

# The Conceptual Analysis of The Halalan Toyyiban for Practices of Food Handling in Food Truck Business

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## ABSTRACT

*In Malaysia, food trucks are a popular business among industry players due to the nature of the business being much easier and more comfortable for the customer, and the food served is cheaper than the restaurants. Despite the immense attention alongside the growth revenue towards the food truck business in 5 years, they are also a few unwanted cases arise caused by poorly handling of food throughout the business which is proven that food truck has been associated with almost 70% of disease outbreak (Auad et al., 2018). Although the food truck business has expanded year by year, the growth of food truck activities has triggered certain issues, and some of the issues might lead to serious matters. The first and foremost gap is when it comes to the cleanliness of the food served and sold on the mobile premise (Okumus et al., 2019). The most common question is how the food truck operators prepare their food, the level of hygiene of its' utensils, the preparation of mixed ingredients, and the management waste practice (Donkor et al., 2009). These problems might trigger the halalan toyyiban concept adopted in the practices of the food truck business. This study aimed to examine the concept of halalan toyyiban in the food truck business.*



*The study adopted qualitative research, collecting data through doctrinal and semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis. The finding indicated that only a few food truckers know halal and toyyiban, and some food truckers are not interested in applying for halal certification for their businesses.*

**Keywords:** *Business, FoodTruck, Halal, Halalan Toyyiban*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Muslims are obliged to devour permissible and wholesome food according to shariah law. Wholesomeness comprises cleanliness, quality, and safety altogether without leaving one of them (Normalina Omar et al., n.d.). In addition, the words halalan toyyiban have been mentioned a few times in the Quran, such as in the chapter Al- Baqarah versed 168 and 172, Al Maidah verses 87-88, Al Anfaal verse 69, and Al-Nahl verse 114. These verses show how Islam emphasizes that Muslims consume what is permissible and wholesome and leave what is prohibited behind (Shahwahid et al., 2018).

In addition, people are encouraged to consume healthy and safe food, which brings many benefits to the human body. Without proper preparation or consumption of healthy food, it will cause lists of diseases, for instance, salmonellosis, cholera and botulism. To the extent that, in certain cases, it can cause death. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated that 600 million people across the globe fall sick, and as many as 420 000 deaths are reported after consuming contaminated food. This number shows how significant healthy and safe food for human consumption is to ensure the body functions well without complications.

Food trucks are a popular business among industry players in Malaysia because the business is much easier and more comfortable for the customer and the food served is cheaper than the restaurants. Although the food truck business has expanded yearly, the growth of food truck activities has triggered certain issues. Some of the issues might lead to serious matters, including the cleanliness of the food served and sold on the mobile premise (Okumus et al., 2019). The problem arises in food preparation, utensils hygiene, the preparation of mixed ingredients and waste management practices (Donkor et al., 2009).

Food truck activities usually can be exposed to a certain degree of unhygienic environment since it cannot maintain the quality and freshness of ingredients, the absence of a refrigeration system, inadequate running water, the ability to prevent contamination and cross-contamination since it has limited space which these of reasons might be the biggest cause to a serious case of foodborne illness (Cortese et al., 2016). These problems might trigger the halalan toyyiban concept adopted in the practices of the food truck business.

On the other hand, the food truck business has caught industry players' eyes since it gives much more benefits than setting up physical restaurants. In the United States of America, based on research from IBIS World, a market research centre has stated that between 2011 and 2016, industry revenue increased at an annual rate of 7.9%. While in Malaysia according to Malaysian Digest (2016) food truck business in Malaysia is starting to become the Centre of attraction for industry players since it is easier to operate, but it is believed the spark started to grow around 2014 with only three licensed food truck operates around Klang Valley then it starts to increase to 5 food trucks every month and 70 by October 2016.

