

## Challenges on Sertu Cleansing in Halal Logistics

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### ABSTRACT

Halal is covering to Muslim and non-Muslim and it is more in their life concern. Halal is a symbol for quality assurance, lifestyle choice and in business and trade globally. But, there are fewer studies published on halal logistics especially on sertu or samak cleansing on transport vehicles and container even though halal integrity is increasing important in halal industry. This research is exploratory study and collected of the data through series of interviews which focus on the selected halal logistics players to identify the challenges or issues in implementing sertu cleansing in halal logistics. This article study applies on in-depth purpose sampling collected as information that is available for specific target halal players. The outcome obtained from this research has identified the challenges faced by halal logistics service providers. The challenges are less aware by the Muslim customers and players, integration in between the halal logistics services and halal authority, financial issues with this service and the last is lack of government support. The information and knowledge of this study can be utilized as a reference to the halal authority, halal logistics service providers, researchers and other party who needed this information in logistics and supply chain management specifically in sertu or samak cleansing.

**KEYWORDS:** Halal Logistics, Sertu or Samak Cleansing, Logistics Management, Logistics Challenge.

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### INTRODUCTION

All Muslims required for an assurance that the consumed food follow the Islamic principles which is wholesome and good that to be called as toyyib [1]. This also expresses that Islam guides to forbid of haram and doubtful things and partake of halal by muslims [5]. Muslims have always been associated with Islam and Islam is directly linked to halalan and toyyiban (good quality). The increase of the halal market [14] will be required for extensive of halal rules and regulations [15] towards halal ownership by the Muslim customers have become the vulnerability of halal food supply chain [2, 6]. Halal is involved in the global business and become the assurance of quality choice of lifestyle beside the Muslims religious related matters [18].

#### Problem Statement

In [31, 32, 33] has discussed many issues arisen by the supply chain and logistics players related to the halal product and its value in halal logistics. He also expresses that the lacking in the authority transparent of halal certified related to its process and integrity to the halal logistics players. These issues also discussed by [12, 29]. But, there is less discussion on the challenges in sertu or samak cleansing on transport vehicles and container in upholding the halal integrity of goods from the farm to fork.

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### **Research Objectives**

The identification of the challenges encountered by logistics service providers in implementing halal logistics is the objectives of this research which are focusing on sertu or samak cleansing on the transport vehicle and container in ensuring (uphold) halal integrity in halal logistics.

### **Research Question**

The achievement of the above objective, following are the research questions.

1. What do you understand with Shariah halal cleansing or sertu or samak cleansing?
2. What are the challenges in implementing sertu or samak cleansing in ensuring halal integrity in halal logistics?
3. Who are responsible for ensuring halal integrity through sertu or samak cleansing activity?

### **Significance of the Study**

Since there are very minimal numbers of studies on this topic, the identification of challenges in sertu or samak cleansing from this study could be used as an indicator by halal supply chain players to face the uncovered issues in halal industry. The contribution to the body of knowledge in this topic also will provide the potential future research on any topics in adopting halal cleansing into logistics management for policy makers and halal logistics service providers in the future.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Halal Definition**

Halal in Shariah laws means “things or actions permitted or lawful”. So, when we are talking about halal foods, it means any foods that are allowed to be eaten by the regulations of Islamic law. All related life matter of Muslims including food and drink has concerned with the halal term. Fard (compulsory), mustahabb (recommended), halal (allowed), makruh (disliked), haram (forbidden) are five requirements الأحكام الخمسة (al-ahkam al-khamsah) that guide the action of human morality in Islam. Halal is one of these five requirements and the Islamic principles guides that mubah means allowed and permitted unless it is prohibited [15].

### **Shariah Ritual Cleansing (Sertu or Samak Cleansing)**

Cleansing aims not only to purify but also to filter and to remove all possible remaining traces of contaminants in total so as no evidence of contamination remains. Hence, ritual cleansing in halal logistics and transportation refers to sertu; and that ritual cleansing (sertu) is carried out in the transport, trucks and containers if there are evidences of severe najis contamination are present; or when one is in doubt (syubah) on the status of halal and cleanliness (toyyib) of the said containers and trucks [15].

Sertu or samak cleansing consists of two types; dibagh for animals' skin and sertu for other items. Dibagh is the act of ritual cleansing of animals' skin, other than dogs and pigs, until the smell and the remains of meat and fat are removed. The samak or sertu of mughallazah najis is the act of cleansing with the intention of purifying the body, clothing, spaces, utensils and equipment that was in contact with mughallazah najis; by washing seven times using mutlaq water, the first time being with water mixed with soil [20, 23].

