

HALALAN TOIYYIBAN FOOD HANDLING PRACTICES: A REVIEW ON STREET FOOD VENDORS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *The street food sector has become an important component of food distribution system in many cities in Malaysia particularly for midday meals. However, certain street-vended food can pose significant risk to consumers due to microbiological contamination. The concern of hygiene and halal become critical for Muslim consumers and also non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia. Thus, this paper aims to determine the matters of halalan toyyiban among street food vendors in a way to guarantee the food being serve to patron is safe and fit for consumption. Halal status is a certification awarded based on the application of food service operators to be certified. Currently, there is no certification made for the off-premise outlet such as street food vendors. Nevertheless, without the halal certification, it does not mean that they are the excluded group to practice halal and toyyib especially among Muslim vendors. Halal status is not only about the halal ingredients or halal sources but as well as the process of the whole food preparation should be following the halalan toyyiban practice. It is in line with the holistic concept of halalan toyyiban 'from farming to fork'. This paper is using review analysis based on previous articles that has been done by other researchers. Literature review was conducted to gather all information of street food vendors. Based on the information gather, the concept of halalan toyyiban will recommend hoping to serve better food for Muslim community who consume the food and nurture the awareness of Muslim vendors to practice halalan toyyiban in their business. Thus, this paper will contribute to the body of knowledge in the technical aspects of halalan toyyiban in food handling practices among street food vendors.*

Keywords: Street Food, Halalan Toyyiban, Vendors

Introduction

Changes in lifestyle and the rising cost of living requires every citizen to make a living out of the house. Changing in people lifestyle and the rapid growth of nation's economic causing the increasing number of people to eat out. Tiring of work led to a lack of time to cook at home. Street foods are the most reachable source of food consumption. It became common for numerous reason. It is common due to its accessibility such as placing around factory, offices, schools and universities, transit points and market places. Besides that, it also become popular for tourist as it attracts them with selling the local delicacies. Street food is defined as ready to eat (RTE) food and beverage prepared and sold by vendors and handlers especially in streets and similar public places for consumption at a later stage without further processing or preparation (F.G.Winarno and A.Allain, (2013). With lower start-up and infrastructure costs, street stalls present opportunities for entrepreneurs looking to start a business and introduce their locals alike. Typical food offers include baked goods, ice cream, snack foods and local specialities (Agriculture and Agrifood Canada, 2014). Street foods are largely treasured for their flavours, convenience, low cost and their cultural and social heritage links even though it has been the risky food for consumption. (Oludare Olufemi, 2014; J. Khongtong et al., 2014; Chioma et al. (2016).

Literature Review

Challenges among street food vendors

Many people are concerns of the risk of food contamination however most of them making the wrong decision in choosing a proper food handling place. In Malaysia, many cases of food poisoning had been reported were from Ramadan bazaar during fasting month which also can consider as street food vending. This was because the food had been prepared early in the morning were not keep at the correct temperature had already been contaminated by bacteria before the food served and consume by the customers (MOH, 2015). There are several challenges face by street food vendors pertaining to accomplish the proper hygiene practices.

The street food sector has become an important component of food distribution system in many cities in both developing and industrialized countries, particularly for midday meals. However, certain street-vended food can pose significant risk to consumers due to microbiological contamination. The risk is dependent primarily on the type of food, the method of preparation and the manner in which it is held before consumption (WHO, 2010). Food safety and hygiene knowledge of street food vendor is limited along with poor hygiene practices, thus reflecting on the food vended and causing foodborne illness problem and possibly affecting tourism image. Since street food is an open space it is hard to prevent of insects and stray animals (Y.M.Sun et al., 2012; O.O.Aluko et al.,2014). Based on the MOH report in 2015, the numbers of foodborne illness in Malaysia is normally occurred from the hawkers stall. Safe hygiene practices should become integral to the vendor as the product will be consumed by people of all ages and many may be vulnerable to poor quality food. In 2012, there were over 11,000 street stalls/kiosks with total transactions exceeding 490 million in Malaysia. Between 2008 and 2012, outlets and transactions grew at annual rates of 6.2% and 5.9%, respectively. The average street stall/kiosk earned US\$179,939 in 2012, or just US\$4.10 per transaction, the lowest among all subsectors (Agriculture and Agrifood Canada, 2014). Thus it reflects that street food and kiosks has many patrons who are risky in food consumption.

