Could Japan Excel In The Halal Food Industry?

Sharifah Alhabshi
University of Malaya, Malaysia

Abstract
The objective of this paper is to examine the possibility of Japan excelling in the halal industry, namely in the food business. The Japanese has been known to be ethnically homogeneous. Apart from being ethnically homogeneous Japanese are also said to be “shukyo” that the word “religion” (when interpreted from a Christian-Islamic-Judaic perspective) does not translate well with Japanese traditions. Thus, saw among the very small percentage of Muslims living in Japan, they are very detached from the Japanese native community. As anticipated the study finds majority of Japanese population do not see halal as relevance to the Japanese for many of them have not heard of the “word” halal thus has no clue of what halal is all about. Halal foods therefore are not Japanese main food choice. Nonetheless, should the people are expected to produce halal foods highest possibly they could because Japanese generally are obedience and ethical, thus when entrust with the production of halal food will abide by the rules and regulations stipulated. However, to be a halal leader matters on halal management must be acceptable universally. Japan is still working on this issue by way of seeking partnership with key Muslim state. The progress of Japan in halal market has been slow for vision of the state has not been clearly translated or understood by the people. The success of Japan halal cannot rely on the government alone the people has to have equal share in promotion halal for Japan.

Keywords: halal, Japan, Muslims, food, market,

INTRODUCTION
Why do countries venture into the halal food market? Is it because of economic, politic, foreign policy or an inclination to foster and promote the sanctity of the Aqidah or belief in the Islamic teaching? Generally, the latter point seldom pushes countries to join the halal market rather most countries join the halal bandwagon because of the lucrativeness of the halal market. In term of volume Muslim population is expected to grow from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion in 2030 that is, increasing by 600 million or an average of 2% per year. The global halal economy was valued at approximately USD3.2 trillion in 2012 and is forecasted to double to USD6.4 trillion by the year 2018. The industry’s footprint have now extended beyond the traditional Muslim states, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, now has a sizeable presence in non-Muslim states namely the United Kingdom, Brazil, the United States of America and Thailand. In 2013 saw one more of the world leading economy, Japan, voicing interest of joining the halal world market. The interest was announced by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe planning to double halal meat exports by 2020, a move to bring an extra $10.3 billion income to the country economy (World Bulletin / News Desk 04 November 2013). The government also promise to pay for half of the costs involved in upgrading processing facilities to make the meat industry compliant to halal standards. The move made by the Prime Minister are followed by many activities promoting halal in Japan, one in particular is through halal tourism. The objective of this paper is to examine the possibility of Japan excelling in the halal industry, namely in the food business.

Review of Literature
Maybe it is a surprise to some when mention that Japan has been in the halal business longer than some of the nations that are leading in the halal market. The Japanese Food and Beverages Companies that is registered in Malaysia for instance such as Aji No Moto, has been in existence in Malaysia market for almost 50 decades. Assumingly Aji-No-Moto is halal because it almost a must food additive in the home and restaurants for cooking of vegetables and soups. In term of fine dining, Japanese cuisines have also overtaken Malaysian local cuisines (cuisines of the Malays, Chinese and Indians) and these restaurants are patronised by all irrespective of religious orientation. Based on
rough estimation there are about 640 Japanese restaurants Malaysia-wide (excluding Shushi King that could be found in almost all medium and large scale shopping complexes in major cities).

However, why Japan has not expands its presence to the level of the champions? The face of Islam is not significant in Japan and Japan as a nation is not challenged by the issue of adherence to the Islamic faith. Among the very small percentage of Muslims living in Japan, they are very detached from the Japanese native community.

The Japanese has been known to be ethnically homogeneous, 98.5% Japanese and 1.5% other (Koreans 0.5%, Chinese 0.4%, other 0.6%, namely the Ainu). The Koreans in Japan (called Zainichi) are the largest ethnic minority. As of 2010, there are 565,989 Koreans in Japan who are not Japanese citizens. The Chinese are the second largest ethnic minority in Japan comprising 0.4% of Japan's population. (Maher 1995; Statistics at the Immigration Bureau of Japan 2010). The Filipinos is the third largest (202,592 as of 2007) population of Japan followed by the Brazilians (Statistics Bureau Department, 2008). Finally the Ainu an aboriginal ethnic Japanese tribe, they make up a portion of the Japanese demography.

