

# **The Successful Adoption of Halal Logistics Among Japanese Logistics Companies**

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## **Abstract**

The increasing number of Muslim populations around the world has influenced the growth of the halal business market. This triggers the Japanese halal logistics companies to take this opportunity to be certified as halal logistics service providers. It is interesting to explore the successful adoption of halal logistics among Japanese logistics companies as there are few studies and research on their success stories. This study analyses the scale of involvement of Japanese logistics companies in halal business services as well as the justification of their interest in adopting halal logistics. Based on a qualitative research approach, three in-depth interviews were conducted with the representatives of three Japanese halal-certified logistics providers in Malaysia. Four themes were identified as the elements that create the interest: culture, internationalisation, management support and government support. The findings also highlight that culture, seeking support, and integrity was significant to the sustainability of Japanese logistics companies after getting the halal certification.

**Key Words:** Halal Logistics, Logistics service Provider, Japanese companies

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Halal carries the meaning of lawful, the landscape of hygiene, safety and standard (Borzooei and Asgari, 2013). Halal is not only restricted to food products, but it also covers the logistics sectors where it plays its role in planning, operation and sustainability of the halal supply chain (Karia and Asaari, 2016; Khan et al., 2018; Talib, 2020). The population of Muslims around the world will increase by approximately 35% in the next 20 years, from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030 (Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2011), the Global Islamic Economy stated by 2024, the global Islamic economy will grow USD 3.2 trillion in 2024. Accordingly. Multiple sectors will experience profit growth, including halal logistics (Dinar Standard, 2019). Benefiting from the halal economic growth, several Japanese take this opportunity to involve in the halal market. This is because Japan is well-known for its high-standard countries and homogenous culture. Other characteristics of Japanese national culture reinforce the importance of benevolence and credibility in business relationships with Japan, such as trust in Japanese culture (Lohtia et al. (2009). As a non-Muslim country, Japan is new in the halal sector but is growing significantly in the halal market as they are seeking fresh opportunities in the Halal sector, such as promoting their halal products and services. As far as the literature can verify, Japanese logistics companies' perceptions of adopting halal logistics services have received less attention. The previous study mainly focuses on food manufacturers' and SMEs' perceptions of adopting Halal logistics services. Neither research has explored their interest in adopting halal logistics businesses and their scale of involvement.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Third-Party Logistics**

Logistics is part of the supply chain, which can improve and control the efficiency of the flow process to meet customer satisfaction. Logistics has its management, which includes planning, implementing and controlling the forward-reverse flows and storage of goods, services and related information between the point of origin and the point of consumption to meet the customer requirement (Hwang, 2017). Tang & Abosedra (2019) emphasise that logistics provides a key element in a supply chain that assists in accelerating the production and export process by integrating and managing inputs flow to produce goods and services before delivering them to the customer. Hence, logistics is a component part of the supply chain as logistics leads to the efficiency and interaction of the process. Thus, third-party logistics services refer to outsourcing the logistics services or contract logistics offering warehousing, inventory management and value-added supply chain activities (Robert et al., 1993 & Evangelista et al., 2018).

### **2.2 Concept of Halal Logistics**

The concept of Halal does not only applicable to foods, but it goes beyond covering and guiding the everyday life of Muslims. Simply put, everything is halal unless it is prohibited by law. Halal is not only restricted to the ingredients or raw materials of the products but also covers the supply chain activities, Mohamed et al. (2016). In protecting the integrity of Halal products, logistics plays a vital role. This is because logistics has a supply chain orientation, including materials management and information flow across the supply chain, Anna and Konrad (2008). The main success of the Halal industry relies heavily on logistics service management capabilities to ensure the integrity of Halal products, Tan et al. (2012). This is because the chain of logistics, including warehousing, distribution, handling, packaging and retailing, must be controlled, and no break in the chains, which is consistent with the Halal standards, Faradina et al. (2018). Malaysia had produced the MS2400 with a set of requirements for halal supply chain management and its halal certification, namely MS2400:2019 (Part 1-3) (Mahidin et al., 2016). As this study focuses on a Japanese logistics company, to become a successful halal logistics service provider, they shall:

- Apply one or two types of MS2400 with JAKIM approval
- Complete and pass the JAKIM audit
- Obtain the JAKIM certification
- Implement the Halal Assurance Management System.

