

## Halal Supply Chain Awareness: Initial Case Study in Hong Kong

Sariwati Mohd Shariff, Saadiah Yahya, Sabariah Mohamad

Malaysian Institute of Transport and Logistics, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to present preliminary findings of an exploratory study on basic halal awareness and halal supply chain awareness among randomly-selected undergraduates majoring in supply chain in a private university in Hong Kong. This was part of a collaborative halal supply chain project in 2015 to explore students' perceptions towards halal supply chain in a non-Muslim country. Findings using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) descriptive analysis showed that halal awareness and perceptions of halal supply chain was very low with mean scores (1.77-2.44). However, respondents were aware halal means no pigs/pork and safe (mean score >2.72) based on 3-point Likert scale. These findings correlated with the qualitative findings from in-depth interviews with purposively-selected officials from the Islamic Community Center in Hong Kong. Further analysis indicated that the Hong Kong undergraduates are somewhat not so receptive towards the needs and knowledge on halal trainings and halal standards. In conclusion, knowledge and awareness of the halal supply chain are relatively very new in Hong Kong. Thus, this preliminary research project recommends further collaborative efforts are needed to promote halal awareness trainings and halal supply chain concepts and principles to Hong Kong through collaborative efforts with the universities, the Islamic Community Center and Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics, Hong Kong. Last but not the least, there is a huge potential to expand the Malaysia halal knowledge and market in Hong Kong.

**KEYWORDS:** Halal, Halal Awareness, Halal Logistics, Halal Supply Chain, Halal Training, Halal Promotion.

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### INTRODUCTION

Halal foods and halal services basically must comply with the Islamic religious faith and observance of Shariah law. Halal covers not only for food and drinks, but also all matters of daily life [22]. This holds true and relevant as halal simply means "things or actions permitted or lawful" indoctrinated in the Shariah laws. Thus, halal services particularly halal logistics and halal supply chain must be delivered in accordance with Islamic Shariah law. The Islamic law or commonly known as the Shariah (Al-Shariah) prescribes a moral system of living that governs every aspect of a Muslim life. But, many do not realize that the Shariah law does not limit to only the Muslims, Muslim countries or the Islamic nations. It is meant for the universal mankind regardless of nations, race, ethnics and religious faith [27].

Apart from halal, the Shariah law also places strong emphasis on cleanliness (toyyiban) [22]. With reference to the Malaysian Standards MS2400 (2010) [19], toyyib is defined as the basic standards for hygiene, safety, sanitation, nutrition, risk exposure, environmental, social and other related aspects in managing daily livelihood. Hence, toyyib refers to wholesomeness. Integrating halalan-toyyiban connotes the assurance and guarantee of halal-toyyib being integrated into holistic and balanced requirements that fulfil the condition, situation or application needs as stated in the MS2400 Halalan Toyyiban Assurance Management System (2010). The MS2400 is the Malaysia Standards that stipulate operating standards and its requirements for the assurance of halal supply chain. These standards are applicable to manufacturers, transporters, logistics service providers, warehouse operators and lastly the retail operators via its part 1, part 2 and part 3 standards respectively.

Generally speaking, when halal is being mentioned in public and layman, it is only halal foods that register in the minds and the eyes of people. It must be noted that halal governs not only for food production or manufacturing; but halal encompasses halal management covers right from the beginning: raw materials suppliers, manufacturers, the transporters, the containers, the warehouses and distribution centers, business owners, operators and their operations, the wholesalers and retailers and their businesses, right till the end in hypermarkets, supermarkets and small retail outlets services. All these must be halal compliance, and this is a halal supply chain management [8, 23].

#### Halal Global Business

Malaysia is regarded as one of the leaders in the global halal marketplace. The global market value of the trade in halal foods and non-food products is estimated at US2.77 trillion annually [28]. Halal is now the new source of economic growth for Malaysia with the emergence of potential growth of the halal market from China,

Japan, Thailand, India, Australia and Middle East countries [11]. For Japan, halal food products are gaining popularity due to the high quality standards set upon on these products. “Malaysia processed food exports to Japan amounted to RM654.7 million in the first 10 months of the year 2014, which is a 25% increase more than a year ago” [24]. The Tokyo Olympics in 2020 will bring the world together for all potential buyers who are keen on halal products and services. Halal is now recognized by both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers as a symbol of quality, safety and wholesomeness which quoted from [11]. It has also been reported that Malaysia’s halal certification is well-accepted internationally for the past fifteen-twenty years ago since 1995. In fact, Malaysia is also the global pioneer in halal certification system for halal foods and halal food outlets through JAKIM Malaysia. JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) is the government authority that oversees halal policies, halal auditing and halal certification processes. JAKIM is also the certification body for Malaysian and other countries seeking for Malaysian halal standards certification and Malaysian halal logo for halal food industry that includes abattoirs, food manufacturing, foods and beverage outlets, pharmaceutical, healthcare and all imported food products from other countries [18, 21].