Apart from being ethnically homogeneous Japanese are also said to be “shukyo” that the word “religion” (when interpreted from a Christian-Islamic-Judaic perspective) does not translate well with Japanese traditions. Most texts quoted Shinto, Buddhism and Christianity are the three main religions in Japan but there are some (see, for example, Swanson & Chilson 2006) who claimed that currently new religions play just as large of a role in the makeup of Japanese religiousness as the “big three”. Keisuke Matsui (2014) for example, refers to Japan as a ‘museum of religions’ because of its diversity. He sees most Japanese are into syncretism - is most often found in the blending of Shinto and Buddhist practices and beliefs or shinbutsu shugo. In fact according to Matsui, syncretism has been the norm in Japan for centuries. It is often seen as the result of the pragmatic approach to religion that many Japanese take: they go to whatever shrine, temple, or church that can perform the rites or services that they specifically need at the time. This emphasis on orthopraxy (a focus on “correct rituals”) over orthodoxy (“correct belief”) causes some non-Japanese to identify the Japanese as non-religious (Kisala 2006: 3).

Islam as a case in point was mentioned in Japan was early as 1868 during the era of Japanese Renaissance. The spread of Islam was however very slow up until the infiltration of the Tablighi movement entering Japan from Pakistan between 1956 and 1960 (Jamad al-Awa 1986). The Tabligh group converted several Japanese then became renowned Islamic teachers such as Umar Mita and Mustafa Komura whom converted Abdul Kareem Saito, Khalid Kiba, Umar Kawabata, ZaKariya Nakayama, Ali Mori, and Amin Yamamoto. Since then the process of Islamisation in Japan began but still very slow. The period of highest Islamic presence in Japan started in the 1980s when massive Muslim from Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Afghanistan, Africa, Turkey, and the Middle-East migrated to Japan for employment opportunity. Many of these new migrants settled and married Japanese women and thus further expanding the Muslims population, Table 1. During this period saw the institutionalisation of Islam in Japan. Mosques and prayer halls were built and halal food restaurants and halal retail stores were introduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Estimated 1990 Muslim Population</th>
<th>Percentage of 1990 Population that is Muslim</th>
<th>Estimated 2010 Muslim Population</th>
<th>Percentage of 2010 Population that is Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>118,000</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>185,000</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Character of the Japanese

Japanese also have a character trait that is different from the many. Japan has a small geographic area and has the lowest proportion of arable land to population and very little in the way of readily extractable natural resources. Its inhabitants crowd together in the mountain valleys and along the coasts in densely populated enclaves. Japan is also subject to regular frequent disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes, and the regular possibility of crop failure. Yet Japan economic success stories have impressed even the larger continents. After the catastrophe of World War II, the Japan has developed at an unprecedented pace. Peter Drucker (1981) asserted that:

The accomplishments of Japanese industry are the result not of some all-powerful structure but of Japan’s having defined more ably than any other industrial nation some of the essential rules for managing complex organizations in the modern world (p. 5).

Frank Weil (2010) has similar wonders about Japan. Not many nations could withstand crisis like property bubble burst that occurred in 1990. Weil says:

The Japanese seem to have discovered that their national wellbeing can be achieved even with declines in relative economic prosperity. Their population seems to be willing to make shared sacrifices to maintain the elements of daily life that they consider most important: social harmony and order, safety and environmental health” (p. 6).

A long history of challenging environment has had a profound effect on Japanese culture; people developed very strong co-operative ties as a collective survival mechanism. Society recognised early on that a lack of natural resources meant that the best way to succeed was through developing human capital. The result is a culture in which great value is placed on education and skills on the one hand, and on the group and social relations on the other. In Japan there is a shared belief that if the individual works tirelessly for the group, the group will reciprocate. A mentality “this is all for one, one for all” is rare in today's world but has serves Japan well.