### **2.3 Halal Japanese Logistics Companies**

In the context of trade, logistics is an essential component of economic growth and can be considered the backbone of the economy. The evolution in logistics over the last two to three decades led to the changes and designing of logistics facilities such as distribution centres and warehouses (Sakai et al., 2016). The development of Japanese investment in Malaysia began in 1991, and it went actively until 2003 when Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad implemented the Look East Policy to attract Japanese investment (Iqbal et al., 2015). Since then, Japan has become a major trading partner with Malaysia. Consequently, Japanese companies began investing in the halal business in Malaysia. In 2020, 94 companies were certified as Halal logistics service providers, and four of the logistics service providers were Japanese logistics companies. Even though four companies are a small number, it shows that Japan has taken this opportunity to serve the growing demand for the halal market in Malaysia.

## **2.4 Factors Influencing Successful Implementation of Halal Logistics**

Throughout the literature, there are four factors identified as factors implementation of halal logistics, namely, the culture which influences the organisation of Halal logistics (Haleem & Khan, 2017, Hatch & Schultz;1997, Shahzad et al., 2012, Dansomboon et al., 2016, Batyko; 2012& Adair et al. 2001), internationalisation for halal logistics services (Welch & Luostarinen; 1988, Halaszovich & Kinra; 2018) management support in supporting the organisation for Halal logistics adoption (Dobroszek et al., 2018, Mangan & Christopher; 2005, Ngah et al., 2015, Tarmizi et al., 2014, Marjudi et al., 2017, Din & Daud; 2014 & Talib et al., 2015) and government support for logistics service provider for Halal logistics services (Sparapani; 2000, Samsi et al., 2011, Rahim et al., 2018, Tan et al., 2012& Talib et al., 2016). Therefore, this study explores whether these factors influence Japanese logistics companies to be involved in halal business and adopt halal practices. Figure 1 shows the development of the framework of this study.

### *Culture*

Culture holds the organisation all-together. A study by Shahzad et al. (2012) found that the organisational culture has impacted various organisational processes. As this study employs Japanese logistics companies as the context of this study, it is necessary to focus more on their culture, which influences their daily life. Japanese has a high context culture (personal experiences and environmental factors) and are very famous for their unique culture, which lies in its specific traits, observable nowhere else in the world, Batyko (2012) & Adair et al. (2001). In terms of logistics perspectives, Japanese culture influences how logistics firms are managed. According to Shinohara (2006), Japanese logistics is presented as a close network of long-term human relationships where they are very strict in achieving their goals and precise in planning to avoid unexpected problems. Various studies demonstrate that the Japanese working style with their partners is successful due to long-term relationship style (Mujtaba & Isomura, 2012, Zhang & Kuroda, 1989). Apart from that, the hierarchy system is also a part of the Confucianism style, which is practised in Japanese business working culture. This is aligned with Katz (2006); one of the major themes in Confucianism is practising hierarchy rank, where the Japanese tend to be very hierarchical. Other than that, trust is also part of the Japanese business working style. This is because trust enables confidence between partners.

### *Internationalisation*

In Halal businesses, many firms start to internationalise their products and services to meet the demand of the Muslim customer. the changes in the cultural and religious landscape of world politics encourage the internationalisation of firms to capitalise on the halal food market (Adams, 2011). Welch & Luostarinen (1988) mentioned the success of international companies depends on their ability to apply a variety of methods or approach to the process. Internationalisation was also extended towards Japan's logistics due to Japan's embarkation on a new age of global trade and demand from its own country for exporting or importing products worldwide. This is because the manufacturer is responsible for increasing the networking of the logistics organisation by implementing the outsourcing just in time, reducing cycle lead time and creating a new global view of storage and distribution, Lemoine & Dagnaes (2003). Thus, in this context, internationalisation can be explained as the process of the firms or logistics companies in approaching new businesses in the foreign market, which is Halal business as the new business to Japanese logistics companies.

