

## GARIS PANDUAN *SERTU* MENURUT PERSPEKTIF ISLAM – JAKIM: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

The *halal* industry in Malaysia is rapidly expanding in line with the National Halal Policy 2025–2035, aiming to establish a holistic and conducive *halal* ecosystem globally. One of the key requirements for *halal* certification is the implementation of the *sertu* process in cases of contamination involving severe impurities (*najis mughallazah*) from dogs, pigs, and their derivatives. To standardize this practice, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) published the Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam. More than a decade since its implementation, however, several concerns have been raised by stakeholders regarding its clarity and practicality in meeting industry needs. This study critically reviews the Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam to identify key implementation issues, categorize them into related themes, and propose recommendations for improvement. Adopting a qualitative approach, the research is based on content analysis of the guideline and insights gathered through round table discussions with stakeholders and industry representatives, focusing on both *fiqh* and technical aspects. The data collection by content analysis is systematically reviewed, and textual data is coded by breaking it into meaningful units, which are then categorized based on predefined or emergent themes to identify patterns relevant to the research question. The round table discussions collect qualitative data by engaging stakeholders in structured dialogue, which is recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed to capture diverse perspectives and in-depth insights. Both methods rely on careful transcription, coding, and thematic analysis to produce organized, meaningful qualitative findings. The findings reveal 11 core issues and recommend five amendments: establishing mandatory conditions for *sertu*, refining material specifications, standardizing soil preparation methods, enhancing the *sertu* procedure, and incorporating post-*sertu* cleaning protocols. These amendments and recommendations contribute to strengthening guideline implementation and boosting compliance within the *halal* industry, thereby supporting integrity and consistency in *halal* certification processes in Malaysia.

## Introduction

Malaysia anticipates a RM22.34 trillion increase in demand for the global *halal* economy by 2030 (Malaysian Investment Development Authority, 2022). This increase is attributed to growing demand for *halal* products among both Muslims and non-Muslims. The primary drivers of this demand are healthy and safe eating, as well as *halal* tourism. Consequently, all *halal* components must be properly regulated to ensure smooth development (Astro Awani, 2021). *Sertu* is one of the requirements for Malaysian *halal* certificate applicants under the Halal Assurance System (HAS) for large and medium-sized industries. *Sertu* means purifying the body, clothing, places, hardware, and equipment that have come into contact with severe impurities (*najs mughallazah*), such as those from dogs, pigs and their derivatives, by washing them seven times with *mutlaq* water (pure water), with one wash mixed with soil (Al-Nawawi, 1994; al-Khatib al-Shirbini, n.d.; Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik), 2020). According to Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik) (2020), the first wash should be mixed with soil, followed by six washes using *mutlaq* water.

In the Malaysian context, any *halal*-certified company must develop and document a *sertu* procedure that complies with JAKIM guidelines. This requirement facilitates the company's implementation of *sertu* processes in cases of cross-contamination or non-conformance that necessitate the *sertu* process (Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik), 2020). Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam were endorsed by the Fatwa Committee Muzakarah no. 96 in 2011. This guideline includes the definition of *sertu*, along with *sertu* procedures for industrial purposes, processes, soil specifications, preparation methods, and so on. This guideline must be read in conjunction with the Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik) (2020) and the Malaysian Halal Management System (Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik), 2020).

However, there is a need to review this guideline to align it with the demands of the *halal* industry. The Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (Domestik) (2020) outlines nine *halal* certification schemes, and some industries face challenges in implementing the *sertu* process, as the guidelines have been in place for over 10 years and require updating to meet industry demands (Yusof, 2023; Mohd Salleh et al., 2020). Hence, it is necessary to create specific guidelines for each Malaysian *halal* certification scheme. Among the issues that have arisen are a lack of understanding and knowledge about *sertu* among individuals, as well as the emergence of modern *sertu* equipment and machines that are sensitive to soil water, potentially causing rust and damage (Salleh et al., 2024). The purpose of this research is to examine the content of the SGIP 2013, analyze the issues within the guideline, and categorize them into related themes. The study's findings will be formulated into recommendations for improving the *Sertu* guidelines.

## Literature Review

Islam places great emphasis on cleanliness and purification, which are integral to faith and worship. Purification in Islam involves removing impurities (*najs*) through prescribed methods such as ablution (*wudu*), full body washing (*ghusl*), and specific cleansing procedures for severe impurities (*najs mughallazah*). *Sertu* is a method of cleansing *najs mughallazah* that involves seven washes: one with *mutlaq* water mixed with soil and six with *mutlaq* water alone, based on classical jurisprudence (Nurrulhidayah et al., 2024; Yusof & Mohd Subri, 2022; Ahmad & Shariff, 2016). Such emphasis reflects the holistic nature of Islamic law, which not only governs ritual purity but also extends to broader human conduct, even in situations of war (Iwansyah, 2019). *Najs* is categorized in Islamic law into essential *najs* (which cannot be purified) and unessential *najs* (which may be rendered impure through contact). Different schools of *fiqh* provide detailed rulings on what constitutes *najs* and how purification should be performed, with some variation in specifics such as the impurity status of animals or substances (Nurrulhidayah et al., 2024; Yusof & Mohd Subri, 2022).

The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) developed Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam to standardize the *halal* certification process, particularly for cleansing impurities in *halal* food production and related industries. The guideline is part of the broader 'Manual of Halal Certification Procedures' aimed at ensuring *halal* compliance across Malaysian industries. The State Islamic Religious Councils (MAIN/JAIN) are responsible for monitoring and verifying the implementation of the *sertu* process, issuing *sertu* certification, and conducting audits to ensure compliance with the Halal Assurance System (HAS) (JAKIM, 2013).

Before delving deeper into the topic of *sertu* within the JAKIM guidelines, the study will review the implementation of *halal* certification in Malaysia, analyze *sertu* from a *fiqh* perspective, and discuss issues based on *sertu* implementations.