Some called the well-knit relationship among the people and expanded to workplace between management and labour a Japanese secret. The Japanese do not believe in strikes, and are dedicated to the work assigned to them. Interestingly, Japanese companies do not look upon the employer-worker relationship as a labour contract but as a joint membership in the same family. The firm wins the loyalty of the employees by its attitude of paternalism - influenced more by humane, rather than economic, considerations in its dealings. Progress is the main aim and not profit (Bhargava 2001). Thus Japanese are always trying to achieve optimum productivity and progress. The Japanese are also seen by some as having practical outlook and believe in showing results in their work, even if this meant trial and error methods. Japan's impact on the modern world has been enormous. It occupies just only 0.002 sq. km of the world land area (148,940,000 sq. km), yet came to wield one sixth of the world's economic power. Just 150 years ago it was an obscure land of paddy fields and feudal despots. Within 50 years it became a major imperial power – it's so-called 'First Miracle'. After its defeat in the Second World War, when Japan came close to annihilation, within 25 years it recovered remarkably to become the world's third biggest economy – it's 'Second Miracle'. It is now not only an economic superpower, but also a technological and cultural superpower. According to Henshall (2012) Japan’s success lies in deeply ingrained historical values, such as a pragmatic determination to succeed.

The culture and the characteristics of Japanese broadly are very homogeneous. The faces of other culture such as the culture of Islam is very sketchy because then and now the Japanese are not challenged by the issue of adherence to any faith. Conversely the very small population residing in Japan are facing the issue the dilution of Islamic faith, especially among the second generation children who came from mixed marriages: non-Japanese Muslim with Japanese Women, non-Japanese Muslim women with Muslim Japanese men and the children of Japanese Muslims in general.
Is rather interesting therefore to examine how could the state promote halal which is the culture of Islam to a state that is oblivious to the religion of Islam?

Methodology
The paper follows the case study approach, used to unravel the complexities of a given situation. A case study research deals with a case or cases in its entirety, with chances of being able to discover how the many parts affect one another. It also allows detailed workings of relationships and social processes, rather than restricting attention to their outcome. The case study approach allows focuses not only on the outcomes and results but also on the opportunity to explain why certain outcomes are the way they are, contrary to just finding out what those outcomes are. Looking at the growth of halal market in Japan the strength of the case study approach would be that it could investigate the processes that explain such growth and how that growth interrelates with other factors.

The object under investigation is halal food outlets in the major cities of Tokyo in Japan. The study sees that the selection of Tokyo as point of focus, in light of the various constraints, is relatively reliable because representatives of the target respondents are easily available in the city. The study explores the people and food outlets, as well religious leader’s views of halal potential in Japan. The case study approach is deemed appropriate for the study as the situation is not one artificially generated specifically for the purposes of the research. It is not like an experiment where the research design is dedicated to impose controls on variables so that the impact of a specific ingredient can be measured.

The field study exercises were divided into three categories. The first category involved observatory study of food outlets, including restaurants, groceries and butchers. The second category involved interviews with religious leaders and halal certification centres. The final category involved interviews randomly with Muslim and non-Muslim customers, and food outlet owners and their helpers when granted permission to do so.

In terms of data collection, one of the strengths of the case study approach is that it allows the researcher to use a variety of sources, meaning different types of data and different types of research methods as part of the investigation. In fact, a case study actually invites and encourages the researcher to do so. In light of this suggestion, this study applies a combination of data collection techniques, which includes observations of events within the case study setting combined with the collection of documents from official meetings, informal interviews (including emails were used to check on missing or unclear facts) with people involved and questionnaires. In addition, photographic imaging and capture were highly instrumental part of the research observation process as captured images brought to light facts that were not revealed during interviews.

Analysis
Respondents Profile
A total 200 individuals were approached with a questionnaire only 162 (81%) questionnaires were fully answered by the respondents. Thus discussions in this paper used only responses from the 162 completed questionnaires. Of the total 162 respondents, 58% (94) are Japanese nationals and 42% (68) are migrants, inclusive of Bangladeshis (17), Indians (15), Indonesians (12), Nepalese (5), Pakistanis (18) and Thais (2).

In term of religious affiliation 62 of the respondents are Muslims, represented by these nationalities: Japan (7), Bangladesh (17), India (9), Indonesia (12), Nepal (5), and Pakistan (18).

Among the Muslims, irrespective of their nationality acknowledged having good understanding of halal. Among the non-Muslims (a total of 100 respondents) 5% (5) of them have heard of halal and believe they know what halal is. However, when asked to define halal they said halal is a vegetarian-
based food and halal is pork free food. The remaining 95% (95) of the non-Muslim respondents have not heard of the word halal thus has no inkling on the meaning of halal.

The question on halal perspectives was broken-up into five sub-questions. The Muslims claim halal concept influencing their life, admitted consuming only halal food despite finding halal food is difficult in Japan. Claiming also to ensure their food consumptions are not tainted with non-halal ingredients they will bring home-cook food to work and pack for their children luncheon in school, Table 2.