### *Management Support*

Many studies have addressed the importance of management support and performance influence for the organisation. For example, a study by Ngah et al. (2015) found that management support is one of the determinant factors in the Halal warehousing service adoption among Malaysian Halal manufacturers. In the study of Tarmizi et al. (2014), management support is one of the factors that have influenced readiness towards halal logistics, as management has a crucial role in delivering the ideas and direction to perform halal logistics operation activities. Meanwhile, in the Japanese context, the management is unique, and they have their own management style. Moreover, as Schatzbeg et al. (1997) mentioned, culture has an ongoing influence, and the homogeneity of Japanese influences themes in appearance, behaviours and decision-making process. The most prominent cultural

characteristic of the Japanese is their philosophy of grouping, Schatbeg et al. (1997). Thus, Japanese management usually supports their subsidiaries to maintain the relationship in the organisation.

*Government Support*

Government involvement can increase many aspects of the country, such as economic effectiveness, productivity and others. In the context of the Halal industry, government support plays a significant role in implementing the halal legislation and guidelines as the government is part of the Halal stakeholders, Samsi et al. (2011). Tan et al. (2012) highlight that the most influencing factor in adopting ICT in Halal transportation is the government’s support, where the government can reduce the main barrier to establishing halal transportation service providers. Several countries have come out with their own logistics policies as a mechanism to support the integration and connectivity of logistics. The Japanese government supports the expansion and assists in delivering improved profit to the companies. The Star (2019) reported the Japanese government had invested RM125 million through its fund in a logistics and warehousing company. Thus, it can be assumed that the government’s support of the logistics companies is similar to the application of Halal logistics among Japanese logistics companies.

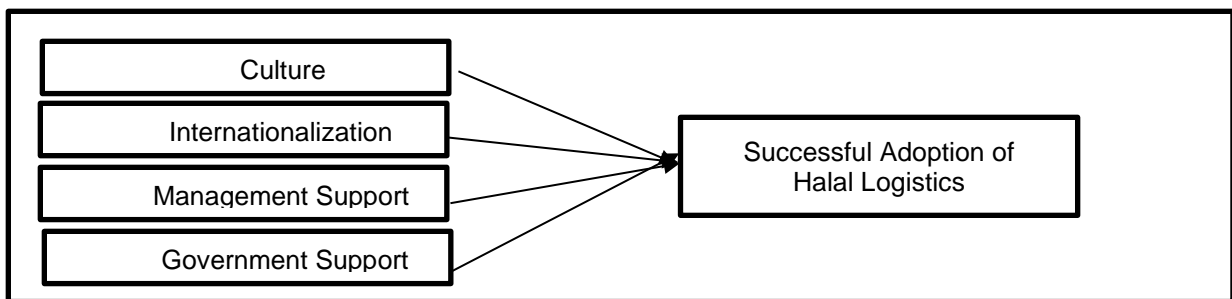


Figure 1: Development of Framework

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Based on a qualitative study, six interviews from three companies were conducted in audio form. Each interview took about an hour. Informants were from the top and middle management of the company. The detailed profile of the companies is shown in Table 1. In this qualitative study, data were obtained by interviewing respondents. The data were collected and recorded in audio form. The interviews were conducted for about one hour with the top and middle management of the company. Three Japanese companies were selected, and five respondents agreed to be interviewed. The details as per shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Company Profile Information

<b>Company</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
COMPANY ABC	ABC has implemented the Halal Assurance System (HAS) and has been certified with Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) for five years. The main services offered are transportation service and freight forwarding services.
COMPANY DEF	DEF was the first Japanese company certified in Halal transportation by JAKIM. The main services offered are transportation service, warehousing service and freight forwarding service.
COMPANY GHI	GHI has been certified by Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) for four years. The main services offered are transportation service, warehousing service and freight forwarding service.

Meanwhile, the criteria of participants should be addressed since it influences some factors for the implementation of halal logistics in the companies. All respondents were contacted via tele-conversations and confirmed as the informants of this study. Three representatives are from Company

ABC, two from Company DEF, and one from Company GHI. Table 2 summarises the information regarding the respondents' backgrounds.