### ***Implementation of Halal Certification in Malaysia***

The Arabic word “*halal*” denotes something that is ‘permissible’ or ‘lawful’ in Islam (Riaz & Chaudry, 2018). It embodies excellent and wholesome universal principles, including fair trade, ethical shopping, sustainability in health restoration, and concern for animals and the environment (Dahlal, Saniff, & Noh, 2024). The implementation of *halal* certification in Malaysia began with the establishment of the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Council (MAIWP) on February 1, 1974, which was placed under the responsibility of the Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam Malaysia (MKI) Secretariat. The MKI Secretariat later was upgraded to a division in the Prime Minister's Department (JPM), known as the Religious Division. Initially, this division issued *halal* certification letters for food and beverage products that met the requirements of Islamic law. On January 1, 1984, the organizational structure of the division was reorganized, increasing the number of units and upgrading the positions of heads of divisions, branches, and units. This change aligned with the growing responsibilities of implementing the program under JPM, in addition to continuing its duties as the MKI Secretariat. On May 21, 1985, the Religious Division of JPM was converted into the Islamic Affairs Division (BAHEIS), which fulfilled one of the Prime Minister's duties in implementing Islamic governance under Article 38(3)20 of the Federal Constitution (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Malaysia is a prosperous center for the *halal* industry, accounting for over 10% of the country's GDP. Numerous industries, including retail food and beverage (F&B), food processing, pharmaceuticals, banking, finance, and travel, coexist with and benefit from the *halal* sector (Abdul Halim et al., 2020). Consequently, Malaysia has garnered significant attention from foreign societies, particularly from predominantly Muslim nations (Malaysian Investment Development Authority, 2023). The Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) (2023) reported that *halal* food exports to international markets are projected to soar to USD 3 trillion (RM13.3 trillion) by 2027, up from USD 2 trillion in 2021. The growing Muslim population, projected to comprise 24% of the world's population in 2022 (or 1.9 billion people), is a major driver of this expansion. Major categories of *halal* food include meat, poultry, processed seafood, processed fruits and vegetables, dairy products, cereals and grains, oils and fats, and confections. The Asia Pacific region has the highest demand for *halal* products, followed by North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America (MIDA, 2023).

The *halal* industry has expanded not only in product sectors such as pharmaceuticals, health products, toiletries, and cosmetics but also in service sectors like marketing, supply chain, logistics, packaging, manufacturing, branding, and financing (Azam & Abdullah, 2020; Nor et al., 2023). The study also indicates that lifestyle offerings, including travel and tourism, hospitality management, and the fashion industry, are now significant sectors within the extended *halal* industry (Aniqoh & Hanastiana, 2020). With a head start in establishing a well-structured *halal* regulation and ecosystem, JAKIM and *Halal* Development Corporation Berhad (HDC) have been entrusted to lead this dynamic sector. These agencies carry out their responsibilities through a vast pool of knowledgeable talent that offers practical solutions while improving mechanisms and infrastructure to align with Malaysia's *Halal* Industry Master Plan 2030 (MIDA, 2008).

On one hand, religious beliefs significantly influence consumer preferences, particularly regarding food choices, and Islam imposes specific dietary guidelines, especially concerning meat and meat products. However, ensuring compliance with *halal* standards across the entire meat and meat products supply chain presents considerable challenges. Instances of non-compliance, including improper slaughtering techniques, mislabeling, adulteration, and contamination, have raised concerns about the authenticity of *halal* status. Fathima et al., (2024) highlight that these issues pose a threat to the authenticity of *halal* certification. Priantina et al., (2023) analyze current trends and discussions surrounding *halal* studies in relation to micro and small businesses.

Micro and small enterprises face challenges in implementing *halal* assurance, primarily due to their limited resources. Among the issues encountered are a lack of knowledge, understanding, and access to *halal* technical assistance regarding the certification process. A study by Sucipto et al., (2022) on the bakery industry found that *halal* material choices affect production costs, product quality, and profit. The commitment of small-scale bakery businesses to choose materials determines their speed of compliance with *halal* certificate requirements. A study by Wijoyo and Isyanto (2023) on the implementation of *halal* certification for creative economy business actors in the food and beverage sub-sector indicates that such certification can enhance their confidence in operating their businesses. Community service initiatives that involve the business community can be very effective, as they can serve as intermediaries to socialize the importance of *halal* certification. A study by Ahamat et al., (2023) explores the challenges faced by Malaysian SMEs in exporting *halal* food products through a case study of Jalen Sdn Bhd, a *halal*-certified manufacturer. The study identifies two main barriers: difficulty in sourcing *halal*-certified raw materials and challenges in obtaining Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) certifications due to high costs and complex procedures. These constraints limit the international competitiveness of *halal* SMEs despite Malaysia's strong *halal* ecosystem. The study suggests that enhanced institutional support and streamlined certification processes are essential to help SMEs expand into global *halal* markets and strengthen Malaysia's position as a *halal* industry leader.

*Halal* products are no longer merely a preference but a necessity for the majority of consumers. Azis et al., (2024) conducted a study on *halal* trend certification and labeling through bibliometric analysis and a systematic literature review on publications from 2018 to 2023, revealing a significant increase in the number of publications. The results underscore the importance of awareness and education regarding *halal* certification and labeling within the community. With more products being labeled *halal*, consumers can make choices that align more closely with their religious beliefs, thereby strengthening their religious identity and sense of security in consuming products that comply with Islamic law (Maslul & Utami, 2018; Mirdhayati et al., 2020; Ilyas, 2018; Yunus et al., 2014; Ghani & Farouk, 2021).

### ***Sertu from a Fiqh Perspective***

Understanding the real situation that necessitates the *sertu* process is critical to avoid waste and negative reactions from people, particularly non-Muslims. The *fiqh* literature clearly outlines the situations that require the *sertu* procedure. This is stated in the book *Hashiat Al-Bujayrimi ala Al-Khatib* by Al-Bujayrimi (1995): "Anything that cannot be seen with the naked eye is forgiven, even if it contains *mughallazah* impurity, due to the difficulty (*mashaqqah*) of avoiding it".

According to this text, *sertu* must be performed when severe impurities (*najs mughallazah*) are visible to the naked eye, whether they are *ain' najasat* or animals like dogs and pigs that reside in or pass through a location. However, if these impurities are not visible, they are forgiven. The concentration rate and ratio of water mixed with soil are not specified in the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah R.A. However, the author of *Mughni al-Muhtaj*, namely Al-Shirbiny (1994), provides further clarification:

Translation: His statement (with purifying soil) means it must cover the area of impurity using an amount that turbids the water and reaches all parts of the affected area through the medium of water. It is also necessary to mix the soil with water, either before applying it to the area or afterwards.

(Al-Shirbiny, 1994, p. 239)

According to the passage above, the soil should be dissolved in water until the water changes color and becomes cloudy, and the quantity of soil should be sufficient to clean the area contaminated by *mughallazah* waste. Furthermore, certain innovative *sertu* methods, such as the spray and wipe technique, raise concerns about compliance with Syariah requirements. Thus, there is an explanation in the book *Hashiyat al-Bajuri* by Al-Bajuri (2016): "The water must flow; mere contact with water without flow is not sufficient, because that is not called washing; however, immersion is sufficient, because it is considered washing". In conclusion, when using the spray and wipe method, it is essential to ensure that the water sprayed on the surface that comes into contact with faeces can flow effectively.