### Malaysian Halal Standards

The Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM) together with JAKIM, Halal Development Corporation (HDC) Malaysia and pioneering multi-national halal food manufacturing industry players collaboratively establish 13 Malaysian halal standards in order to spearhead the growth of halal business in Malaysia. In fact, these agencies even shared their expertise to other countries that sought guidance in setting up halal certification process and controls in these respective countries. Non-Muslim countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Japan and now China and Korea are now competitively placing greater focus and strategies to develop their own local producers to increase market and export of their halal products and services overseas as these countries now see the vast global opportunities in halal products at the global level [14,28]. It was reported that these countries are even modelling against our Malaysian halal standards, particularly the MS1500: 2009 standard for halal food production, preparation, handling and storage. In addition, Malaysia has created another impact in introducing the MS2400: 2010 standards for Halal Assurance Pipeline Standards for halal supply chain assurance or halal assurance pipeline. Thirteen Malaysian halal standards that have been established for the Malaysia halal industry is shown on in Table 1 [9].

Table 1: Malaysian Halal standards [9]

MS Standards	Description
MS1500:2009	Halal Food-Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage-General Guidelines (Second Revision)
MS1900: 2014	Shariah-Based Quality Management Systems
MS2300: 2009	Value-Based Management System-Requirements from an Islamic Perspectives
MS2393: 2013	Islamic and Halal Principles-Definitions and Interpretations on Terminology
MS2424: 2012	Halal Pharmaceuticals-General Guidelines
MS2594: 2015	Halal Chemicals for Use in Portable Water Treatment-General Guidelines
MS2610: 2015	Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services-Requirements
MS 2200:2008	Islamic Consumer Goods-Part 1: Cosmetic and Personal Care-General Guidelines
MS2200: 2013	Islamic Consumer Goods-Part 2: Usage of Animal Bone, Skin and Hair-General Guidelines
MS 2424: 2012	Halal Pharmaceuticals-General Guidelines
MS 2400-1: 2010 Part 1	Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline: Management System Requirement for Transportation of Goods and/or Cargo Chain Services
MS 2400-2: 2010 Part 2	For Warehousing and Related Activities
MS 2400-3: 2010 Part 3	For Retailing

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Halal Awareness

Halal food industry is gaining attention across the world as nations and manufacturers realized its great potential and halal assurance on food hygiene, cleanliness, safety and well-being of human beings with regards to consumptions, usage and purchase. Manufacturers are obliged to act responsibly to maintain the halal status of the products in compliance with halal requirements [13]. In majority Muslim countries, halal awareness among the Muslim consumers is on the rise as they are now more particular on the halalness of the food products and food outlets [30]. Even the non-Muslim consumers are slowly getting to know and understand on what is meant by halal foods. There is a strong demand for halal products in non-Muslim countries for both groups of people (Muslim and non-Muslim). The halal products are growing in popularity among the non-Muslim consumers due to human animal treatment concerns and the perceptions that halal products are healthier and safer [3, 10].

### Halal Integrity

The scope of halal products or services does not mean halal is deemed only at the selling points, or at the point of consumption and purchase by end users. Instead, halal products or services involves every aspect,

process step and activities along the supply chain which is from the origin (source) or farm and all the way to the consumers [1, 29]. In halal supply chain processes from the source, it involves transporters, manufacturers, distributors, warehouse operators, workers where handling, carrying, placing, moving, processing and stacking take place together with the use of equipment, vehicles, forklifts, stackers, facilities in handling all goods and cargo regardless of halal and non-halal products. Hence, there exist some forms of break chains along these processes from one point to another; and there may exist vulnerabilities and potentials of cross contamination among the halal and non-halal products [2, 4].