The practice of inappropriate hygiene practices is also as a result of total ignorance of many vendors and the nature of the food that they prepare. Most street food vendors and handlers in Africa and other developing countries habitually were ignorant of basic food safety issues, were often unlicensed and were untrained in food hygiene while working under simple unsanitary conditions selling unrestricted food items and operating without any monitoring of the food they sold (Oludare et al., 2014; J.Khongtong et al., 2014; Samapundo et al., 2015). Safe food is the food that does not cause harm to the consumers when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use. In order to assure that the food is safe, the food producers should take necessary steps to comply with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practice (GHP). Good Manufacturing Practice is where the producers apply the combination of manufacturing and quality control procedures to ensure the product are consistently manufactured to their specifications. The Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene and the Malaysian Standard MS 1514 on General Principles of Food Hygiene lay down a firm foundation in hygienic practices in ensuring food hygiene. (MOH, 2015).

Food hygiene contains steps and procedures that control the operational conditions within a food establishment, allowing for favourable environmental conditions for production of food that are safe and suitable for human consumption. Food hygiene is the basis for the production and preparation of safe food. Unsafe food may cause food poisoning and food borne illnesses. Thus, food safety has impact on individual health (Chiratus et al., 2015; R.Kok and Balkaran, 2014). In Malaysia, there is also lack of enforcement by Ministry of Health and local public authority where the requirement for a food premises is very loose which they only need to attend one day training in food handling, have a typhoid injection and had health examination. Since Malaysia is flooded with the immigrants it is increasing many problem where each of them have their own culture which some of them does not concern about hygiene and cleanliness.

Generally street food vendors display the knowledge of food safety and hygiene. This knowledge of food safety can however be improved if a sufficient number of vendors receive training in basic hygiene practices plus the halalan toyyiban element to strengthen the training syllabus. Vendors must be conscious of hygiene and sanitation characteristics of street food vending and consumption. Committees should be established in order to educate vendors and to help street vendors integrate into the urban food supply chain in the safest and most efficient way possible in line with halalan toyyiban and based on Islamic pillars. Many sources have stressed the importance of a need for running water and toilets in areas where street vendors operate. However, there does not appear to be national data on the food safety aspects of such operations. As findings from the research done by Oludare et al., (2014), he suggested in his study, the aspect of national data of hygiene and sanitation aspects of street food operations should be given consideration in municipality planning since street food makes up a large sector of the informal economy of South Africa.

Each individual especially those who are in food service industry are responsible to prepare safe and nutritious food. There is also a need to educate people about the reality and the importance of safe food handling as it becomes a global issue for individual and enforcement. Thus, many countries aim to improvise level of food safety due to the increasing number of food borne illness. Many studies done have shown that street food vendors have sufficient information regarding hygiene and food safety principles and they are aware of the need to ensure safe practices in preparing foods for public consumption (Y.M.Sun et. al, 2014; J.Khongtong et al., 2015). The practices examined in these studies also indicate that street food vendors can provide food of good quality if emphasis is placed on hygienic practices and regulatory compliance; therefore training can be regarded as crucial in ensuring food safety.

These regulations should create a favourable base from which to guide street food vending along a more beneficial and productive path. This process should lead to adoption of measures designed to improve the hygienic conditions under which street food is sold, so as to ensure an adequate level of safety for the consumer. The new norms and regulations should emphasize the need for changes in consumer and street vendor attitudes based on equally necessary changes in their understanding of personal hygiene and food safety must be remembered that the basis for altering the present situation in the desired manner will be provided by training, education, and communication (R.Kok et al., 2014).

Standards and practice of safe street foods in various country

In Malaysia, the Food Hygiene Regulations of 2009 serve as the overall reference for street food vending. As per Section 4 of the Food Act 1983, “premises” include any street, open space or place of public resort or bicycle or any vehicle used for or in connection with the preparation, preservation, packaging, storage, conveyance, distribution or sale of any food. All food premises manufacturing, preparing, processing, storing or serving for sale/mass catering and all vehicles from which ready-to-eat foods are sold must be registered. Implementation is carried out with respect to grading premises with Grade A (>90) and B (80–89) with the local authority and the MOH in some states (MOH, 2015). Recently, MOH also had introduce new awarded to those premise with the grade A which is *Bersih, Selamat and Sihat* (BESS- Clean, Safe and Healthy).