According to the Malaysia Standard of MS2400:2010 [23], Shariah ritual cleansing refers to the removal of contaminants based on cleansing procedures in accordance to the Shariah requirements as stipulated in MS2400 standards requirements. In the Holy Quran outlines the procedures and guidelines of sertu or samak cleansing that indicated the steps to cleanse and purify the stated three types of najis, especially the severe najis or mughallazah najis that relates to the dogs, pigs and its descendant [19, 28].

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY HALAL LOGISTICS SERVICE**

### **Lacking of Awareness of Sertu Cleansing among Halal logistics Service Providers and Muslim Consumers**

The Muslim customers' awareness on halal food is through their practice and knowledge on halal concept [34]. However, they assumed that all food produced and sales in Malaysia will be halal. The Muslims are required to consume the halal foods and goods. The appreciation of halal might be loss among Muslims and halal products manufacturers due to not enough knowledge, awareness and understanding of the halal concept[35]. Halal food awareness is important for customers because food products in Malaysia are ranging from various local and imported foods that produced and managed by all ethnic groups [9]. Therefore, the Muslim customers' awareness of sertu or samak cleansing is needed because it is one of the elements in ensuring the halal status of the product.

The encouragement by Islam to its followers is included the cleanliness of the product taken including the proper sertu or samak cleansing to the equipment used to handle halal products. But, the awareness is less among muslim consumers.

### **Lack of Integration and Collaboration in Between Halal Logistics Service Providers and Halal Authority**

One of the issues in the halal logistics is the standard of sertu or samak cleansing guidelines in halal industry. According to [30] claimed that the halal logo on the halal product packaging important because it will indicates the products taken is safe, clean and trustworthy for consumption [13]. But, there is only halal sticker for sertu or samak cleansing after the particular containers or transport vehicles completed the cleansing activities.

The absence of collaboration in the worldwide halal cleansing logo become the constraint ensuring the halal integrity in the supply chain due to no proof of sertu cleansing activities to ensure the halal status. Currently, there are 120 companies in Malaysia including halal manufacturers and halal logistics service providers [13] but not in sertu cleansing. If the containers have been cross-contaminated by the severe najas that related to pigs or dog or any doubtful traces, therefore it needs to be cleaned through sertu or samak cleansing.

According to [16], the Muslim consumers concern on the consumption of the halal products but they also aware on the important of halal logistics due to logistics functions to deliver the halal product to the Muslims' consumers.

### **Less Customer Demand on the Service and Financial Barrier**

Muslims have always been associated with Islam and Islam is directly linked to halalan and toyyiban (good quality). For Muslims, it is their religious obligation to consume halal food. The concern on understanding among Muslims about halal food is posed because the foods in the market and the foods imported into Malaysia is managed by all ethnic groups. In Malaysia, the application of halal certification and logo is based upon request by food producers. For those with halal certification and logo have the advantages of capturing a bigger market because 60.4% of Malaysian are Muslims [3]. Based on this information the halal products producers need to look into the cleanliness of the tools and equipment in handling the halal product to the halal market through sertu or samak cleansing.

The integrity of halal products to the Muslims' consumers can be implemented through the segregation of halal and non-halal food products during the delivery of the products to avoid any contamination [25]. The tools and equipment for the halal food productions and halal logistics compulsory not be shared during the activities to avoid contamination [22]. But, it is not highlighted by the industry as the halal and non-halal products are still using the same truckload or store in the same warehouse. If the tools or equipment of halal food product is accidentally contaminated with non-halal product, therefore these tools or this equipment compulsory need to be cleaned through sertu or samak cleansing.

The reasons of challenges in implementing of sertu or samak cleansing due to since this service is not set up as mandatory by Malaysia government, therefore the halal logistics are not seriously implement it due to no demand from the customers. At the same times, the logistics cost will increase based on the investment is required to start this service and the charges will be transferred to Muslim consumers. Therefore, the customers’ demand for this service is less.

**Lack of Government Support and Promotion**

In [29] indicated there are the relevant constraints need to be rectified such as the inconsistent definition of halal, the individual firms’ halal logo, the usage of Islamic brand names on non-halal products and the lack of enforcement by authorities. Another weakness is the lack of government support to make sertu or samak cleansing mandatory to transport vehicle and containerization that carry food products and other related products.

The less participation of the enforcement personnel will create not integrated halal logistics activity. When the limited authoritative control and the authority has less knowledge and understanding on halal logistics activities can cause they not able to not know the nature and degree of importance of halal towards logistics services in managing the halal policies and procedures including the certification.

**METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative approach was most suitable and adapted for this study in order to study the challenges in implementing sertu or samak cleansing in Malaysia. Qualitative studies are deemed more appropriate [8, 41] which applies the method of the purposive sampling and judgement sampling from the specific target of respondents. The indication of all samples is presented by the fair representation of halal logistics players and policy maker in Malaysia in Table 1.

Table 1: The representatives of logistics service providers in Malaysia

Company	Description
Company 123	Supply the shipping container and its spare part and provide the related services such as washing, repairing and painting.
Company 124	Halal logistics service provider certified by HDC & JAKIM
Company 125	Halal logistics service provider with warehouse facility only certified by HDC & JAKIM
Company 126	No Halal procedures and practices
Company 127	Government authority (Halal)
Company 128	Sertu or samak cleansing products manufacturer

The data is collected from primary source, secondary source and the series of in-depth interview. Information can be captured through the interview with the Shariah expert on the shariah perspective and challenges in sertu or samak cleansing application in halal logistics. According to [11, 21, 27], the in-depth interview is an effective tool to obtain a rich understanding in sertu or samak cleansing and its challenging in implementation of this service in halal logistics.

The identified interview candidates were having a solid expertise in Shariah and halal logistics through the purposive and judgement sampling in Malaysia. These candidates were selected from the following organizations: Halal Development Centre (Shariah), shipping container supplier, two halal logistics providers with halal certification from the Malaysia policy maker, halal logistics provider without halal certification and sertu or samak cleansing product manufacturer.

Shipping container supplier was the first candidate and the person contacted was interested in this topic, it was easy to arrange for an in-depth interview without any rejection. The numbers of the selected respondents weresmall;the interview was conducted in the average of one hour to two hours duration in combination of Malay and English language. The interviews were recorded the voice to allow the researcher to transcribe and to analyze the results of the activities [11, 17, 21] and captured more inputs in sertu or samak cleansing in halal logistics.

The moderator plays an important role to introduce the topic, asked the research questions, observing, took the notes and recorded the discussion[27]. Recording and transcribing the discussion are required to better analyze the discussion later [11]. Table 2 summarizes the respondents' information. In addition, all conversations are in Malay and English and are recorded using voice recording devices with the permission from the respondents.

Table 2: The respondents' information

Company	Type of Company	Position	Years in Industry
Company 123	Container Supplier	General Manager	18 years
Company 124	Halal Logistics Service Provider	Warehousing Manager	13 years
Company 125	Halal Logistics Service Provider	Warehousing Manager	9 years
Company 126	Transport and Warehouse (without halal certification)	Senior Manager	12 years
Company 127	Government Authority (Halal)	Trainer of Halal	6 years
Company 128	Sertu Product Manufacturer	Owner of Company	15 years

The researcher identified the theme which will be divided into three sub-themes namely respondents' background, halal logistics industry and the challenges in the sertu or samak cleansing. The research questions prepared from general to specific related matters to invite openness and to avoid the bias element in the interview [10]. Upon completion of all the recorded conversation and information are extracted from the selected respondents, transcribed the data, the data analyzed and the conclusions are prepared [22]. Some of not related data collected during the interview will be removed.

## RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data has been analyzed and identified the challenges on sertu cleansing in halal logistics. Table 3 shows the list of challenges faced in sertu or samak cleansing in halal logistics. Based from the list, all issues are coded as Issue # and categorized into four areas of challenges which coded as Constraint #. These areas are shown in Table 4, based on the grouping of the issues in halal logistics.

Table 3: Challenges faced in sertu or samak cleansing in Halal logistics

Code	Issues Identified
Issue 1	Sertu cleansing or Halal cleansing is not a compulsory practice in Malaysia
Issue 2	Less information and exposure on Halal cleansing in the Halal industry
Issue 3	Less expert and limited knowledge in logistics industry and sertu cleansing
Issue 4	Limited demand on sertu cleansing service from Halal industry
Issue 5	The charges of sertu cleansing service are too high compared to conventional cleansing service
Issue 6	Lack of government's support, intervention and enforcement in the implementation of the service
Issue 7	Less in promotion/understanding in Halal logistics and sertu cleansing
Issue 8	Standards set by JAKIM/JAIN are difficult to abide and not cost-effective
Issue 9	Less communication between JAKIM, HDC and logistics service providers
Issue 10	Less integration between JAKIM/JAIN and Halal logistics players
Issue 11	No model or example of successful implementation of sertu cleansing in Halal logistics as a benchmark
Issue 12	Sertu cleansing in Halal logistics is not cost-effective and involve large capital expenditures for service providers
Issue 13	Tractability and trace ability issues along the sertu cleansing activities in the supply chain (sertu staffs' attitudes and ability, wrong handling, wrong approach, the sertu product usage)
Issue 14	Less collaboration in between halal logistics service providers in ensuring unbroken halal chain and implementation of sertu cleansing
Issue 15	Less participation from the private companies as it requires substantial capital or investment and customers' demand on the service
Issue 16	High capital or investment to sertu cleansing service providers due the sertu product is about the high cost
Issue 17	Lesshalal training in sertu cleansing in halal logistics
Issue 18	The customers not happy with the sertu cleansing service charges when the presence of haram or doubtful substance on products during logistic activities.
Issue 19	Logistics service providers' practices are not similar procedures in halal cleansing.
Issue 20	Negative perception in halal service will adds in more costs