### ***Implementation of Sertu in the Halal Industry***

According to Salleh et al., (2020), the demand for Islamic cleansing services or *sertu*, has indirectly increased due to the growth of the *halal* business both domestically and internationally. However, while the hadith addresses Islamic washing (*sertu*) in general, industrial standards are more complex, as the process also involves water-sensitive machinery and equipment, posing a challenge for the sector. Therefore, for the industry to practice Islamic purification (*sertu*), a more comprehensive standard is necessary. This study clarifies the traditional *sertu* practice as defined by Islamic law, examines modern *sertu* practices in the context of the *halal* industry, and reviews the protocols and administration of *sertu* by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and the State Islamic Religious Department.

The understanding and knowledge of the purpose and conditions required for the *sertu* process remain at a moderate level among the community (Awang & Zaki, 2022). This issue arose when an electrical goods retailer promoted a *sertu* package for the sale of used goods, claiming it was necessary due to uncertainty regarding whether the equipment's owner was Muslim. This practice is said to comply with syarak requirements, which state that Muslims should be free of *najs mughallazah* (Sidek & Ridzwan, 2018). Additionally, there was an incident involving wild boars entering a mosque in Sungai Buloh, Selangor, which resulted in the replacement of the mosque's carpet. The cost to replace the entire carpet affected by severe impurities (*najs mughallazah*) was as high as RM34,000. Many people criticized this situation, viewing it as a waste of money (Malaysia Gazette, 2018).

Furthermore, several issues concerning *sertu* products, such as clay soap, have been identified. The manufacturer of *sertu* products indicates that the number of additional ingredients in their products ranges from six to 20. The National Fatwa Muzakarah states that added items in the product must not exceed the percentage of soil present. Consequently, a review of the *sertu* product is necessary to ensure compliance with Syarak's requirements (Azhari et al., 2020). Additionally, the *sertu* service and the state department of Islamic religion noted that the current guidelines do not encompass all *halal* certification schemes available in Malaysia, complicating the implementation of the *sertu* process in various industries, particularly those with complex and sensitive equipment. Therefore, further research is needed to establish more specific guidelines that can be adopted by all *halal* industries (Salleh et al., 2020).

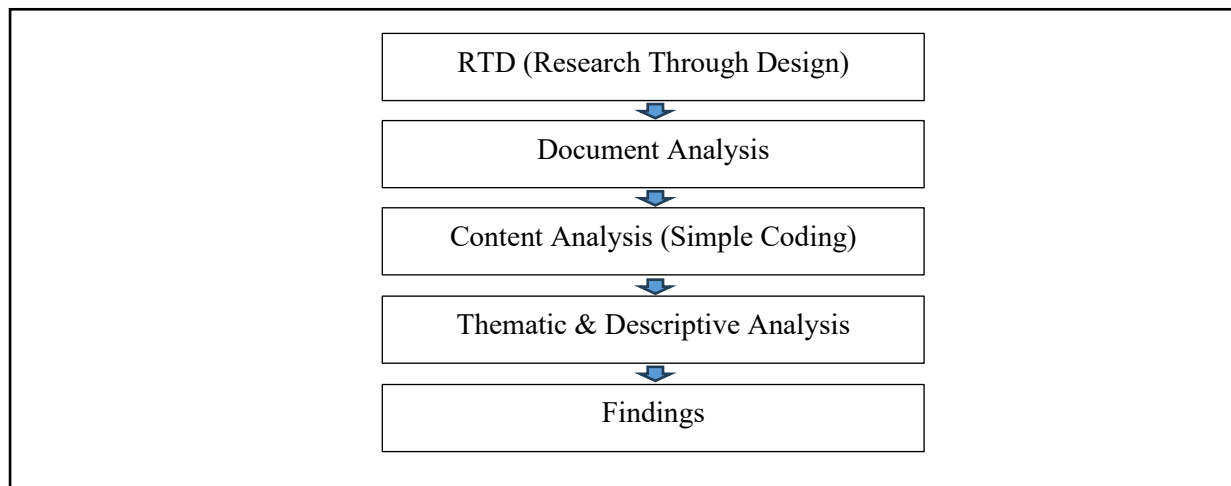
### **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design, consistent with Creswell's (1998) assertion that qualitative methods are particularly effective for gaining a deep understanding of the complexities inherent in the social world and uncovering the reasons behind specific phenomena. The primary objective of this research is to identify issues related to the Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam from an industrial perspective. To achieve this, the study conducted a Round Table Discussion (RTD) with five stakeholders: *sertu* industry players, *fiqh* experts, JAKIM officials, State Islamic Religious Councils (MAIN), and State Islamic Religious Department (JAIN).

Subsequently, the researchers reviewed the guidelines, categorizing issues into related themes and proposing recommendations for improving the Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam. The content analysis approach was employed to examine the document, focusing on the *sertu* guidelines. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is particularly suitable for interpreting subjective content through a systematic process that identifies key themes and patterns. This approach enables the researcher to critically explore the religious, procedural, and regulatory aspects embedded within the *sertu* guidelines (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The main instrument used in this study is document analysis, with the primary source being the Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam. This document is selected as it serves as the official and main reference for *halal* certification related to *sertu* procedures in Malaysia, providing standardized procedures and regulatory frameworks for the implementation of *sertu* within the *halal* industry (JAKIM, 2013). The data collection process involved content analysis techniques, focusing on systematically reviewing, summarizing, and thematically organizing the information contained in the guidelines. The data were interpreted based on recurring concepts and issues related directly to the study's objectives. This method allows for a clearer understanding of how *sertu* practices are implemented and the gaps that exist in real-world applications (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

To ensure reliability, the study employed a transparent and consistent data handling and analysis process. Every stage of content analysis was documented clearly, and the coding process was performed meticulously to maintain consistency and reduce bias. For the validity process, the data were approved by experts in *fiqh halal* and *Shariah*. The primary reference document was analyzed thoroughly to ensure that the findings were grounded in the original content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

During the analysis phase, the researcher utilized simple coding techniques based on Strauss and Corbin's (1990) methodology. Themes were developed based on the issues identified in the *Garis Panduan Sertu menurut Perspektif Islam*, focusing on *fiqh* and technical issues. The themes include "Sertu Prerequisites", "Specifications for Materials", "Exclusions from Sertu", "The *Sertu* Method", and "*Sertu* Materials". This method helped structure the findings into organized categories, enabling a clearer understanding of the guidelines' strengths, limitations, and areas requiring improvement (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Figure 1 illustrates the detailed process in the methodology of the study:



**Figure 1.** Methodology Process

In this study, the researchers used simple coding for RTD data and content analysis data as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Simple Technique Coding Guideline

Code	Description
ISSUE (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8)	RTD data
CONTENT (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10, C11)	Content analysis data

A qualitative content analysis was conducted based on the official *Sertu* Guidelines from an Islamic Perspective (JAKIM, 2013). Relevant textual data were extracted and coded systematically. The codes were then grouped into broader themes reflecting the key areas of concern in the guidelines. In order to enhance transparency and replicability, a coding audit trail, including verbatim excerpts, assigned codes, and emerging themes, was prepared. This process followed the qualitative analytic procedures outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), ensuring a structured, valid, and rigorous interpretation of the guideline content.