Thus, the concern for assurance of halal integrity is important for a halal supply chain. In order to protect the halal integrity of halal foods, all parties that are involved in the halal supply chain must have good understanding and adequate awareness on halal [25, 26, 30]. Likewise, in [17] posited that halal supply chain services offered by logistics service providers are guaranteed only when the products are within their custody. However, once the products are transferred to the custody of another party or the next custodian, there is a tendency of breakage in a halal supply chain when the other party does not practice or adopt a halal supply chain.

**Halal Promotion**

Malaysia has been spearheading the halal business through aggressive promotions at both national and international levels. There are significant and breakthrough halal programs events propagated by several government and private agencies such as the annual World (Malaysia) Halal Conference, Halal Fest (Halfest) carnivals, establishment of halal hubs (parks), halal tourism promotions, halal development and trainings by HDC (Halal Development Corporation), halal trade by MITI (Ministry of International Trade Malaysia) and MATRADE (Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation), SME Corp for halal small-medium enterprises; Department of Standards Malaysia for the development of halal standards and guidelines, last but not the least the authority for halal management and certification that is JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) under the Prime Minister Office [11,16, 20].

Malaysia has also collaborated internationally with SMIC (Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries) for global halal standards. In tandem with halal growth, the Malaysian institutions of higher learning are also promoting halal research and innovations towards advancing new halal knowledge and improvising halal practices based on halal research being carried out. One of these is this Malaysia research center of excellence who was given a research grant on the halal supply chain to carry out more intensive research and collaboration, so as to assist the nation towards halal capacity building and halal human capital development [5].

**METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Hong Kong in November 2015 as part of a halal supply chain research collaboration effort of a research center in Malaysia. A four days visit to two selected private universities and the Islamic Community Office was facilitated by the Chartered Institute of Transport Hong Kong (CILTHK) Office. The research commenced on the first day where interviews (qualitative research) were carried out by staff working at the Office of Board of Trustees (BOT), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong. At second day, a questionnaire survey was executed on undergraduates undertaking a supply chain degree program in one private university visited by the Malaysian researchers [6, 7].

The objectives of this study were to find out 1) the level of halal awareness; and 2) halal supply chain awareness in Hong Kong. Hence, the research questions were: 1) What is the halal awareness level?; 2) What is the level of halal supply chain in Hong Kong? Hence, this paper presents the initial findings and analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Self-constructed questionnaire was developed using a simple 3-point point scale: (1) No, (2) Not Sure AND (3) Yes. The overview of the questionnaire is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Overview of questionnaire

Section	Descriptor	N Items	Reliability (Alpha Cronbach)
Section A	A1. Halal Awareness	5	0.7790
	A2. Perceptions on Halal Foods/Services	21	0.9570
	A3. Halal Trainings	3	-
Section B	Demographics	6	-
Section C	Halal Supply Chain	11	(open-ended)

**FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

**Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is a non-Muslim country with a population of 7.2 million [4,12]. The major official languages are Chinese Cantonese and English. Their major religions are Buddhism and Taoism. Hong Kong has 4 main districts namely Hong Kong Island, New Territories, Kowloon and Lantau Island. Its main currency is Hong

Kong Dollar. The Muslim community population in Hong Kong is estimated at 300,000 with a breakdown of 30,000 Chinese, 30,000 Pakistanis and 150,000 Indonesians. There are also Muslims from India, Malaysia and Middle East and African countries. The Islamic matters and Muslim community welfare are overseen by the Board of Trustees (BOT), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong recognized by the government of Hong Kong [15].

**Respondents**

The researchers visited this selected private university together with the halal supply chain research collaborator who is the Head of Supply Chain and Sustainability Program. A total of 30 survey forms were distributed to the undergraduates undertaking supply chain degree program with the assistance of the collaborator. 18 forms (60%) were returned and analyzed. There was equal representation of 50% male (9) and female respondents (9). All were in the age range of 21-25 years old.

**Halal Awareness**

Section A1 contained 5 items, mainly focusing on halal awareness on halal logos and halal foods. Table 3 showed that the awareness on halal is very low with a consistent “No” with 55%-72%.