All issues identified during the data collection in Halal logistics industry are then grouped into four areas of challenges. The first areas is labeled constraint 1 the issues are 2, 3, 7 and 11 indicated the less of awareness in sertu cleansing in halal logistics by the halal logistics players and Muslim consumers. Issue 9, 10, 13 and 14 are grouped in constraint 2 that specifies the integration and collaboration effort issue in between logistics service providers and halal authority such as traceability issues and lack of dedicated halal facilities. Issues concerning the fewer customers demand in sertu cleansing service and financial barrier are labelled as constraint 3 with issue 4, 5, 8, 12 and 18. The final category is labelled constraint 4 concerns about lack of government support and intervention to ensure all halal players to adopt sertu or samak cleansing in logistics activities. There are four issues in this category which are issue 1, 6, 16, 17 and 19.

Table 4: Grouping of issues in halal logistics

<p><b>Constraint 1: Lack of awareness in sertu cleansing by the halal logistics service provider and Muslim consumers</b>  Less information and exposure on Halal cleansing in the halal industry: <b>Issue 2</b>  Lack of expertise and knowledgeable about sertu cleansing by Halal logistics industry: <b>Issue 3</b>  Less in promotion and understanding among Malaysian regarding halal, halal logistics and sertu cleansing: <b>Issue 7</b>  No model or example of successful implementation of sertu cleansing in halal logistics as benchmark: <b>Issue 11</b></p> <p><b>Constraint 2: Lack of integration and collaboration effort in between logistics service providers and halal authority</b>  Less communication in between JAKIM/JAIN, HDC and halal logistics service providers: <b>Issue 9</b>  Less integration in between JAKIM/JAIN, HDC and halal logistics service: <b>Issue 10</b>  Tractability and trace ability issues along the sertu cleansing activities in the supply chain (sertu staffs' attitudes and ability, wronghandling, wrong approach, the sertu product usage): <b>Issue 13</b>  Less collaborative efforts among logistics service providers in ensuring the integrated halal chain in sertu cleansing: <b>Issue 14</b></p> <p><b>Constraint 3: Less customers' demand and financial barriers</b>  Limited demand on sertu cleansing from Halal industry: <b>Issue 4</b>  The charges of sertu cleansing are too high compared to conventional cleansing services: <b>Issue 5</b>  Standard sets by JAKIM/ JAIN are difficult to abide and not cost effective: <b>Issue 8</b>  Sertu cleansing in halal logistics is not cost-effective and involve large capital expenditure for the service facility: <b>Issue 12</b>  The customers are not happy with the sertu service charge when the presence of haram or doubtful substance on products during logistics activities : <b>Issue 18</b></p> <p><b>Constraint 4: Lack of government support and intervention in implementing sertu cleansing</b>  Sertu cleansing or Halal cleansing is not a compulsory practice in Malaysia: <b>Issue 1</b>  Lack on the government support and intervention in enforcement of sertu cleansing: <b>Issue 6</b>  High capital and investment in sertu cleansing which is related to a sertu product at higher cost: <b>Issue 16</b>  Few Halal training, especially for sertu cleansing in Halal logistics: <b>Issue 17</b>  Halal logistics service providers' practices are not similar procedures in halal cleansing: <b>Issue 19</b>  Negative perception that halal service will adds in more costs: <b>Issue 20</b></p>
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## DISCUSSION

**Constraint 1** states the importance of awareness in sertu cleansing as the challenges recognized in halal industry and as was indicated by [35], the halal products are compulsory consumed by Muslims. Loss of appreciation and participation in the halal system is happening due to limited knowledge, less awareness and less understanding in the halal concept among Muslims and the halal products producers. A standard rule that fit all related industries is needed to ensure the halal cleansing in halal logistics is properly implemented and maintaining the halal integrity in the logistics network. The representatives from Company 123 and 127 indicated that the sertu cleansing in logistics as routine activity is difficult to be implemented, since there is no mandatory enforcement from the government authority. They also said that the halal certification from the authorities which is recognized by JAKIM not actively used but only per request from the Muslim consumers. The government's enforcement and standardization of halal guidelines is less has caused the higher costs in the process. The respondents agreed that the sertu cleansing in Malaysia is still in the initial stage in the halal logistics because there is less knowledge and limited experts in conducting sertu cleansing in halal logistics.