### Samples and Materials

Based on the content analysis, five themes were identified and supported by interview findings from industry players, specifically Company A (Informant 1) and Company B (Informant 2). The first theme highlights the lack of detailed specifications regarding the conditions for compulsory *sertu* (I1) as previous studies indicate that Malaysians' understanding of *sertu* remains moderate.

Data from the round table discussions addressed several issues regarding *sertu* implementation in *halal* industries. These issues are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Issues of *Sertu* Implementation

Issues	Description of Issues
11	Lack of specifications for soil in <i>sertu</i> implementation in industries
12	Lack of methods for soil preparation
13	Lack of explanations for soil-water concentration for <i>halal</i> schemes
14	Lack of discussion on the sensitivity of machines/equipment
15	Lack of <i>sertu</i> method in the <i>Sertu</i> Guideline <i>Halal</i> Certification Schemes
16	Lack of discussion about post- <i>sertu</i>
17	Lack of explanation on technical parameters standardization
18	No Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for <i>sertu</i> implementation

In this study, data on the SGIP 2013 were collected and analyzed using thematic analysis. The primary aim was to identify and examine the core issues within the guideline from both *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and technical perspectives. Upon identifying these issues, the researchers systematically categorized them into five main themes, as shown in Table 2, each representing a critical area of concern within the guideline. Based on this thematic categorization, a few structured and practical recommendations were developed to improve the clarity, applicability, and effectiveness of the *Sertu* Guidelines for industry implementation.

**Table 3.** Critical Review of Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam by JAKIM

Code	Issue	JAKIM Guideline Page	Theme
C1	<i>Sertu</i> does not specify the conditions that must be met in detail.	5	<i>Sertu</i> Prerequisites
C2	The specifications and methods of soil preparation are not clearly organized, causing confusion in soil water preparation.	6	Specifications for Materials
C3	Machines or equipment that are incapable of adhering to the specified percentage of soil water.	9	Exclusions from <i>sertu</i>
C4	The methods described in this <i>sertu</i> guideline book are too general and do not apply to all <i>halal</i> certification schemes.	9-15	<i>Sertu</i> Method
C5	The methods are organized according to the type of soil used, potentially confusing the reader.	9-15	
C6	Specifications and soil preparation methods are described in different subtopics.	6	Specifications for Materials
C7	Does not explain why the percentage of soil is used in the guidelines.	6	Specifications for Materials
C8	The method does not clearly define the need for additives in the <i>sertu</i> process.	10	<i>Sertu</i> Materials
C9	How many times should this additional washing be performed?	14	
C10	The types of additives that are used.	14	
C11	The period of time needed to complete the sanitation process.	-	<i>Sertu</i> Method

\*C= content, number= no of content

The findings of this study are organized by themes, and suggestions for improving the *Sertu* guidelines are done.

### Discussion on Material: Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam

The Critical Review of Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam by JAKIM constitute a fundamental component of the Malaysia Halal Certification Manual, offering a structured and authoritative framework for the application of *sertu* procedures. These guidelines are particularly essential for industries that require purification processes in instances of contamination involving *najs mughallazah* (severe impurities), such as substances derived from pigs or dogs. Serving as a critical reference for ensuring compliance with Islamic legal and hygienic standards, the guidelines delineate the circumstances necessitating *sertu* and the proper implementation techniques. Based on a comprehensive content analysis, the guideline is organized into four principal domains: (1) Introduction and Definition, which clarifies foundational concepts and the scope of *sertu*; (2) Material Specifications, detailing the requirements and

conditions for water and other cleansing agents; (3) Methods of *Sertu*, outlining procedural steps based on Islamic jurisprudence; and (4) Exemptions, specifying contexts in which *sertu* may not be obligatory. Each of these components collectively ensures that the *sertu* process is applied consistently and in accordance with *Shariah* principles within the *halal* industry.

### **Introduction and Defined Terms**

This section explains the purpose, background, definitions, and wisdom (*hikmah*) of *sertu* as part of its introductory foundation.

#### *Purpose:*

The *sertu* process aims to establish a standardized purification method for objects, premises, equipment, clothing, or individuals contaminated by *najs mughallazah*, ensuring they are ritually pure according to Islamic law.

#### *Background:*

Islam emphasizes both physical and spiritual cleanliness. This requirement is derived from the Prophet Muhammad's S.A.W instruction:

Translation: Clean utensils licked by a dog with seven washes, the first using soil.

(Muslim, Hadith No. 279)

Thus, *sertu* involves one wash with soil-mixed water, followed by six rinses with *mutlaq* (pure) water. The definition part defines *sertu* as the cleansing of something contaminated by severe impurities (*najs mughallazah*). It can be purified by washing it once with soil-mixed water and six times with *mutlaq* water.

#### *Interpretation:*

The guideline clarifies that all derivatives of pigs and dogs, including DNA traces in processed ingredients, fall under the category of *najs mughallazah*. This has implications for ingredient screening and mandates the *sertu* procedures for any contaminated tools or surfaces.

This part also defines core terms: *ain najasat*, *najs mughallazah*, *sertu*, and *water mutlaq*.

#### i. *Najs Mughallazah:*

All substances derived from dogs or pigs, or their progeny, whether in the form of licking, saliva, flesh, fat, bones, or any extract from either animal, are considered *najs mughallazah* (severe impurity).

#### ii. *Mutlaq Water:*

Pure water that has not been contaminated by any impure substance to the extent that it alters the smell, taste, or color of the water.

#### iii. *Ain al-Najasat:*

Impurity that is visible to the naked eye, referring to the physical substance of the impurity itself.

#### iv. *Sertu:*

The act of cleansing *najs mughallazah* by washing with pure water seven times, with one of the washes using water mixed with soil. Preferably, the first wash should use the soil mixture, followed by six subsequent washes using the *mutlaq* water.

### **Wisdom of Sertu**

The *sertu* practice is not only a form of religious obedience (*ta'abbudi*) but also offers scientific and hygienic benefits. It eliminates harmful microbes found in animals and aligns with modern food safety protocols such as GMP and HACCP, reinforcing Islam's concern for purity and public health.