While among the non-Muslims, 98% claim they did give halal food priority in their diet because they practice different religion. In fact to some Muslim foods are no allowable in their diet. Conversely, some asserted that they occasionally do try out vegetable-based Muslim foods such as noodle and soup because they believe Muslim foods preparation are generally cleaner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Muslims (62 Respondents)</th>
<th>Non-Muslims (100 Respondents)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halal concept influences my life</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am giving halal food products priority</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you recognize Japan halal logo?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you differentiate fake &amp; non-fake halal logo?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could Japan excel in the halal food industry?</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the question of recognition Japan halal logo, 21% of Muslims realised that the Japan Halal Association is Japan halal certification body, while 79% believe Japan has no halal certification body therefore do not know how Japan halal logo look like. They said they trust the mosque halal certification, therefore, will endorsed products recognised by the imam/religious teachers. For example, spices and food additives generally accepted by the mosques are foods endorsed by Halal India, Majelis Ulama Indonesia and Jabatan Agama Kemajuan Islam Malaysia - JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) and Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore). While for meat products they recognised meats (chicken, beef and mutton) imported from Brazil certified by the Central Islamic Brazilian Halal Food (Cibal Halal) operated by the Federation of Muslim Associations of Brazil (Fambro). Fambro is the only institution in Brazil recognized by JAKIM, Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore), Islamic da'wah Council in the Philippines, Inc. (IDCP) and many other organs of the Islamic world.

About 92% of Muslims also claimed they cannot differentiate between fake and non-fake halal logo. Accordingly, they admitted having no trust in the food prepared and sold by non-Muslims even with halal signage. The suspicion is supported by statement from an Islamic teacher, “It is impossible for the jahil referring to a person who is extremely ignorant and disbelieves in Allah (SWT) to produce halal foods”.

The final question probed was view of Japan excelling in the halal food industry. Among the non-Muslims 92% see Japan cannot excel in the halal food industry. A significant percentage of Muslims (71%) also see Japan has no capability of producing halal in big quantity. Among the key reasons
given are Japan does not have demand for halal from within the country, specifically from the Japanese nationals. Japanese are still too distance from the knowledge of halal in fact even to the religion of Islam. Secondly, Islamic community in Japan is relatively small further is still dominated by non-Japanese citizens whom generally live in their own enclave or within their own ethnic group. Thirdly, promotion of halal is very much concentrated to generate revenue in trade and tourism. There is no holistic recognition of Muslim and Islam in the mainstream society. For instance, services for Japanese Muslims population are very restricted and generally had to be sponsored by non-organisational bodies to survive and sustain.

There are however some optimists (18%). These are the halal centre head, mosque iman and teachers as well as business owners (including restaurants owners, grocery store owners); they passionately believe that Japan could be a halal centre in the Far East in the nearest future. They claim apart from proven business tactics and strategies; Japan has the niche that many Muslim countries lack, that is integrity and ethics.

**Evaluation**

The objective of this paper is to examine the possibility of Japan excelling in the halal industry, namely in the food business. The previous sections have discussed the views on Japan becoming a halal food centre. This section evaluates these feedbacks from various perspectives, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness.

Relevance measures the extent to which the halal initiatives are suited to the priorities and policies of the country. In evaluating the relevance of halal food industry the following questions are considered.

- To what extent are the community accept halal as a way of life or a profitable business venture. Are the activities carried out by the government consistent with the overall public acceptance or market acceptance? Are the activities and products have achieve the government desired goals.

Efficiency measures quality and quantity of halal products in the market in relation to the available resources and capacity of the country. Has the country goes out of its way to produce halal products, i.e. approach that is not cost effective. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted. When evaluating the efficiency of the initiative the following questions are as asked. Were the activities cost-efficient or the implemented in the most efficient way compared to other alternatives?

Effectiveness measures the extent to which government initiatives have attains its objectives. In evaluating the effectiveness of the government initiatives the following questions are considered.