**Constraint 2** highlighted the collaboration issues in between logistics service providers and Halal Authorities. The Company 124 and 128 commented that the major issue in terms of industry

integrative efforts is no similarity in handling operation of halal products. The logistics service providers are applying the different practices and they are competing with each other. This could be the result of the lack of dedicated assets and facilities in handling halal products. The owner of the Company 128 expressed that they are dedicated halal cleansing facilities and equipment with the sertu product to cater customers' demand, but once the products movement are passed to a different party, the halal supply chain is tend to be broken and contamination is might be occurred if the receiving party did not aware and practice halal logistics.

The Company 124 and 125 were agreed with the statement of the Company 128, it is in line with views and the task can be transferred or outsource to their company. This can be supported by [14, 24]. Both Company 124 and Company 125 explained that their obligations only concerns on halal storage and handling facilities in the warehouse but not the import or export transportation activity. During transportation, the track and trace of the halal equipment is difficult to avoid from cross contamination since the delivery procedures of halal products are made by separate entities. If there is existence of haram or doubtful substances on the halal products during logistics activities but the information are not informed and shares because there is no cooperation and integration in between the logistics service providers in the supply chain. This was expressed by all the respondents that difficult to identify the presence of haram contamination, sometimes the transporters using the halal facilities and the sertu cleansing need to be done in maintaining the halal status. They are agreed that the awareness by the industry players is weak on the importance to maintain the halal integrity.

**Constraint 3** focuses on lack in demand of sertu service and financial barrier. Previously, any halal cleansing matters such as the halal certification's application, auditing and so forth are under JAKIM. Now, all the responsibilities related to sertu cleansing shifted to JAIN (Jabatan Agama Negeri) and this change has caused confusion create more difficult process as per expressed by all respondents. The policies and procedures set up by JAKIM are difficult to abide and are not cost-effective stated by Company 123, 124 and 125 therefore they outsource the third party to perform on behalf and customer not happy with the charges. They said that due to there is no enforcement from the government authority the Muslim consumers tend to ignore this responsibility. They also indicated by the warehouse manager that not all logistics service providers have the ability to own the dedicated halal cleansing equipment and other related equipment including the sertu product, warehouse or premise as it will involve substantial capital investment.

**Constraint 3** also covers the financial issues in executing the sertu cleansing in halal logistics. Company 123, 124 and 126 claimed that the halal cleansing demand is not encouraging; the halal cleansing facilities cannot become the main source of revenue. The conventional logistics cleansing is still the main demand for the customer because it is more profitable. All respondents agreed that the halal cleansing service will add in high cost in operating will affected the overall logistics costs. Therefore, the reluctant of the players to venture into sertu cleansing will increase the risks to unsuccessful of halal supply chain.

**Constraint 4** stresses out the issues of the participation and promotion of government authorities. Company 123, 125, 126 and 128 said that the weak government support in promoting halal logistics is one of the issues to look at. The government supports on the halal industry is mainly to the halal product manufactures and small-medium enterprises (SMEs). It was also recommended that the government need to do mandatory policy to make sertu cleansing compulsory and focused on halal logistics. It is because halal does not only matters during production or purchasing stage but it is also during the delivery, storage, distribution and handling stages. The Muslim consumers have less knowledge and not really understand on the importance of cleanliness of the equipment that handles the halal logistics for halal products or services. The training and education on to the industry player on the halal logistics unfortunately the efforts are still limited and not enough.

## CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

In summary, there are four challenges identified in sertu cleansing in halal logistics namely lack in awareness in sertu cleansing (constraint 1), integration and collaboration issues among logistics service providers and in between Halal Authority (constraint 2), less customers' demand for sertu cleansing and financial barriers (constraint 3), the last constraint is the issues pertaining to government's support and intervention on implementing of sertu cleansing. These issues will be required a study on the barrier factor of implementation in adopting sertu cleansing into halal logistics management.

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