In certain situations, the *sertu* process is exempted from being performed. This is clearly mentioned in the exemptions section of the guideline. The cases of *sertu* exemption are: *sertu* is not applicable to internal human cleansing (e.g., ingestion), or new Muslims (*muallaf*) are not required to cleanse body parts previously exposed to impurities. *Fuqaha*’ or classical scholars also provide additional exemptions for several scenarios (Al-Ramli, 2009; Al-Zuhaili, 1985):

- i. A negligible amount of *najs mughallazah* that is not visibly apparent.
- ii. Internal body parts of a living human.
- iii. Situation where purification is extremely difficult (*masyaqqah*).

Islam has clearly outlined the prerequisites and principles of *sertu*, emphasizing that purification serves both religious and practical functions. The goal is not only to fulfill an act of worship (*ibadah*) and obedience to Allah SWT but also to ensure the removal of impurities from the body, clothing, and environment (Mustafa al-Khin et al., 1992).

### **Material Specifications**

Water and soil are the primary materials used in *sertu*. According to the guidelines, two types of soil can be utilized in the *sertu* process: soil and clay soap. The water used must be *mutlaq* water, which is free from impurities (*najs*) that would alter its smell, taste, or color. The soil must not have been used for *tayammum* (*musta'mal*) and must not be contaminated by impurities (*najs*), oil, or other substances. Furthermore, the best soil selection is specified; it should be clay taken from at least four meters below the surface and dried until it can be crushed into dust. However, any part of the soil that is considered pure and clean may also be used. Clay soap is employed because the Muzakarah Fatwa Committee has mandated its use, provided that the percentage of soil in the soap exceeds that of other ingredients and that the *sertu* process adheres to *Shariah* requirements. The *sertu* guidelines discuss material specifications, soil preparation, and selection methods. *Fuqaha*’ or *fiqh* scholars have also clearly outlined the specifications for *sertu* materials in their writings. The material specifications for water and soil are as follows (Al-Ramli, 2009):

Water: Must be pure (*mutlaq*), natural, not previously used for purification or washing (*ghayr musta'mal*) and free from any contamination by impurities (*najs*).

Soil: The soil used must be:

- i. Clean and free from impurities (*najs*).
- ii. Not previously used for purification or *tayammum* (dry ablution).
- iii. Free from contaminants such as oil or other impurities.
- iv. Safe for equipment to avoid damage (e.g., fine particles).

In current industries, access to acceptable soil is limited. The use of certified clay-based cleansing products or any *sertu* products that comply with *shariah* is on the rise. *Halal* industries must provide proof, such as lab tests or source certificates, that the water used meets these standards during audits.

### **Sertu Method**

According to the Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam, the *Sertu* Guideline highlights two types of *sertu* methods; namely the *sertu* methods (one for soil users and one for the use of clay soap). The *sertu* method is classified based on the type of soil used for each piece of equipment, area, body part, and so on, that has been contaminated with severe impurities (*mughallazah najs*). The description is as follows:

#### ***Sertu Method Using Soil***

The use of soil in the *sertu* process is detailed in the section on cleansing premises and consumable items. The procedure is as follows:

- i. Step 1: Remove all visible impurities ( '*ain al-najasat* ) thoroughly until no traces remain visible to the naked eye.
- ii. Step 2: Prepare a sufficient amount of water and mix in a small portion of clean soil until the color of the water changes to resemble the soil, and the mixture becomes uniform.
- iii. Step 3: At the first wash, apply the soil-water mixture to the contaminated area or object, ensuring complete coverage.
- iv. Step 4: After that, rinse the area or object six more times using *mutlaq* (pure) water, completing a total of seven washes.
- v. Step 5: It is permissible to add a permissible cleaning agent, such as *halal-certified soap*, during the second or third wash. Fragrance may also be added to the final rinse, especially in cases involving soft furnishings like sofas or clothing.

This *sertu* method aligns with the *Shariah* compliance outlined by Al-Ramli (2009) as follows:

- i. The contaminated area must first undergo removal of the physical impurity ( '*ain najasat* ).
- ii. Subsequently, seven washings are performed.
- iii. Six washings are done with *mutlaq* water.
- iv. One washing with water mixed with soil (preferably the first wash).
- v. Modern adaptation: The use of *sertu* soap (containing purified clay) is permitted as a hygienic alternative to the traditional method.

For sensitive and complex equipment that is difficult to dismantle, the suggested *sertu* method involves using a spray technique. The soil-water mixture can be placed in a spray bottle and sprayed onto the surface to be cleaned until the mixture flows. The percentage of the soil-water mixture has been determined to be within the range of 0.6% and 2.5%, depending on the required water concentration. Table 4 illustrates the *sertu* methods for sensitive and complex equipment as mentioned in the *sertu* guideline:

**Table 4. *Sertu* Procedure using Soil Water**

<i>Sertu</i> Part	<i>Sertu</i> Procedure
Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Machines	<i>Sertu</i> is the part of the head that compresses the dust into medicine. Then prepare a moist soil compound that can be mixed with the medicine-making material (the empty base component) and passed through the manufacturing machine as the first wash, followed by six other moist compounds.
Compressor Heads	For compressor heads that compact powder into medication, a moist soil compound should be prepared and mixed with the basic ingredients of the medicine ( <i>base component</i> ). This mixture should be passed through the production machine as the first wash, followed by six subsequent washes using similar moist mixtures.
Operational Line	For the operational line, such as conveyor belts, a cloth or sponge should be soaked with the soil-water mixture and wiped across the entire operational line for the first wash. This process should be repeated six more times using clean water or water mixed with a permissible cleaning agent.
Containers	For containers, a sufficient amount of soil-water mixture must be prepared and sprayed onto the container's surface until it flows across the surface. Then, the surface should be scrubbed using a brush to ensure the mixture is spread evenly.
Kitchen	For kitchen areas, the surface must first be cleaned of oil and any visible impurities ( <i>ain najasat</i> ) before applying the soil-water mixture evenly over the surface.
Pipes	For pipes, a sufficient amount of soil-water mixture must be prepared and passed through the pipes using a pump or suitable equipment.
Storage Tank	For storage tanks, the soil-water mixture should be evenly spread over the inner surfaces of the tank.

The *sertu* procedure for pharmaceutical machines, containers, kitchens, pipes, and storage tanks provides a practical and *Shariah*-compliant solution for cleansing complex industrial equipment that may be contaminated with *najs mughallazah*. By adapting the method based on the nature and sensitivity of each item (whether through spraying, soaking, wiping, or pumping), industries can ensure ritual purity without dismantling the entire systems. This approach not only preserves equipment functionality but also upholds the *halal* integrity in line with Islamic guidelines and modern hygiene standards.

#### *Sertu Method using Clay Soap*

All industries, premises, equipment, clothing, transportation, and human body parts that are contaminated with *najs mughallazah* must use clay-based soap as a substitute for soil in the *sertu* process. This was approved by the 76th *Muzakarah* (Conference) of the *Fatwa* Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia, held on 21–23 November 2006, which stated:

“Soap containing clay elements may be used to perform *samak* for *najs mughallazah*, provided that the clay is pure and the clay content in the soap is greater than the other substances, and the cleansing method is carried out according to *shariah*”.