- To what extent were the government objectives achieved or likely to be achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

**Relevance**

The study finds majority of Japanese population do not see halal as relevance to the Japanese for many of them have not heard of the “word” halal thus has no clue of what halal is all about. In embarking in halal means Japan promised to produce foods that are free from any component that Muslims are prohibited from consuming, that is, all good and clean foods are halal. And, adhere to the preparation of the foods that go through the whole detail procedures as stipulated by Quran and Hadith, that is, certainty of food sources, the ingredients, the slaughtering processes, product processing as well as handling and distribution, product storage and display, hygiene, sanitation, packaging, and certification. The products are to follow the stipulated procedures to deter it be labelled as haram or prohibited to consume, mashbooh products become questionable or doubtful either due undetermined ingredients in a food or makrooh means the food has been generally associated with someone’s dislike for a food, that is, food though is not prohibited by the Shariah yet is not a desired act, such as eating crab for example. While concerning slaughtering animals such as cows, sheep, goats, deer, moose,
chickens, ducks, game birds, etc., are halal, but they must be Zabiha means have been slaughtered according to Islamic rites. The procedure is as follows: the animal must be slaughtered by a Muslim. The animal should be put down on the ground (or held if it is small) and its throat should be slit with a very sharp knife to make sure that the 3 main blood vessels are cut. While cutting the throat of the animal (without severing it), he person must pronounce the name of Allah or recite a blessing called the Tasmiiyya or Shahadah which contains the name of Allah, such as “Bismillah Allah-u-Akbar”.

Managing halal is complex and tedious because the law of halal are made by Allah thus reading of the law must be done by those who are conversant with the Quran to ensure correct interpretation for implementation. Upon understanding the demand of the Quran how does the interpreter ensure that his/her interpretation is implemented according to the demand of the Quran? As the line of food chain the gets more and more interpreters and implementers are required that should faithfully follow the demand of the Quran. Immediate question comes to fore how many of these interpreters and implementers will be able to adhere to the intricate law of halal?

Unlike countries with clear Islamic influence such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, Japan has very vague and patchy link to Islam vis-à-vis halal. Islam is the least known religion among Japanese locals (Shazlinda 2008) and of course not knowing Islam will equal to not knowing halalness. Similar feedback were received from food producers and sellers, they find it too complex to comprehend the requirements of halal. The situation is made worst when the representation of Muslims in Japan is very small and spread-out, making it difficult for the non-Muslims to understand Islam and halal. With Japan monolithic culture the non-Muslims will forever has no inkling of what is halal food (Japan Food Industry Centre 2009; Le Bas and Patel (2007). In the words of Mordechai Kedar (2013):

The Japanese tend to lump all Muslims together as fundamentalists who are unwilling to give up their traditional point of view and adopt modern ways of thinking and behaviour. In Japan, Islam is perceived as a strange religion that any intelligent person should avoid.

While writing by Hajj Mustafa Fujio Komura (2009), stated that: 90% of Japanese people used to believe that Islam is a barbaric, aggressive and inferior religion that came from barren deserts of Arabia. Almost similar message was highlighted in an article entitled Islam in Japan, asserted that:

Japanese society being one of the world's most literate countries…..[however] knowledge of ordinary Japanese about Islam is modestly confined to few terms related to polygamy, Sunnah and Shia, Ramadhan, Makkah, Allah the God of Muslims and Islam the religion of Muhammad.

Islamic dawah in Japan has been weak, perhaps contributed by the unreceptive of the country itself to ‘religion’. Could also relates to Muslim immigrants that came to Japan are vastly divided by national and ethnic origin, language, sectarian tendency, socio-economic background. This means Muslims that migrated to Japan have failed to build communities and lack representation or unifying organization or mosque. If the study may refer to the case of Islam in Canada and United States, they are non-Asian and Christian dominated countries. Muslims migrated to these countries although came from various parts of the world yet they congregate via Islamic network which ultimately allow them to build a very strong Muslim community far away from home.

Muslim community in Japan is very segregated this follow with the pattern of halal businesses relatively disperse and some case very isolated. This point is supported by Sakurai (2003), who saw Muslims population in Japan to be inconspicuous until the mid-1980s, when the influx of Muslim foreign workers migrating to the country for economic reasons began to attract attention”. The growth of Muslim stores (foods and non-foods) were also disperse and many were not easily sighted (unless one search for it by walking) because they are hidden by tall buildings and are located quite a distance from major road network. As late as 2012, numbers on halal food stores across Japan stand at 55 only
and mosques or *musolla* (prayer room) 27 (with concentration in Tokyo) out of 48 prefectures in Japan (Islamic Centre Japan 2012).