Based on the library search, Thailand and Singapore has a proper legislation for street food vendor. In Singapore, The National Environment Agency has adopted a multi-pronged approach to uphold public hygiene in cooked food stalls which features legislation, public education, grading of food outlets and a points demerit system. Food stall holders in the hawker centres are required to ensure that food prepared in their stalls are safe for public consumption. The rules they must comply with are set out in the Environmental Public Health Act, the Environmental Public Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations, and the Sale of Food Act. To ensure food hygiene, the National Environment Agency conducts surprise spot checks on a regular basis. (Singapore Hawkers Policy, 2014).

For the Thailand legislation, The Public Health Act 1992 regulates street vending in Bangkok. Under the Act, no person is allowed to carry out street vending activities along public roads and footpaths unless authorized by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration is the local government of Bangkok established under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act 1985 to be responsible for the management of the city. It is responsible for, among other things, setting out rules governing street vending in Bangkok and issuing personal hygiene guidelines for the compliance of street food vendors. (Thailand Hawkers Policy, 2014)

There is a platform for many countries to discuss on the matters of street food vending hygiene and practice. Nowadays, street food is no longer for the low income community. For certain countries, street food is been commercialized and improvised as a tourism destination. There is a Regional consultation on safe street foods held in Bangkok in 2014, and few things have been encounter for various country regarding the issues. Each countries may follow internationally recognized and accepted standards like the Codex Alimentarius (WHO, 2010), the implementation of a uniform Code of Practice, HACCP for street food, hygiene and sanitation, food safety management and assurance and total quality management could take place in stages.

Based on recommendations by WHO they are highly recommend that every street food should adapt the five keys to Safer Food to address the street food which is as below:

Key 1. Keep clean

Key 2. Raw and cooked food should be separated

Key 3. Destroy hazards when possible

Key 4. Keep microorganisms in food from growing

Key 5. Use safe water and raw material

If all the recommendation been follow, the street food vendor will achieve the ultimate hygiene and clean food to serve to the patron.

Halal in foodservice industry

Hygiene has been given much emphasis in the concept of *halal* and it includes various aspects of personal body cleanliness, clothing, equipment and the working premises for processing or manufacturing of foods, drinks and products. The objective of *halal* is to ascertain that the food (whatever kinds) produced is safe, hygienic and not hazardous to human health. Thus, in the context of *halal*, hygienic food, drinks and products can be defined as free from *najis* (dirt/impurity) or contamination and harmful germs. So, it is obvious that *halal* compliance is particularly important in food matters especially in the practice of keeping ourselves and the things around us clean in order to prevent diseases (Norazlina A.A, et al., 2014). In order to ensure the safety of consumers, the producers should take necessary steps to comply with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practice (GHP).

In Malaysia, the provisions of the legislation, policies and standards outlined is based on the principles of *halal* and *halal* concept in the al - Quran and as- Sunnah and according to Muslim who acclaimed. Among the legislation relating to the *halal* aspect in this is the Trade Descriptions Act 2011, Food Act 1983 and MS2400-2-2010. The Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene and the Malaysian Standard MS1514 on General Principles of Food Hygiene have laid down a solid procedure in hygienic practices to ensure food hygiene and safety of products (WHO, 2010). *Halal* is not only based on the label or logo. Its cover everything from beginning until to the end users. For Muslims – Securing *Halal* and Quality food at all times is crucial not only as a religious obligation but also for an active and healthy life. Islam strongly emphasis on cleanliness and purity, spiritually, morally and physically, including food and drink (Yaakob C.M, 2009).

The consumption of *halal* food is becoming significant as it associates with quality, cleanliness and safety as underlines by the *syariah* principles. *Syariah* is the divine law of Islam, derived from the Qur'an and other holy text, which serves as the moral guide to Muslims (Al-Qardawi, 2007). The *syariah* sets guidelines for what is right and wrong in everyday life, including standards for food, family life, and business transaction. As a result, the *halal* food trade is getting more globalized and its supply chain is turning more complex. If previously, consumers have put much attention to the production of *halal* foods, but now consumers realize that *halal* compliance applies to the entire supply chain ranging from sourcing of raw materials to the manufacturing, transporting, storing and handling. (Suhaiza et al., 2015). Besides the problem of *halal* haram, the second aspect that must necessarily be given attention to is the word *tayyib* (Al-Qardawi, 2007). In general, the concept derived from this word is rather abstract and seemed to suggest to a separate standard .First: The use of the word *tayyib* in the holy Qur'an is always connected with the acceptance of a particular deed. It is linked closely with purity of

one's heart in doing something. Second: Tayyib as a quality standard for goods or products. Good and pure food are divided into two categories:

- a. Good and pure in quality.
- b. Good and pure because it is halal.