Table 3: Halal awareness

A1. Halal Awareness (5 items)	No		Not Sure		Yes	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
i. Have you heard of (or know) about HALAL?	3	16.7	6	33.3	9	50.0
ii. Have you seen any HALAL logos or captions anywhere in Hong Kong?	13	72.2	0	0.0	5	27.8
iii. Have you read anything on HALAL foods/services?	10	55.6	1	5.6	7	38.9
iv. Are you aware of any HALAL restaurants in Hong Kong?	10	55.6	4	22.2	4	22.2
v. Have you been or eat any HALAL restaurants in Hong Kong?	11	61.1	2	11.1	5	27.8

Figure 1 shows the mean scores of 1.556-2.333 based on 3-point Likert scale (1-No; 2-Not Sure; 3-Yes) respectively from Table 3. The low mean scores indicated and confirmed that a majority of the respondents did not know about halal “1-No” and “2-Not Sure”.

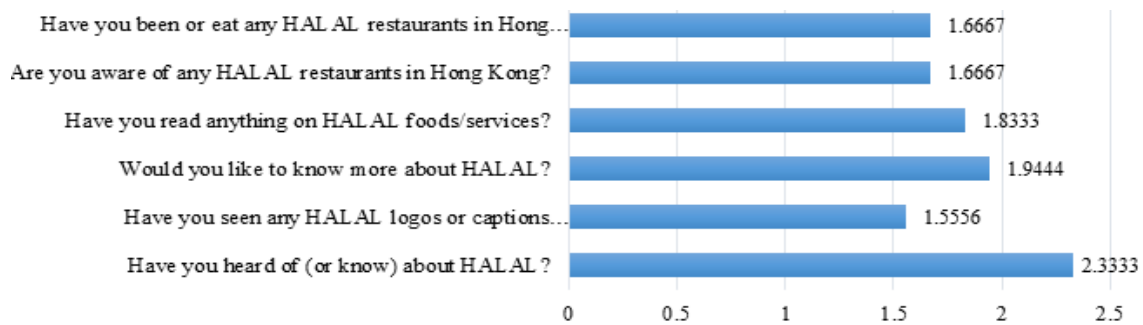


Figure 1: Mean scores on Halal awareness

For subsection A2: Perceptions on halal foods/services, analysis shown that the respondents were somewhat able to associate halal with clean, hygiene, safe, health, comply with food regulations, not harmful for consumption, for all people and must follow Islamic teachings and requirements (10 items highlighted from the 21 items listed in this section). These(10 items) amounted to 47.6% of halal characteristics that these respondents perceived. These (10 items) presented 61%-77% favorable (yes) perceptions.

Eighty-three percent of respondents concurred and perceived halal as safe and comply to food regulations.77% (14 respondents out of 18) knew that halal meant no pigs/no pork for item xx. Table 4 showed the respondents’ perceptions of halal foods/services.

Table 4: Perceptions on Halal foods/services

A2. Perception on Halal Foods/Services (21 items)	No		Not Sure		Yes	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
i. Clean.	2	11.1	3	16.7	13	72.2
ii. Hygienic.	2	11.1	5	27.8	11	61.1
iii. Safe.	1	5.6	2	11.1	15	83.3
iv. Healthy.	2	11.1	4	22.2	12	66.7
v. Comply to Food Regulations.	1	5.6	2	11.1	15	83.3
vi. Comply to Government Laws.	1	5.6	7	38.9	10	55.6

vii. No contamination.	2	11.1	6	33.3	10	55.6
viii. Not harmful for consumption.	1	5.6	4	22.2	13	72.2
ix. Not intoxicated when consumption.	2	11.1	6	33.3	10	55.6
x. Only for the Muslim people.	7	38.9	2	11.1	9	50.0
xi. For all people.	3	16.7	3	16.7	12	66.7
xii. Must follow the Islamic teachings.	2	11.1	5	27.8	11	61.1
xiii. More expensive.	5	27.8	6	33.3	7	38.9
xiv. International trade requirements.	2	11.1	7	38.9	9	50.0
xv. Compliance to religion.	2	11.1	6	33.3	10	55.6
xvi. Follow Islamic requirements.	1	5.6	5	27.8	12	66.7
xvii. Follow my Muslims friends.	8	44.4	6	33.3	4	22.2
xviii. Is a trend now.	5	27.8	8	44.4	5	27.8
xix. Is unique in its own ways.	3	16.7	6	33.3	9	50.0
xx. No pigs/porks.	1	5.6	3	16.7	14	77.8
xxi. No alcohols.	4	22.2	6	33.3	8	44.4

Figure 2 showed the distribution of mean scores: the lowest 1.777 (follow my Muslim friends) indicating respondents did not agree that halal is about following the Muslims (religiosity) and highest mean scores (no pigs/porks-2.722; comply to food regulations-2.777; safe-2.777 and clean-2.611) respectively. This latter analysis concurred with Table 4 results.

