that the food products and meat and alternatives had the highest demand and expected to be the largest product segment by 2025. The reason may be because the meat and alternatives are the most preferred diets by Muslims worldwide (Market Research Report, 2018). Halal products and services are widely accepted to the world market due to its practice on the universal concept that includes the process of storage, packaging, transportation, and delivery that contribute to the benefit of its end products with good quality, fresh, clean, and healthy. Therefore, the halal concept is not limited to the Muslim population, but it has a wide range of benefit that includes the non-Muslim population as well.

Halal is included in sustainable development because it is not merely about religion and food but also involves industries participating in business and economy. Furthermore, halal products are produced from farms, forests, factories, and various environmental or ecological sources. Meanwhile, the end users or consumers and industrial players that involved with halal products and services are a part of the social aspect. The increasing demand for halal products and services is growing proportional to the rising population and consumption, which contribute to global food demand. Consequently, the ecosystem is imbalanced due to overexploitation of fisheries, livestock, water, and energy, along with climate changes and the ability to produce food in line with the competition over land.

It is important for the halal industry to be developed sustainably, and it is closely related to the players in the halal industry which are the stakeholder, supplier, manufacturer, seller, and consumer. Due to the information available around us, it is clear that the information about environmental and societal degradation alone will not lead to action. Action can only be implemented when individuals and society have a belief system that acknowledges the importance of the natural environment to human development, and then will they engage in actions for sustainable development. Therefore makes ethics as a fundamental prerequisite to action.

Malaysia as one of the growing halal industry players is also affected by such crises. The increasing demand for halal product and services may lead to the increase in resources production and consumption. In recent years, the concept of green and sustainable development has been introduced to overcome these crises. Malaysia should engage in sustainable development in all aspect of development. It is believed that the concept of “halalan tayyiban” is in line with the concept of green and sustainable development. The objective of green and sustainable development is to ensure the current needs are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs as well. Thus, the aims of this article are to discuss the importance of ethics implementation and to suggest four main aspects of ethics in having a sustainable halal food industry.

### **Implementation of Ethics for Sustainable Halal Food Industry**

Sustainable development (SD) is a process of constantly attempting to harmonize the needs of development with the maintenance of environmental integrity. SD is becoming crucial, as the human population is constantly growing with increasing per-capita resource consumption,

signifying that the world's environment and human consumption must be managed with far more care and delicacy. SD is a continuous process guided by a basic philosophy with an emphasis on development to improve the quality of life for everyone and development that is environmentally appropriate with proper use of natural resources and involves protecting essential ecological processes, life support systems, and biological diversity (Saigal, 2008).

Ethics have a significant role in advancing the action in sustainable development by promoting values in a profession, as every profession endorses certain values based on its nature and scope (Munawar et al., 2012). Ethics from the Islamic perspective regards virtue or attitude, which refers to a collection of characters of an individual (McDonough, 1984). Meanwhile, Western scholars define ethics as a science that deals with the question of right and wrong in the actions and things that an individual should do (Lillie, 1971). Thus, how does ethics related to sustainable development?

SD is a metadiscipline subject that is closely related to all existing human knowledge in approximately equal parts and with more or less equal importance, including ethics. Ethics is a key element in achieving sustainable development through changes in people's attitudes and patterns of behavior, and the way these attitudes reflect in public policy-making priorities towards sustainable management of natural resources. SD implementation must begin with profound knowledge and understanding of the importance of sustainable development. It must be followed by changes in attitude towards implementing plans and strategies, which involves ethics of the producers, consumers, industry players, and all individuals involved in the process of the development. Ethics can be a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors of the individuals involved in the SD process, which help and preserve the integrity and quality of the halal products and services.

Ethics can serve as a guideline, as it helps with measuring the sustainable use of the environment, sociology, politics, and economics based on moderation, balance, and conservation. It also can be used to safeguard against misuse, mistreatment, and destruction, where greed, extravagance, and waste are considered a tyranny against nature and humanity. Ethics help to produce "tayyib" products, rather than only halal producers, developers, traders, and consumers practicing good and right manners towards sustaining a universal equilibrium in ecology, politics, economy, and sociology.

Ethics is the principal value to be instilled in individuals involved along the halal supply chain (HSC) and in the field of animal welfare, food safety, and food security that are also related to the halal industry. Ethical practices should be adopted to achieve halal and tayyib products and services. Ethical practices including all practices in the industry entail compliance with regulations, moderation, responsibility, consideration to making decisions, and practicing socio-economic and social justice.

The main emphasis on the ethics of sustainability is on remote responsibilities, which means it is our moral obligation to consider the impact of our actions on people and places that are before us, or far from us like the next generation of our population. Another principle is the precautionary principle, which means that due to the limited knowledge on specific impacts of human activities on the natural resources of land, air, water, and any other element that contribute to the end product, we need to implement precautionary actions in every decision-making step.

The precautionary principle that underlying the sustainable development is the priority in decision making, for instance when a developer need to make a decision pertaining to a new development but having insufficient data or facing a high risk to the society and environment, priority should lie with ecosystem preservation and society prosperity rather than industrial development and market growth (Theis & Tomkin, 2012).