Food that is of good quality is well-known. Besides having good taste, it also has necessary vitamins and nutrients. As for halal food, it is a term defined by religion. At times, a particular food type is not of quality but halal status. So men are asked to give priority to food of good quality, both in terms of decency or healthy when choosing food and lawful in terms of religious requirement as well. (Wawarah et al., 2015). The major challenge faced by the Halal industry is the shortage of knowledgeable work force that understands syariah requirements and implementing this theoretical knowledge into actual industrial practice (A.Siti Mashitoh et al., 2013). There is a gap between knowledge and practice to be studied among food street vendors so that they can comply safe food handling procedures in line with halalan thoiyyiban concept.

Halalan thoiyyiban in food service industry

The Muslim population comprised 1.7 billion people in 2014 and is expected to rise to 2.2 billion by 2030. The total Muslim population continues to grow at 1.5% annually which is approximately twice the growth rate of non-Muslim population. Food and drink consumption of Muslim must be conform to Islamic dietary laws. (Thompson Reuters, 2014). Though the halal-haram rules are clearly stated in the Quran, and the hadith, when it comes to the concept of 'HalalanThoiyyiban' where halal is not only permissible but also wholesome, there is lack of awareness and understanding (Sazelin et al.,2014). Everybody are responsible to prepare clean and hygienic food especially to food service operators. However, halal is not only on certification but it's also include the concept of hygiene, cleanliness and safety for all which is halalan thoiyyiban. The consumption of halal food is becoming significant as it associates with quality, cleanliness and safety as underlines by the syariah principles. Seeking for halal products in Malaysia is not tough, however to ensure the food is really hygiene and clean is ambiguous. It is crucial for individual especially food street vendors to comprehend halalan thoiyyiban concept. Besides that, the needs to discover their consciousness about halalan thoiyyiban concept in preparing their food to sell is crucial. As referring to halal thoiyyiba concept in food service industry, the guaranteed of halalan tayyiba must be from the farm to the fork. This principle is one of the syariah rule intended to protect the graciousness of human life as to uphold best dietary habit granted by Allah SWT. (Al-Qardawi, 2007).

The halalan tayyiba concept must be understood by way of its' internal and external trait. It is essential that this concept be absolutely understood as it is a standard to measure quality of consumerism. Halalan Toiyyiban is also a holistic concept that cover wholesomeness of each segments especially in food preparation. It's been agreed by Mohammad Amir et al.,(2015) , the concept of Halal and Haram cover whole aspect of a Muslim daily life; where Halal means activities allowed or permissible by Islam while Haram are those prohibited. The concept of Halal which not only cover wholesomeness, as being preached by Islam, it also includes other important aspects such as hygiene, safety and sanitation. With the acceptance from worldwide consumers for Halal food products, the industries certainly have enough to further develop and thus can meet the consumer demand for the products. In Malaysia, it is estimated that two third of the population are Muslim, so the demand for Halal food product is very high and the market are monopolized by the food manufacturers (Ibrahim S., 2012)

The word *tayyib* is also mentioned in surah al-Baqarah (2) verse 168. In this verse, al-Sharbini (n.d) claimed that the word *tayyiban* has four main elements:

- i. The content of the food is from the source that is halal, not haram;
- ii. The food is clean and does not have any kind of impurities;
- iii. The food does not cause any pain or misery to the people who consume it; and
- iv. The food consists of elements that are nutritious and beneficial to the people who consume it (Sazelin, 2015).

The concept of *halalan tayyiban* considers all the physical and spiritual advantages of the food to the humankind. In this regard, *halalan tayyiban* can be interpreted as foods that are permitted to be consumed (halal) and can give benefits to the human body. In other words, food that is classified as *halalan tayyiban* is the food that fulfils the two criteria: firstly, the food is halal and taken from a halal source, and secondly, the food is a quality food as it provides benefit for those who consume it. Food that does not have these two criteria is not classified as *halalan tayyiban*, hence it should be avoided. The application of the concept of *halalan tayyiban* indicates that the determination of halal food encompasses both the tangible and intangible aspects of the food: The food identified as halal must be in good quality, hygiene and safe to be consumed. Further, this concept is applicable from the initial preparation of the food until its final production. This includes the process of preparation, manufacturing and distribution of the food until it is served to the customers. The concept of *tayyiban* does not mean that the food must be halal, good, delicious, tasty and pure only. It also means that the food must be beneficial to the body and does not cause any harm. Furthermore Yaakob C.M., (2009) stated that the good quality food bounded by Islam has a strong relationship in developing good quality human capital. Halal and *tayyib* foods should be viewed from the aspect of its complete supply chain starting from the farm to the dinner table which includes the food processing and preparation, ingredients and cleanliness. Throughout the process, it is important to ensure that the food does not contain any illegal substances or it is contaminated by harmful products which may be harmful to the human's life and health (Sazelin et al., 2015).