The *sertu* procedure using clay soap is as follows:

- i. Prepare a sufficient amount of clean water and clay soap.
- ii. Mix the clay soap into the clean water, ensuring the soap is thoroughly crushed.
- iii. The clay soap water is now ready for the *sertu* process.
- iv. Pour or apply the clay soap water onto the item to be cleansed to remove any existing impurities and begin the *sertu* process.
- v. Then, wash the item six times using *mutlaq* (pure) water.
- vi. After completing the *sertu*, clean the item again with an approved detergent and sanitize for 60 seconds. Dry the item completely.
- vii. The *sertu* methods for sensitive and complex equipment, as mentioned in the *sertu* guideline, are as follows:

**Table 5.** *Sertu* Procedure using Clay Soap

<i>Sertu</i> Part	<i>Sertu</i> Procedure
Hands	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Wash the hands by pouring or applying clay soap water over any affected areas, ensuring all traces of smell, taste, and color are removed.</li> <li>b. Then, wash the hands again six times using clean water.</li> <li>c. After completing the <i>sertu</i>, sanitize the hands, rinse with clean water, and dry using a towel or other appropriate means.</li> </ol>
Food Preparation Table	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pour or apply clay soap water over the entire surface of the contaminated food preparation table.</li> <li>b. Ensure the clay soap water flows over the entire surface and wash it until all traces of smell, taste, and color are gone. Then rinse again with six washes of clean water.</li> <li>c. After completing the <i>sertu</i>, wash the table again using an approved detergent and sanitize.</li> </ol>
Floors (Preparation/ Receiving Areas)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Wash the contaminated floor area with a single application of clay soap water until all traces of smell, taste, and color are removed.</li> <li>b. Then, wash again with six rinses of clean or <i>mutlaq</i> water.</li> <li>c. After completing the <i>sertu</i>, wash the floor once more using an approved detergent and sanitize.</li> </ol>
Machines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Clay soap water can be sprayed or poured over the contaminated machine surface (e.g., oven) until it flows and removes all smell, taste, and color. This method is used to avoid damaging sensitive equipment.</li> <li>b. Followed by washing the surface six times with clean or <i>mutlaq</i> water. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This step can also be performed using a wet cloth to further reduce the risk of damage to the machine.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

The *sertu* method using clay soap begins by preparing an adequate amount of *mutlaq* (pure) water. The clay soap should then be crushed and mixed thoroughly into the water. This method is suitable for cleansing tools, hands, tables, floors, and machines, especially when direct contact with soil may cause equipment damage. While the overall steps remain consistent, content analysis reveals variations in sentence structure and emphasis. The following differences are identified:

### 1. First Step – Variation in Sentence Usage

Examples:

- i. "Run clay soap water over the tools to be purified to remove visible impurities and initiate the *sertu* process".
- ii. "Wash your hands with clay soap water to remove excrement that has touched any part of your body until the smell, taste, and color are gone".

The phrase "*until the smell, taste, and color are gone*" appears in the context of hand cleansing but is not used consistently in other applications. For clarity and consistency, the purification criteria should be standardized across all procedures to avoid reader confusion. In cases involving sensitive equipment, such as ovens, it is advised to apply the clay soap solution by spraying or gentle washing until the mixture flows over the affected area. This helps prevent damage to delicate machines.

### 2. Second Step – Consistent Application

The second step is consistently stated across use cases:

- i. "After that, clean the tools with *mutlaq* water six times".

In cases where machinery is sensitive to direct water application, using a wet cloth or sponge soaked in *mutlaq* water is recommended. This method serves as a practical adaptation that ensures compliance with *Shariah* requirements while simultaneously preventing potential mechanical damage. It reflects an important balance between religious obligations and the operational constraints of modern industrial equipment, underscoring the need for contextual flexibility in implementing *sertu* procedures.

### 3. Third Step – Optional Finishing Procedures

This step is optional, as the second step already completes the *sertu* process. However, additional instructions are provided in some cases:

- i. "After completing the *sertu* process, the tools must be cleaned with an approved detergent and sanitized for 60 seconds. The tools should then be dried".
- ii. "After you've finished the *sertu*, wash your hands with soap and water. Dry your hands with a towel or similar".
- iii. "After completing the *sertu* process, wash it again with an approved detergent and sanitize".

These variations suggest a need for further research to determine whether additional cleaning, sanitizing, and drying steps are necessary or merely recommended. The guidelines do not explicitly clarify the status or requirement level of these post-*sertu* procedures. Additionally, the instruction to sanitize tools for 60 seconds, although mentioned in *Garis Panduan Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam, may confuse readers and *sertu* practitioners due to its placement and lack of supporting explanation. In conclusion, several elements of the *sertu* guideline remain ambiguous, particularly in terms of structure and clarity. Firstly, the requirement for soil-water concentration is inconsistent, raising uncertainty about its obligatory status. Secondly, the overall organization and explanation of the materials and procedures involved in *sertu* are fragmented and difficult to interpret. Thirdly, the methods outlined are overly general and may not align with the operational realities of Malaysia's *halal* industry. Therefore, it is recommended that the *sertu* guideline be reviewed and refined to improve clarity, coherence, and practical applicability, particularly to support effective implementation across diverse *halal* sectors.

### ***Discussion on Issues and Challenges***

Based on the RTD data and content analysis presented in Tables 2 and 3, the study identifies five key themes that highlight areas for improvement in the *sertu* guidelines:

#### ***Lack of Detailed Conditions for Mandatory Sertu***

The current *Sertu* guidelines suffer from a lack of clearly defined conditions that mandate their implementation, creating confusion among users and enforcement bodies. This ambiguity is compounded by the absence of a standardized operating procedure (SOP) for executing *sertu*, which limits consistency and accountability in practice (I8). Furthermore, the guidelines insufficiently address the practical sensitivities of machinery and equipment, particularly those vulnerable to damage from water-based purification, leaving manufacturers without adequate direction (I4). This gap is concerning, given that previous studies have shown that public understanding of *sertu* practices in Malaysia remains moderate, underscoring the urgent need for clearer and more detailed operational guidance (C1) (Ahamat et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022). The guidelines do not clearly define the conditions under which *sertu* is obligatory. This is a critical gap, especially given that previous studies indicate that public understanding of *sertu* in Malaysia remains moderate.