Table 2: Profile of the Respondents

Company	Position	Length of Experience	Citizenship
COMPANY ABC	Deputy General Manager cum with Halal Chairman	31 years	Malaysia
	Branch Manager	7 Years	Japanese
	Halal Sales Manager	3 Years	Japanese
COMPANY DEF	Senior Executive for Transportation Operation	25 Years	Malaysia
	Executive for Transportation Operation	6 Years	Malaysia
COMPANY GHI	Halal Manager	10 Years	Malaysia

All the informants were from middle management, where they were responsible for daily operational activities and decisions and had experience in dealing with Japanese. In addition, Mangan et al. (2004) suggested that interviewing middle management is deemed necessary since they are the decision-makers of logistics operational activities and thus can provide greater insight into the organisation. Therefore, all respondents were selected based on the conditions below:

- Internal Halal Committee Members (IHC)
- Japanese or has been involved in the industry for more than 3 years
- Middle management

#### 4. FINDING

The results from the interviews show that three main themes were identified related to the successful adoption of halal logistics among Japanese logistics companies, namely culture, seeking support and integrity.

##### 4.1 Culture

Most informants perceived that culture was the main factor that had led to the successful adoption of halal logistics among Japanese logistics companies. In the literature review section, previous studies have shown that the Japanese organisation has practised long-term relationships, trust and hierarchy systems. The commitment was found to be the core sustainability component and successful halal logistics adoption among Japanese companies. They further explained committed customers led to sustainable business. Below are examples of quotations related to the commitment to the customer from the interviews conducted:

*“The customer is suggested from top management, the business will be more secured compared to Malaysian local customer. This is because of relationship and networking with the top management between our company and customer”, Respondent 1 (Company ABC),*

*“We call the Japanese customer as our VVIP customer. As a Malaysian, we take more care of these customers because they provide the highest profit compare to the others”, Respondent 1 (Company DEF).*

*“I prefer choosing Japanese customers because of the quality services they offer and prompt payment”, Respondent 2 (Company ABC).*

Secondly, commitment to the halal logistics business was the second major component found in Japanese culture. Most informants agreed that their companies were very committed to providing

halal logistics businesses despite the poor demand from the food producers. These companies are committed to providing and promoting halal logistics services. The sample of the quotation as below:

*“Only one customer is using the halal warehouse service. But the customer occupied 70% of halal warehouse area. We take as our initiative to put the cargo at halal warehouse even they are not required us to put in the halal warehouse”, Respondent 3 (Company ABC)*

*“Some of the customers still require us to have halal certification. For example, A\*\*\* company, has many branches and they are supplying halal food around Malaysia. One of the requirements from them is halal certification. If we don't have the halal certification, we cannot participate in the network and the tender. In future, there is a big potential customer, we can show to them that we have already prepared and our halal system was well established”, Respondent 1 (Company GHI).*

With the halal certification, the companies believed that their companies could be easily recognised by their potential customer.

*“We add halal services as our special value to customer.... customer can use our certification to value to the buyers' products”, Respondent 2 (Company DEF).*

*“We plan to grow our halal business, by approaching our existing customers and persuade them to expand and occupied our halal warehouse. This is because our existing customer are the major supplier in Malaysia. By doing this, our halal business can be further expanded”, Respondent 1 (Company ABC).*

The third commitment is the commitment to the business partners along the supply chain. The informants highlighted that the top management is willing to invest in their business partner's business to serve the growing demand for halal business. As indicated by Company DEF:

*“Company joins partner with G\*\*\* C\*\*\* to cater the halal market demand. Any customer who requested for halal cold storage, company will send the details at G\*\*\* C\*\*\* to handle the cargo”, Respondent 2 (Company DEF).*

*“We take other initiatives such merging and joining with other company to provide halal logistics services to cater the halal demands”, Respondents 1 (Company DEF).*

#### **4.2 Seek Support**

Seeking support from the government was one factor contributing to the sustainability of the halal business among Japanese logistics companies. Commitment from the government was found to be very significant by these informants. Furthermore, the informants agreed if JAKIM enforced companies to adopt halal supply chains to complete the halal practices, it might create a great demand for halal logistics businesses.

*“If JAKIM guide and promote us around the world, then we can successfully sustain the business not only in Malaysia”, Respondent 3 (Company ABC).*

*“We need government support to market the Halal logistics services”, Respondent 2 (Company ABC).*

The informants also demonstrated that stated commitment from the government to the halal business could create great awareness among the customer. Some of the customers have a lack of interest in using halal logistics services. As stated by GHI and DEF: -

*“If they are aware of the importance of halal supply chain, they will use halal logistics service provider as their third-party services”, Respondent 1 (Company GHI)*

*“Customers have poor knowledge on halal logistics services. Therefore, not many customers requested to use our halal services. We can’t invest more such adding more lorry due to the lack of demand”, Respondent 1 (Company DEF).*

### **4.3 Integrity**

The third significant factor found in bringing successful adoption of halal logistics among Japanese logistics companies is integrity. The results indicated that integrity is vital in maintaining the halal status in their operational activities. According to Mohamed et al. (2016), Halal integrity refers to halal products free from any potential contaminant from upstream to downstream of the supply chain. It is important because it may violate the halal status intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, the informants explained the company must comply with the halal requirement to maintain the integrity of the products.