Notwithstanding the people view of Islam and halal, the government of Japan sees halal as relevance to the state. The call for halal in Japan became clear only after year 2000 (especially during the administration of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe) when the Government made tourism development and food exports as one of the key impetus of economic growth. Since then, Japan became to be heard in the halal news, especially when it took radical step promoting the tourism industry by easing visa requirements for 60 countries, including Indonesia (the country with the highest Muslims population), Malaysia and Brunei. The strategy has produced positive impact to Japan as noted by Singapore-based Crescent Rating Muslim visitor arrivals could double from an average of 7.2% in 2013 to an average of 18.7% in 2014 and 2015.

In short the Japanese only has the issue of educating the public on the halal dollar and sense value to Japan. The government of Japan will have an arduous task of educating the public. This has to be done however because in the long run should Japan able to promote halal the return will benefit the people and the nation.

**Efficiency**

Efficiency measures quality and quantity of halal products in the market in relation to the available resources and capacity of the country. Halal foods are not Japanese main food choice. However, the study survey revealed that Japanese generally are obedience and ethical, thus when entrust with the production of halal food will abide by the rules and regulations stipulated. According to Yuasa (1967) in the mid-Edo period, that is, in the stage of primitive commercial capitalism, the virtue of honesty had already obtained a firm foundation in the Japanese economic ethics. The point affirmed by Jansen (2000) referring his case to the Tokugawa period where loyalty, obligation, duty, harmony and diligence were the way of life. Yuasa further pointed out that in the typical ‘closed and self-sufficient’ feudal economy, the basic *ethos* of economic agents was to the virtue of accepting the present condition as it is *enough* (not exceeding their own bounds) and sharing goods among the members - *Chisoku-Anbun*. The ideology is similar to the teaching of Islam; Muslims *should* view humans as part of a collective membership in which the wealthy and the successful have obligations to help the disadvantaged. Put simply, in Muslim philosophy, it is fine to earn a profit, so long as that profit is justly earned and not based on the exploitation of others for one's own advantage. Further, for those making profits should undertake charitable acts (*zakat*) to help the poor. This is because Islam stresses on the importance of living up to contractual obligations, of keeping one's word, and of abstaining from deception.

**Effectiveness**

Effectiveness measures the extent to which government initiatives have attained its objectives. In Japan the government has no direct involvement with Islamic and halal matters. Halal matters are fully managed by the Japan Halal Association (JHA) a Non-Profit Organization, that is runs by Muslim volunteers. Generally, the volunteers are immigrants that have lived in Japan for many years and their spouses whom very often are Japanese. In May 2012 through Malaysia Department of Religious Development (JAKIM) JHA was accredited as a halal certification body for Japan. JHA obtained the accreditation after undergoing training with JAKIM in Malaysia. In the collaboration with JAKIM, JHA also uses JAKIM’s standard in certifying food outlets operating in Japan. JHA also has to power to conduct training and certification for halal managers in Japanese companies (Japan Halal Association 2012).

Apart from JHA this study found mosques are also acting as halal certifier. The existence of JHA is acknowledged but not necessarily accepted by the Muslims society living in Japan. In the researcher’s understanding halal certification in Japan is interpreted with two main versions, the JHA version and the simple and easy version. This latter version uses the mosque as certification office with the mosque
A religious leader acted as signatory of halal certificate. In cases where testing of suspected food becomes necessary the testing will be assigned to a community whom has access to a chemistry lab (usually located in a university). Various questions could be raised here, first, the cleanliness of the chemistry apparatus and second, knowledge of halal checking procedures by the chemist/person doing the checking. The process undertaken by mosques in the perception of the researcher who is so used to JAKIM tedious and transparent testing process is unacceptable. The process of testing is filled with uncertainty thus the good being tested could be labelled as mashbooh or uncertain. However, when a person lived in a country filled with people ignorant of Islam the effort of trying to ensure the Muslims are given halal foods is commendable.

In a non-Muslim state, appropriate Islamic practices rests upon the advice of religious bodies or religious teachers. The Holy Quran, the Hadith or Sunnah (the practice of Prophet Muhammad SAW) is unchanged and unaltered and allow no contradictions, providing Muslims with the best Islamic and religious guidelines. Sunnah is only an extension and explanation of the Holy Quran, however, the third and fourth Islamic laws, ijma or the consensus (an agreement of the Muslim community on a point of faith or action) and qiyas or analogy (the decision of an expert of Islamic law on the basis of known law given by the Quran and Sunnah) may be open to interpretation to suit the time, place, and circumstances of the issue in question (Regenstein et al. 2003).