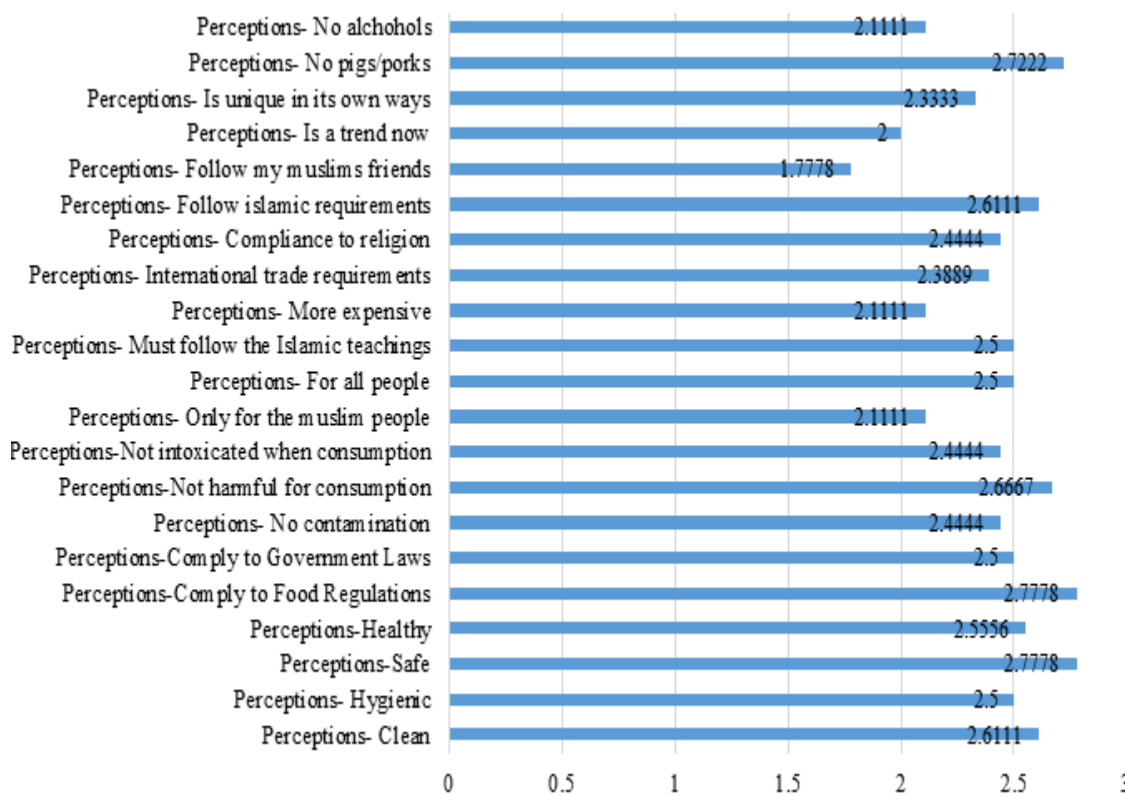


Figure 2: Mean scores on perceptions of Halal foods/services

Next subsection A3 (3 items) aimed to seek the respondents' needs for halal knowledge through halal trainings namely i) halal awareness trainings; ii) halal food management trainings; and iii) halal standards. Findings showed that the respondents' needs to pursue for halal knowledge were somewhat positive with 44.4%-55.6% of the respondents were eager to know more on halal through trainings. Refer to results of Table 5 for Halal trainings, while Figure 3 depicted the distribution of number of respondents' needs for halal trainings.

Table 5: Halal trainings

A3. Halal Trainings (would like to learn Halal?)	No		Not Sure		Yes	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
i. Halal Awareness Trainings	6	33.3	4	22.2	8	44.4
ii. Halal Food Management	4	22.2	4	22.2	10	55.6
iii. Halal Standards	5	27.8	4	22.2	9	50



Figure 3: Breakdown of respondents needs for halal trainings

### DISCUSSION

The respondents in this initial survey were young adults undertaking a degree in supply chain management in only one selected private university. These initial findings may not reflect the whole student population in Hong Kong as this was the first pilot study on halal ever being carried out in Hong Kong.