A sustainable halal food industry involves various parties such as the stakeholders, manufacturers or producers, and consumers in achieving its objectives. These three entities need to implement ethics with their capacities and abilities. Therefore, this paper suggested four main aspects of ethics that can be practiced by stakeholders, producers or manufacturers, and consumers in pursuing a sustainable halal food industry.

#### **Four main aspects of ethics in having a sustainable halal food industry**

**(i) Knowledge of halal and sustainable**

Knowledge is the most important element in human life, and it is also important in developing a sustainable halal food industry. Knowledge is fundamental to sustainable development as knowledge provides us guidance and proper steps in building the industry. The necessary knowledge is broad, but for this issue particularly is the knowledge regarding sustainable development, halal science, and various fields-related knowledge for every entity of stakeholders, manufacturers, and consumers. Besides, the most important knowledge to possess is the ethics of knowledge which helps us to distinguish between good and bad, and helps in decision-making. Halal as we know it is merely not about food only, but also about the handling, processing, packaging, and logistics of products that can be included in a HSC. Other knowledges that need to be emphasized are food safety and food security.

**(ii) Linking sustainable development and halal development**

Every entity involves in the halal food industry must acquire knowledge and desire in the related field especially in sustainable development and halal development because progressing a plan of action on development requires involvement from all parties. Then, they can link the two developments to develop a sustainable halal food industry. According to United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (2011), the key to balancing between the three dimensions; social, economic and environmental sustainability, is to understand their linkages and interactions. In the case of Lebanon, a main obstacle to an integrative sustainable development approach is the lack of coordination between stakeholders in general, on one hand, and the designated official bodies, on the other. Each entities and organizations (such as environmental organization) work independently, without strategic coordination with related ministries. Therefore, it is important to implement the ethics concurrently with other elements namely animal welfare, HSC, food security and food safety, with adequate halal knowledge in having a sustainable halal food industry. A good coordination and linkage among the organizations and entities involves in the development is another key to a successful sustainable halal food industry.

### **(iii) Consideration on social impact**

In developing a sustainable halal industry, the players in each entity should consider the outcome impact on society. Besides, it is also closely related to the responsibility of every individual involves in the industry. It is mentioned previously that ethics is the principle value in the sustainable development and the main emphasis is on remote responsibilities. Therefore, this is where the human value in each player should be emphasized and attentive through education and awareness on the importance of sustainable halal development. Consideration on social impact is important as each development may affect society especially in terms of economy, community, and environment that are also in line with the domain of sustainable development.

### **(iv) Lifestyle changes**

Globalization and modernity show the changing lifestyles of society from traditional to modern and dependent on technology. Besides modernity, innovation and advancement in science and technology show a lot of people choose a ‘throwaway’ lifestyle, for example using disposable materials and not practicing reuse-reduce-recycle concept, without looking at the impact to the society and environment, but it may be beneficial to the economic aspect. Therefore, in having a sustainable halal development, each player may need to change their lifestyles and be alert to the impact of any action taken. For instance, a manufacturer producing innovative food products may consider the impact on the consumer’s health and environment. The manufacturer may consider producing a green product with healthy ingredients that is not harmful to the consumer. Besides, the consumers also need to know their rights, added with additional knowledge that may help in their decision-making in the purchasing process. In addition, the knowledge may play a critical role in developing a halal sustainable food system. A research done by Golnaz et al. (2015) indicated that consumers especially non-Muslims still view the halal process from the religious perspective instead of the sustainability aspect.

## **Discussion**

In summary, ethics is a system of moral principles that affect people in making decisions and lead their lives. Ethics is closely related to integrity. In the halal food industry, the integrity of products and services are important, the same as the integrity of the players in the industry that includes manufacturers, producers, sellers, stakeholders, and consumers. According to Tieman (2011), the HSC approach is important to guarantee the halal integrity at the point of consumption. Besides, halal needs a supply chain approach where the value chain and its supply chain activities are totally aligned with the Syariah requirements (Tieman et al., 2012). Therefore, ethics can act as a guideline in the halal sector in developing integrity and sustainable halal food industry. The halal industry must maintain the halal principle along the HSC and does not give attention only to the products, but also emphasizes on the industry players. Besides, the halal sector should not be focusing on profits only, but also to take into consideration about the human value and social

impact, as they are the notion of the halalan tayyiban concept as well. In several industries, the development of the economy is given a priority over the social and environmental developments.

Therefore, further research is encouraged to expand the ethics of the halal food industry for sustainable development. This effort is also in line with the education for sustainable development that could encourage people, particularly students to participate in sustainable development and awareness on issues of social justice, ethics, and wellbeing and its relation to ecological and economic factors, develop a future-facing outlook, learn to think about the consequences of actions, and how systems and societies can be adapted to ensure sustainable futures (Longhurst et al., 2014).

## Conclusion

This modern-day shows many parties are working to improve themselves, careers, and finances in order to have a better life. The halal industry is also growing as the demand rises due to the increase of population and the necessity of life. Besides, modernity also shows the development of science and technology, along with economic growth. However, it is important for us to look at the ethical aspects, especially in giving humanity values to the development of today's economy, science, and technology. It is also part of the concepts and the notion of al-Quran pertaining to halalan tayyiban.

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