Notwithstanding the fact, necessary to note that production of halal foods for export cannot rely on the religious teacher of mosques because the consumption of the foods is targeted for the universal Islam population. Acceptable halal foods must undergo the universally recognised process of halalaness. Japan still lacks this procedure.

In term of halal promotion is essential also to have a strong brand name and Islamic network. Taking the case of Malaysia, the HDC contributed the marketing and promotion part of halal with the assistance of range of agencies, namely the Ministry of Agriculture, Tourist Development Corporation, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation. The government of Malaysia halal body, JAKIM, a globally recognised halal body is entrusted to translate the needs of halal for Malaysia. This means in the business of halal apart from ingenuity, at least until its name has been recognised internationally acceptable knowledge of Islam is a must. The principles of justice and equity in Islam will be accepted without questioned for countries with recognised name or brand in halal. However, upon reaching this stage producer countries must be on alert for many a time sellers and manufacturers will find ways to shorten the process of halal check for purpose of market control. Rather common to hear sellers adulterate ingredients - like combining pork and steak to make kebab - simply to reap extra profits, an act grossly offensive to Islamic morals and religious decency (Bashar and Lawal 1997).

Business in Islam supposedly combines a value-maximization concept with the principle of ‘justice’ to maximize the general welfare of the society. This principle offers a means to create value and elevate the standard of living of people in general through commercial endeavours. The Islamic ethical guidelines ensure mutual respect for, and the individual freedom of, both sellers and customers. Islamic ethics dictates that under no circumstances should sellers exploit their customers or in any way involve themselves in dishonesty, fraud, or deceit. Any unethical business practice reflects injustice, which by definition negates the concepts of brotherhood and equality of humanity that form the core of the Islamic vision. Indeed with increasing demand and competitiveness ethical values are generally sidelined.

**Japan strategizing its ventures into halal business**

Success is often a result of work smart rather work hard. In light of this, Japanese fund manager Inspire Corp has set up a fund in partnership with the Malaysian state-owned fund manager Permodalan Nasional (PNB) to help Japanese companies get halal certification and build sales
networks in Muslim countries. PNB (Inspire Ethical Fund) will start with 4.95 billion yen ($48.70 million) and identify small-to-medium sized Japanese firms with potential for expanding to Islamic markets in ASEAN (Reuters 2014). Inspire Corp took this initiative to maximise Japan’s current resources, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and to speed-up production by networking with established halal Malaysia SMEs. According to Inspire, the fund will unlock the barrier that is lacking halal compliance knowledge, that currently are restricting Japanese SMEs to expand into the halal market. This means opening potential 4.69 million SMEs in Japan, constituting 99.7% of all enterprises, accounting for 70% of all employment (Small Medium Enterprise Agency 2013). This study sees the only possible hurdle in this partnership is the people understanding of the requirements of halal standards. Should people’s acceptance of halal demands is overcome halal industry could grow very fast considering Japan already has strong infrastructural and administrative support system.

CONCLUSION
The paper highlighted several important points; first, the demand on halal is stringent which requires the introduction of tedious and complex monitoring process. However, the complexity has not lessened the production of halal food products rather is increasing at an unprecedented rate. The increment is supported by proactive action by religious bodies to authenticate products fit for Muslims’ consumption. However, with variety of halal foods demanded and the distance from farm to fork becoming more complex authenticating halal products is becoming strenuous. This may allow abuse in halal production and certification. The government of Japan is unable to intervene in the halal business directly considering it is not a Muslim state. Majority of the population are Shinto, Buddhism and Christianity while Islam is a very insignificant and to some have no knowledge of Islam existence. The government nevertheless has to ride on halal lucrativeness to promote the weakening Japanese economy. Acceptance of halal foods in the country and halal food productions nevertheless is very slow because many Japanese do not understand Islam from the religious’ perspective. Currently, the features of Islam in Japan are portrayed by foreign-born or immigrants faces, namely the Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Indians and Middle Eastern communities. These foreign faces are forging hard to make Japan a centre of halal food productions. They believe the ethical and obedience values of Japanese that generally are missing even among Muslims could be maximised in the production of halal for the benefit of the state. In short, Japan could excel in the halal industry only when the people could see the importance of halal to the state.

REFERENCES


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