The halal awareness among the degree students was low with an average of 30%-35% had seen, heard, aware and knew about halal and halal logo in Hong Kong and halal restaurants. This percentage seemed quite reasonable as Hong Kong is a non-Muslim country. These initial findings inferred that there was some awareness (even though minimal) on halal in Hong Kong, as there are only 300,000 Muslim population residing in Hong Kong. It is important to note that during the conduct of the research, the researchers met with several Muslim Malaysian students and visitors in Hong Kong. Additionally, the researchers also observed that there were Muslim foreign workers working in Hong Kong and also non-Muslims while dining in the Islamic Kitchen at Wan Chai Road near the As Siddiq Mosque.

As for the respondents' perceptions of halal foods/services based on the 21 items, analysis showed an overall total average of 26.5% were not sure at all about what are halal foods/services and its characteristics. Findings showed 61-77% of the respondents somewhat knew what are halal foods perhaps based on common and logical reasoning that foods must be clean, safe, hygiene and to comply with food and authority regulations for human consumption. These perceptions findings correlated with the interview data analysis carried out when the researchers conducted in-depth interview with the Muslim non-Chinese staff working at the Office of Board of Trustees (BOT), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong. The qualitative data posited that the halal awareness among the public and students were low; and halal matter is not much being discussed in Hong Kong.

Despite the level of awareness in halal is low (30%) in Hong Kong, the percentage of respondents requesting for more halal information and halal trainings are quite positive with 44%-55% responded agreeably to halal trainings. Should halal information or halal trainings are extended to them, the percentage of halal awareness would likely to be increased in the near future.

Analysis on section C on halal supply chain could not be presented and analyzed as there were insufficient responses and lack of objective evidences to substantiate the level of awareness on halal supply chain among the respondents. This may be because of three main problems related to this section of the study: firstly 1) the respondents being undergraduates did not know about the present state of halal industry in Hong Kong; furthermore these were open-ended questions which were rather difficult to provide answers; 2) the respondents were not able to describe the halal market in Hong Kong; and 3) the respondents were not able to describe their government (Hong Kong) initiatives on global halal market. Questions 2 and 3 were found to be of high level for the respondents to respond, and thus this section failed to achieve the second research objectives.

It is noted too that the Islamic matters are overseen by the Board of Trustees (BOT), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong recognized by the government of Hong Kong SAR. The Office of The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong is located at 40 Oi Kwan Road, Wan Chai and the Islamic Kitchen is also located within this premise. The main functions of the BOT are 1) managing the mosques and muslim cemeteries in Hong Kong; 2) managing the madrassas and maktabas; 3) employing imams, quran teachers and office staff; 4) making arrangements for funerals and burials of deceased Muslims; 5) undertaking Dawah work for the muslims and non-muslims and carryout programs in the general interests of the Hong Kong muslims and propagation of Islam and 6) carrying out halal inspections and issue halal certificates in Hong Kong and some parts of China [15]. Figure 4 is the halal logo for Hong Kong under the control and governance by BOT Hong Kong.



Figure 4: Halal logo Hong Kong

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes the first research objective had been fulfilled with the findings and analysis carried out for this initial halal supply chain project via a case study done on one private university with degree students undertaking supply chain program. However, the second research objective was not achieved as the responses were inadequate due to lack of basic knowledge on halal supply chain among young respondents.

It is interesting to note that even though Hong Kong is a non-Muslim country, there is a minority of Muslims residing in Hong Kong. These are the people who patronized halal food outlets and restaurants, where some of them are halal food operators who are aware about the halal supply chain. Even though there are 52 halal restaurants in Hong Kong enlisted in the internet and recognized halal by the Office of Board of Trustees (BOT), Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, the researchers were not able to visit all these restaurants for more data collection due to the time constraints during the visit. This research will be more worthy to gather more informative insight on the halal perspectives from halal food operators in Hong Kong. In conclusion, knowledge and awareness of the halal supply chain are relatively very new in Hong Kong. Thus, this preliminary research project recommends further collaborative efforts are needed to promote halal awareness trainings and halal supply chain concepts and principles to Hong Kong through collaborative efforts with the universities, the Islamic Community Centre and Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics, Hong Kong. Last but not the least, there is a huge potential to expand the Malaysia halal knowledge and market in Hong Kong. Lastly, this paper is one of the deliverables for this halal supply chain project collaboration between this research center in Malaysia and Hong Kong.

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