Apart from that, the industry players involved with the food truck business should be aware when it comes to serving food for Malaysians which 61.3% of its citizens are Muslim (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). The concept of halalan toyyiban must be of farm to fork and shall be applied throughout the operations with full of integrity and responsibility to preserve safety, quality and hygiene.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Halalan Toyyiban**

The word halal is an Arabic term that connotes the state of the permissibility of objects or behaviour according to the principles of Syariah, while the words toyyiban can be defined as wholesome and good quality. These two aspects not only ensure a good and better physical state but it also the driving force that will straighten and tighten the quality of 'taqwa' (God-Fearing) and 'syukur' (Gratefulness) of ones towards Allah (Bin et al., 2010).

The word *toyyiban* can be defined as pure, good, and wholesome. In other words, food that can be categorized under the classification *toyyiban* is food full of vitamins and nutrition and brings good to the body and soul (Zakaria et al., 2019). These words technically bring different meanings: *halal* means permissible and *toyyiban* means good and wholesome (Shahwahid et al., 2018). Other than that, *halal* implies compliance with the key foundations of *Syariah*. At the same time, the *toyyiban* goes beyond those standards to invoke enhanced features that render something fine, pure and safe (E. N. Omar et al., 2012). Allah has commanded us to eat *halalan toyyiban* and leave what is prohibited in the Quran chapter *Al-Mukminun* verse 51: “O messengers, eat from the good foods and work righteousness. Indeed, I, of what you do, am Knowing” “*Halalan Toyyiban* diet concept also highlights *halal* aspects, hygiene of its sources as well as the right methods of consumption. Nevertheless, when buying food from food truck vendors, there are no demands on their *halalan toyyiban*. In contrast, the Ministry of Health (MOH) (2015) states that 75% of foodborne illnesses come from the food’s poor preparation, leading to contamination.

### **The Development of Food Trucks in Malaysia**

As a whole, the food truck business started to gain when popular lunch trucks serving cheap food, such as premade sandwiches for the urban working class, originated in the United States after World War II. These lunch trucks evolved over the years. Today’s food trucks became very popular after the 2007 Great Recession. Many restaurateurs and skilled chefs could not survive their brick-and-mortar restaurants financially and began serving high-quality food in food trucks (Shafieizadeh et al., 2021). The recession also affected diners’ spending power; therefore, food trucks were a cheaper dining-out alternative. Food trucks are primarily vehicles fully designed with the necessary facilities to cook, prepare and store food and move continuously between different spots (Shin et al., 2019). They provide more diversity in the food service industry by offering innovative cuisines.

While in Malaysia, the food truck business started to gain attention in 2011, with only a few trucks in Selangor growing yearly (Abidin et al., 2018). The food truck has now surpassed new and conventional food to make it on the move, comprising numerous menu styles and endless food options. Today, 70 modern food trucks are expected in Klang Valley alone, with a centre of 5 food trucks opening each month. MARA recently released

approximately RM100,000 in 2017 to help young entrepreneurs start the food truck business sector. Consequently, today's food truck is the most successful and challenging company (Ramdan et al., 2019).

Moreover, Selangor has around 130 registered food truck operators, which is expected to grow. An annual budget of RM140 million has been approved by the Selangor State Government for new entrepreneurs, including food truck operators, with estimates ranging from RM3,000 to RM50,000. The Ministry of Federal Territories also provides funding in addition to the Selangor State Government by offering RM10,000 in funds as an initiative to promote involvement in the food truck industry. This is consistent with making Kuala Lumpur City 2020 a zero-illegal street food zone. TEKUN (Tekun Nasional), which provides financing and advocacy services as well as assistance in the procurement of vehicles, will handle this funding, which is ideal for entrepreneurs to launch their business activities (Abidin et al., 2018). The project is being funded by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) by offering a temporary location to facilitate the operation of food truck companies. Many major programs and festivals in the capital also provide a business room with a fixed-site rental rate for food truck operators. Site rental rates vary by program, but generally, the amount of rent is RM350.00 per day of operation for a food truck site.