#### ***Disorganized Soil Preparation Specifications***

The guidelines for soil preparation in *sertu* purification are presented in a disorganized manner, lacking systematic instructions for mixing soil and water, which hampers effective implementation in industrial settings (C2). This issue is compounded by the absence of clear specifications regarding the type, quality, and ratio of soil to be used, making it difficult for industries to adopt a standardized approach (I1). Furthermore, the guidelines do not adequately address the technical parameters required for consistent application, such as mixture ratios or application methods, leading to additional ambiguity (I7). Compounding these issues is the lack of consideration for machinery or equipment that may be sensitive to water or soil mixtures; fixed soil-water ratios may not be feasible for all industrial applications (C3, I4). These shortcomings highlight the need for flexible, technically sound, and context-sensitive guidelines to support *sertu* implementation in various operational environments (Ahamat et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022).

#### ***Overly General Method Description***

The *sertu* guidelines present overly general procedures that fail to account for the nuanced requirements of different *halal* certification schemes, resulting in significant implementation challenges across industrial and domestic settings (C4). Key procedural gaps include the absence of detailed methods for soil preparation (I2) and insufficient explanations of soil-to-water concentration ratios appropriate for various *halal* contexts (I3). Additionally, the lack of tailored guidance for machinery and equipment that may be sensitive to direct water or abrasive materials (I4) further complicates application. The guidelines also omit clear integration of *sertu* procedures into the broader *halal* certification framework (I5), and neglect to address critical post-*sertu* handling or verification measures, which are essential for maintaining hygiene and compliance (I6). The sequencing of steps based solely on soil type, without considering operational practicality or industrial constraints, adds to the confusion (C5). These deficiencies point to the urgent need for more comprehensive, context-sensitive, and technically precise guidelines (Ahamat et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022).

#### ***Unclear Use of Supplementary Materials (C6)***

The *sertu* guidelines present ambiguity regarding the use of supplementary materials such as soap, disinfectants, and sanitizers following the purification process. This leaves users uncertain about their necessity, appropriate quantities, and role in ensuring *Shariah* compliance (C6). This lack of clarity not only hinders standardization across various *halal*-certified industries but also raises practical concerns, especially for sectors relying on machinery and equipment that may be sensitive to chemical agents or additional moisture (I4). Without specific instructions, industries risk either overusing these materials, which could potentially damage sensitive equipment, or omitting them entirely, compromising hygiene standards and consumer confidence. This highlights a critical gap in the guideline's comprehensiveness,

warranting the inclusion of precise, context-specific post-*sertu* protocols (Ahamat et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022).

To address the issues above, it is recommended that the guidelines be revised to include clearly defined conditions for when *sertu* is mandatory. Second, they should be structured with standardized soil preparation procedures and alternative options for sensitive equipment. Third, the guidelines should be aligned with various *halal* certification requirements through tailored procedures, and lastly, clarified regarding the role and proportion of supplementary cleansing agents post-*sertu*. The suggested enhancements are as follows:

#### i. Mandatory Conditions for Performing *Sertu*

Before detailing the *sertu* method, it is essential to first understand the situations that require its implementation. This approach ensures that readers can assess whether the circumstances they are facing necessitate the *sertu* process.

To meet Malaysia's *halal* certification standards, companies are required to follow JAKIM's *sertu* guidelines carefully. This includes performing seven washes using soil and mutlaq water. Businesses must keep proper records of the *sertu* process, ensure that their equipment can handle the soil-water mixture, and provide appropriate staff training (MPPHM 2020 & JAKIM, 2013). Depending on the industry, practices may need to be adjusted to align with relevant requirements. If machinery poses challenges, companies should consult the authorities to explore approved alternatives.

The *sertu* procedure is only obligatory in situations where there is certainty and proof of the presence of *najs mughallazah* (severe impurity), such as from pigs or dogs. This principle is grounded in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), including the work *Subul al-Salam* by Imam al-San'ani (1997), which emphasizes the foundational rule: "*The original law of something is indeed sacred*".

In other words, everything is presumed clean unless proven otherwise. Furthermore, mere suspicion or doubt does not alter this default ruling. As explained by Imam Ibn Nujaim in *Al-Ashbah wa al-Nazair 'ala Mazhab Abi Hanifah al-Nu'man* (1999):

Translation: If someone questions the impurity determination, the original law remains pure.

(Ibn Nujaim, 1999, p. 120)

From this, it is clear that the obligation to perform *sertu* arises only when there is '*ayn al-najasa*' (visible physical impurity) or strong, confident knowledge that a pig or dog has passed through or contaminated the area. Visual confirmation or certainty—rather than mere suspicion—is required for the *sertu* process to be mandated.

#### ii. *Sertu* Material Specifications and Preparation Methods

Two key issues arise concerning the materials used for *sertu*. Firstly, existing guidelines provide fragmented subtopics on soil specifications and preparation methods (I7), leading to inconsistencies in interpretation and practice. Secondly, there is a lack of explanation regarding the rationale behind the prescribed soil percentage (I8). It remains unclear whether this percentage is mandatory across all types of equipment, surfaces, and industrial areas. The rapid growth of the *halal* industry has led to the increased use of sensitive machinery and devices that may be adversely affected by soil water. In certain contexts, the prescribed soil-water ratio may not be feasible or appropriate. Consequently, several improvements were proposed and researched. Among them are the following:

First, reassessing soil selection and suitability. It is recommended that the method for selecting soil be reiterated, along with a list of soil types suitable for use in *halal*-related industries. A dedicated study should be conducted to identify soil types that are both religiously compliant and safe for use on industrial machinery and equipment. This is crucial to prevent potential damage and ensure the *sertu* process remains practical and implementable across various sectors in Malaysia. Second, reviewing the prescribed soil concentration. The current *sertu* guideline prescribes a specific soil concentration, yet this detail is not clearly defined in classical *fiqh* texts. In fact, the essential criterion is that the soil must sufficiently

alter the nature of the water used. As stated by Al-Shirbiniyy (1994), (with pure soil) it should cover the impure area, in such a quantity that it clouds the water and ensures the soil water reaches every part of the affected area.

Meanwhile, while the above discussion focuses on the *fiqh* perspective, from a scientific viewpoint, the use of soil water for industrial machines has been widely studied and supported by previous research. The soil used in *sertu* is considered pure dust or clay, often characterized by minerals such as palygorskite, kaolinite, phengite, and zeolite, which have cleansing and adsorbent properties (Rahman et al., 2022). Therefore, a safety study is suggested to explore whether industrial machines can safely undergo the *sertu* cleansing process, which involves using a soil-water mixture. It will examine potential risks such as corrosion, physical damage, and hygiene concerns. The machines are subjected to controlled *sertu* procedures to evaluate their compatibility. Based on the results, machines can be classified as:

- i. Compatible;
- ii. Conditionally Compatible;
- iii. Not Compatible.