*“As halal third party logistics service provider, we really maintain the halal integrity of the products by establish the halal assurance systems, identify the critical points and develop the preventive measure in the system... but when reach to their parties such port, are they really on this issue such maintaining the halal integrity of the products. Other examples, we also have other vendor to support the operation. Such transportation. They agreed they can deliver the halal cargo. But we cannot ensure how they control the non-compliance since everyday carry variety of cargo”, Respondent 1 (Company GHI).*

*“We receive a bundle of cargo from port. The cargo is mixing with other cargo in a lorry. The halal cargo was delivered to us and non halal deliver to the other customer”, Respondent 1 (Company DEF)*

The top management has clearly shown that they are committed to complying with the halal requirements through their involvement in the halal operation activities because the top management is committed to maintaining the halal integrity status of the products

*“We need to deliver the halal products to non halal manufacturer which are swine farm. I need to explain further to our top management that this logistics operations will affect our image as halal logistics service provider”, Respondent 1 (Company ABC).*

In short, six in-depth interviews provided various perspectives on the successful adoption of halal logistics among Japanese logistics companies. Four factors were found in previous literature: culture, internationalisation, management support and government support. Ngah et al. (2014) highlight that awareness, complexity and top management support are determinant factors in adopting halal warehouses. Hazwani et al. (2014) determine that support from the management, enforcement of the Halal Assurance System (HAS), environment controls, employee acceptance and company vision as factors in halal logistics implementation among logistics providers. Some of the identified factors were similar and tested in the different contexts of the organisation.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Firstly, the commitment was the major component of Japanese culture in the context of the Japanese logistics company. Their commitment was significantly found in their commitment to customers, their own halal logistics business practices and business partner, which became the foundation of the success and sustainability of their halal logistics implementation. Secondly, at the same time, Government commitment is needed for the Japanese logistics companies to strengthen the sustainability of their halal business. Talib et al. (2020) highlighted that 16 articles found indicating the government’s role needed in logistics sectors cannot be ignored. In this paper, the authors explained the role of government could be divided into six categories: regulation, financial incentives, taxation, infrastructure, guidance and encouragement, and education and labour supply. Therefore, the seeking support variable in the context of this study refers to the commitment from the government in terms of guidance and encouragement to support the Japanese logistics company in the halal businesses. Lastly, integrity was found as the third factor in the successful adoption of the halal logistics business among

Japanese logistics companies. According to Faradina et al. (2018), integrity is the quality of being honest. Based on the findings, the Japanese logistics companies have their own integrity in maintaining the halal logistics businesses by complying with all the halal requirements; such preserve the halal cargo along the halal supply chain. Thus, the objectives of this research to analyse the scale of involvement of Japanese logistics companies in the halal business can be seen by their commitment to seeking support from the government and their integrity in maintaining the halal businesses as well as part of the justification of their interest in adopting the halal logistics.

## **6. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The halal logistics business is not rapidly growing compared to halal food and beverages producers. Even though the growth of halal logistics is relatively low, the Japanese still take this opportunity to serve the demand and adopt halal logistics into their operational activities. From the series of six interviews conducted, the Japanese halal logistics service providers mentioned commitment, seeking support, and integrity were the core components of the Japanese involvement in Halal logistics business operations. This study also demonstrated how the Japanese could sustain the halal business and adopt halal logistics in their companies. Other research should be conducted to confirm the findings with non-Japanese logistics companies certified by JAKIM. This study attempts to identify the driving factors that have led to the successful adoption of halal logistics practices. The findings from this study could provide a foundation for future studies better to understand Halal logistics adoption among Japanese logistics companies. Future research with better contextual theory could be tested since this study did not include any theory testing.

## **6. ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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