In addition, the food trucks business is usually supervised by local councils, it also tends to be tough since there are a variety of laws regulating food trucks. Local governments often include food truck operators to acquire a combination of licenses and permits before the municipality permits them to operate. Recently, food trucks have been positioned next to the office area at lunchtime and the public area at night. The current food trucks are well-equipped with food storage equipment, stylishly serving a range of cultural cuisines, accompanied by innovative truck designs.

### **The Development of Food Trucks in Malaysia**

Food safety and hygiene awareness of food truck vendors is restricted along with poor hygiene practices (Okumus et al., 2019), thus reflecting on the food vended and causing foodborne illness problems. The numbers of foodborne illnesses in Malaysia typically occur from hawker stalls such as food trucks, based on the MOH report in 2015. As the product is consumed, safe hygiene practices should become essential for the provider or food handler (Adane et al., 2018).

In addition, food consumers' increasing issue is regarding hygiene, which may be an untapped market for food producers. This is because health issues related to food intake practically share the same value with the halalan toyyiban definition. Being safe requires extra careful handling and cooking food's cleanliness, source, and process. The most critical thing is to ensure and minimize any possible adverse food contamination that will harm the body. There could be several determinants for the market acceptance of 'halal' food. It is believed that consumers accept a product when they have the true intention to use it or have used the product earlier and want to continue using it. Generally, consumers respond positively to products of high quality. In the case of food, quality is defined mainly by its cleanliness and freshness (Arif & Sidek, 2015).

In addition, each individual, especially in the food service industry, is responsible for preparing safe and nutritious food (Alimi, 2016). 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 individuals and enforcement (Chapman et al., 2010). Thus, many countries aim to improve food safety due to the increasing number of foodborne illnesses. Many studies have shown that food vendors have sufficient information regarding hygiene and food safety principles and are aware of the need to ensure safe practices in preparing foods for public consumption (Faradillah Shafiee et al., 2017). The practices examined in these studies also indicate that food truck vendors can provide food of good quality if the emphasis is placed on hygienic practices and regulatory compliance; therefore, training can be regarded as crucial in ensuring food safety.

## **Research Methodology**

To achieve this study's aim, qualitative research has been adopted using doctrinal research and semi-structured interviews. The doctrinal research was used to gather data relating to the conceptual aspect of halalan toyyiban in the food truck business. The data is collected from books, online journals, reports and online data. As regards primary data gathered from interviews, the research has conducted numbers of interviews session with randomly selected food truck hawkers. They operated the business in Bandar Tun Hussein Onn and Kajang. There are three informants involved in this research. The instrument interview is based on semi-structured interviews

that focus on data related to food truck industry players' points of view on the practices of halalan toyyiban in the food truck business. Using the interview method allows the researchers to go in-depth in obtaining information leading to questions on the study. The interview was conducted face-to-face using semi-structured interviews, and the interview was recorded. The recorded interview has been transcribed verbatim and translated. The transcribed data has been analyzed manually using thematic analysis. On the other hand, the interview and the data have been collected at food truck parks around Bandar Tun Hussein Onn and Kajang, Selangor.

## Result and Discussion

This part is the analysis of the primary data based on the semi-structured interview conducted. Two participants or informants were interviewed who were a worker that directly operated the food truck business, mainly the food truck operator, cook and the manager themselves. Both participants run two different types of food truck businesses. Participant A runs a food truck that sells western food such as fries, chicken chop, lamb chop, various burgers and many others. Participant B, however, runs a small food truck that sells *char kuew tiaw* and a variety of types of blended drinks.

The participant in the first place was asked about understanding the conceptual aspect of halalan Toyyiban, particularly on the relationship between halal and toyyiban relating to the similarity and differences of both terms and whether it is in one body or not. Participant A responds that:

“Halal and toyyiban cannot be separated from one another. Since without halal, there is no toyyiban.”

While Participant B responded that:

“halal is more on *zahiriah* aspects which can be translated as something that we cannot see with our naked eyes, while for toyyiban, it is related to *batiniah*, something that is deeper than the halal aspects, which is related to *tauhid*. halalan toyyiban also be included on the root starter to the business itself.”