Halalan Toyyiban diet concept also highlights on halal aspects, hygiene of its sources as well as the right methods of consumption (Mohammad Amir Wan Harun, 2015). Nevertheless, when choosing to buy a food at a street vendor there is no demands on their *halalan thoiyyiban* whereas based on the Ministry of Health (MOH) (2015), 75% of foodborne illness is come from the food street vendor such as bazar Ramadhan. Since it become very popular among Malaysian. There is a need to have that kind of *halalan thoiyyiban* guidelines of food handling to ensure the food that been serve is really hygiene in line with *halalan thoiyyiban* concept. There is a case reported by enforcement body of Ministry of Health that the vendor does not indicate a proper hygienic handling of food during their preparation since they do not have enough facilities at their premise. Based on the inspection, they found that food street vendor is not bother about the cleanliness as long as they can sell their food. There are many compound being issued to them but seems like no awareness among them to improvise their way of handling food (MOH, 2015).

Recommendations and Discussions

It is recommend that Malaysia would have a standard for street food vendor especially Muslim vendors relating to *halalan thoiyyiban* practice. Recently, MOH has introduced BESS certification to those premise who practice good and proper hygiene. These principles are internationally recognized and the guidelines can be used together with other specific and appropriate codes of hygienic practice. This can be implement in an Islamic way as *halalan*

toiyiyiban since all the practice is good but need to further review so that it will be in line with halalan toiyiyiban concept.

Based from the literature, there is no emphasize on halalan toiyiyiban on the food handling courses given to the food handlers. It can be acclaim to JAKIM, public authority or religious body to conduct training on hygiene based on halalan toiyiyiban practice. Specific legislation also need to implement to ensure safe food serve by the Muslim street food vendors. The needs of specific local and national laws for street food will help to protect the consumer and continuos training of vendors could help address the lack of food quality and safety (Cortese R.D.M. et al., 2015). Thus, there is a need to educate each segment of food operators especially food street vendor to clearly understand about halalan thoiyyiban concept. Even though they are expose to the knowledge in proper food handling during their training but there is no such training and guidelines that implies on halalan thoiyyiban concept. The results of the execution of the practice may contribute wholesomeness of food handling among food street vendor. Ultimately, the changes of their practice may serve a clean and hygienic food based on halalan thoiyyiban that emphasize on four practices which is: a) Cleanliness and purity, b) Sources of livelihood, c) Harmless and d) does not contain shubhah (doubtiness). Besides of having a good and quality food, it is hoping that by consuming food that been handling based on halalan toiyiyiban concept will build a good people spiritually.

Conclusion

There is a saying in the Holy Quran that the Halal is clear and Haram is clear. Between the two are doubted matters concerning which people do not know whether there are Halal or non Halal (Al-Qardawi, 2007). While 'tayyib' more focused on the technical methods for handling, application, and management of related food and drinks that have been lawful. This is because, although in terms of substance of a halal food or drink but it can be illegal if the elements ' toiyiyib ' is ignored. (Syed, 2015). Accordingly, in order to achieve the perfection of worship to Allah SWT, halal dietary factors that fulfills the concept of ' toiyiyib ' including cleanliness and purity, source of income for individuals, the impact of food and drinks to the physical and mental well. The implications of halal and haram also will guaranteed the perfection of one's attitude or behavior (ibadah). That is the importance of consume the halal and toiyiyib food As Muslims, we must ensure the supply of food and beverages is lawful and in compliance with Islamic dietary guidelines (Surah al-Baqarah 2:168 cited from Al Qardawi, 2007). Thus, contribution of halalan toiyiyiban concept for street food vendor in food hygiene practice is hope to serve better food for community who consume the food and nurture the awareness of Muslim vendors to practice halalan toiyiyiban and ultimately building people's with good in spiritually.

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