The findings will help guide machine selection, suggest design enhancements, and support updates to *halal* compliance guidelines.

#### *Sertu Method*

A revised guideline is necessary to clarify the *sertu* method, as the current explanation in the existing guidelines is overly general and lacks the specificity needed for effective implementation in the *halal* industry. Several areas for improvement have been identified, starting with the arrangement of the *sertu* procedures, which, in the current guideline, is based solely on the type of soil used. Furthermore, equipment, areas, and materials requiring *sertu* are not systematically categorized according to their respective classes or operational contexts. To address these shortcomings, it is recommended that the *sertu* methods be reorganized into two main categories, reflecting current practices within Malaysia's *halal* industry:

**Table 6.** Recommendation for Materials and Equipment of *Sertu*

Material	Soil	Clay Soap
Equipment and area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Premises</li> <li>2. Used goods</li> <li>3. Medicine manufacturing machine</li> <li>4. Container</li> <li>5. Kitchen</li> <li>6. Pipe</li> <li>7. Tank</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tools</li> <li>2. Hands</li> <li>3. Table</li> <li>4. Floor</li> <li>5. Machine</li> </ol>

#### *i. Traditional Sertu Method*

This method is suitable for all industries where equipment, surfaces, or machinery are not sensitive to soil-water exposure. It is based on the hadith of Abu Hurayrah RA, who narrated that the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W said:

Translation: After being licked by a dog, the sanctity of a vessel belonging to one of you is to wash it seven times, the first with water mixed with soil.

(Muslim, Hadith No. 279)

This original method involves one wash with soil mixed in water, followed by six washes with *mutlaq* (pure) water, and remains the standard reference in Islamic jurisprudence for cleansing *najis mughallazah*.

## ii. Special Sertu Method

This approach is intended for sensitive equipment or areas where the application of soil-water could cause damage or affect functionality. It includes techniques such as spraying the soil-water mixture, dipping tools in a soil-based solution, and wiping with a cloth, tissue, or sponge moistened with the solution. A practical example of this method is employed by Brahim's SATS Food Services Sdn. Bhd., which developed a *sertu* washing machines capable of handling high-volume dishwashing daily, demonstrating how innovation can maintain compliance while improving operational efficiency. The refinement and standardization of *sertu* methods cannot be achieved without collaboration among regulatory authorities, industry players, and certified *sertu* service providers. The involvement and feedback of all stakeholders are essential in determining which methods are appropriate, effective, and operationally feasible across Malaysia's *halal* industries. Finally, any adopted method must remain in full compliance with *shariah* principles, ensuring that while innovation is welcomed, it does not compromise the foundational rulings of Islamic law. This study, therefore, encourages inclusive engagement to establish practical, reliable, and *shariah*-compliant *sertu* standards.

## iii. Additional Washing after the Sertu Process

It is essential to reconsider the inclusion of post-*sertu* purification steps in the guideline, as content analysis reveals three key concerns:

- i. How many times should additional washing be performed after the *sertu* process? (I9)
- ii. What types of cleaning agents or additives are permitted? (I10)
- iii. What is the required duration of the sanitation process? (I11)

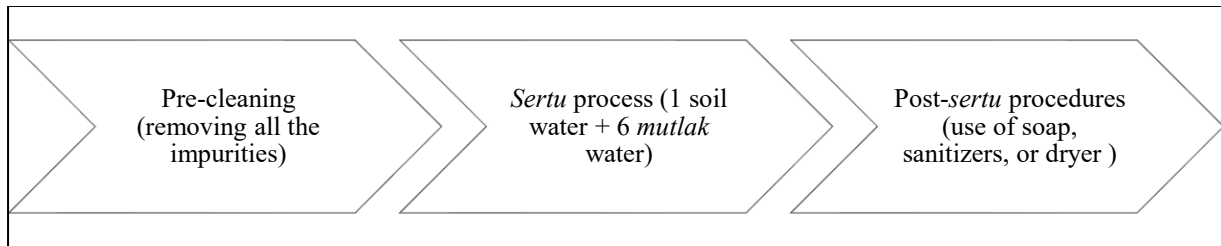
Currently, these post-*sertu* procedures, such as the use of soap, sanitizers, or drying, are treated as optional measures, not religious obligations. Therefore, if these steps are to be formally included in the guideline, they should be clearly presented alongside the purpose of their use and the implications of omitting them for hygiene or certification compliance. Additionally, the language used to describe these steps must be refined for clarity, ensuring that readers, particularly industrial stakeholders, fully understand the role and status of these supplementary actions. Therefore, the study suggests a conceptual framework model for *sertu* guidelines.

**Table 7.** Conceptual Framework for Analytical Model of *Sertu* Guidelines

Theme	Category	Analytical Dimension	Potential Impact on Certification
<i>Sertu</i> Prerequisites	Structural Factors	Foundational requirements and definitions	Ambiguity here may cause inconsistent entry criteria for compliance
Specifications for Materials	Structural Factors	Acceptability and classification of materials	Vague definitions can lead to non-standard applications
<i>Sertu</i> Method	Process Factors	Procedural steps in cleansing practices	Lack of procedural clarity can affect effectiveness and verification
<i>Sertu</i> Materials	Process Factors	Tools and resources used during <i>sertu</i>	Inconsistencies in material usage may hinder uniform certification
Exclusions from <i>Sertu</i>	Regulatory Factors	Exemptions and boundaries of application	Undefined exclusions might create loopholes in implementation



This study also proposes a revised *sertu* procedure, as shown in Figure 2:



**Figure 2.** Revised *Sertu* Procedure

## Conclusion

In light of the issues identified, Malaysia's *halal* legislation and regulations, particularly those related to the *sertu* process, should be reviewed and enhanced. The goal is to strengthen the overall management of *halal* certification and to build greater trust among both domestic and international companies applying for *halal* certification in Malaysia. As *sertu* is a fundamental requirement prior to the issuance of a Malaysian *halal* certificate, it must be clearly and effectively regulated. Findings from the content analysis of the Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam reveal several challenges currently faced by the Malaysian *halal* industry. Four key issues were identified: limited awareness and understanding of the *sertu* process; ambiguity in material specifications, particularly regarding soil and water usage; incompatibility of the prescribed methods with certain Malaysian *halal* certification schemes; and unclear guidance on the use of supplementary products during and after *sertu*, such as soap and sanitizers. This study was conducted in response to the need for improvements to the existing Garis Panduan *Sertu* menurut Perspektif Islam. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to a better understanding of the *sertu* process and provide relevant authorities with actionable insights for revision and enhancement. Ultimately, this article aims to serve as a practical reference for stakeholders, including industry players, *sertu* service providers, and the general public, so that the *sertu* process may be applied correctly and in full accordance with Islamic law.

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