The above response indicates that both participants agree that halal and toyyiban have the same meaning. Halal is considered the root base of the concept of halal toyyiban because the toyyiban depends on the halal of the food.

Next, when the participants asked the practice question, many points of view and opinions were shared. Participant A said, “Consume what is halal is a must, and it is an order from The Almighty, but consuming what is toyyiban is not compulsory. As long as it is halal, it is more than enough. “*Participant B* agrees to consume halal and toyyiban is encouraged for Muslims since it is related to the faith of one’s Muslim.”

In addition, since there is no specific guidelines or requirements for halal food truck, food trucks are bound to follow the requirements and guidelines related to food issued by local authorities. Malaysia has enacted several legislations to govern Halal food. The Trade Descriptions Act of 2011 (TDA, 2011), the Food Act 1983, the Food Regulations 1985 and Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik) 2020 are all part of this.

According to Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik) 2020, Halal can be defined as something lawful and permissible according to Shariah and Fatwa. In addition, there are requirements for mobile premises or food trucks in this procedure which are:

1. Processing and preparing for the food truck must be made in the central kitchen.
2. Minimum of one Malaysian Muslim worker in the processing and preparing of the area.
3. The premise must be operated in the selected area by the local authority
4. Food and drink must be prepared in the certified halal kitchen.
5. Must possess a storage area for the raw material

The participants were asked about the source of the raw materials and ingredients. Both participants noted that they only looked for the halal



certification issued by JAKIM. However, when the researcher asked about the application for halal certification for their business, both participants did not apply, and participant A said they did not plan to apply for any of it. The reasons behind the said answer are ‘The food handler and owner of the food truck are Muslims. Hence, the food shall be saved to consume for consumers, specifically Muslims ‘

Malaysia and halal cannot be separated since Malaysia is the world’s halal hub pioneer. In respect of halalan toyyiban in the food truck business, the matter is a new subject since only a few regulations have been stated specifically for the requirements for the food truck business, especially about the application of halalan toyyiban in the food truck business. It shows that a very small group of food truckers know halal and toyyiban, and it says that some food truckers are not interested in applying for halal certification. Moreover, Halalan Toyyiban must focus more on safety, quality, and cleanliness. However, it also focuses on the sources of the raw material, whether the sources of raw material or ingredients are derived from permissible or non-permissible. Regarding raw materials and ingredients, food truckers are aware that they are bound to use only permissible ingredients for their businesses. Besides, the sources also must be free from shubhah or doubtness. Halalan toyyiban food truck must comply with halal and toyyiban aspects. This means the operators must ensure the sources of raw materials are from halal sources, and it must be free from any contamination and cross- contamination which can affect the halal status of the food itself.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has outlined the concept of halalan toyyiban in the food truck business. Principally, the food truck business or operators are bound to follow the rules and regulations enacted by the government to prevent and preserve the halalan toyyiban aspects of the food when it serves the consumers. The finding indicates that food hawkers need more knowledge regarding halal and toyyiban, and some food truckers are not interested in applying for halal certification. Halalan Toyyiban focuses on safety, quality, and cleanliness as well as the sources of the raw material, whether the source materials are derived from permissible or non-permissible.

Besides, the food truckers are aware of the raw material and ingredients that they are bound to use only permissible ingredients for their businesses. Besides, the sources also must be free from shubhah or doubtness. Halalan toyyiban food truck must comply with halal and toyyiban aspects. This means the operators must ensure the sources of raw materials are from halal sources, and it must be free from any contamination and cross-contamination which can affect the halal status of the food itself. It is recommended to look at why some of the food truck business operators in Malaysia do not seem interested in applying for the halal certificate for their mobile premises since halal is one of the eye-catching factors for the consumers majority of Malaysia are Muslims. They are obliged to seek halal products.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The authors declare no competing interests, such as financial or personal relationships, regarding the writing of this article.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

Author 1 and Co-author designed the study and gathered the literature. Author 1 collected and analyzed the data while Co-author wrote the article.

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