

SUPPLIER ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY IN HALAL PROCUREMENT PRACTICES OF THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Article history:

Received : 4 April 2023

Accepted : 10 April 2023

Published : 10 Mei 2023

ABSTRACT

Halal procurement has not received as much research attention in emerging market contexts as traditional topics like halal traceability and integrity. The practices of halal were found to benefit business performance. With procurement playing a crucial role in organisation performance, it is relevant to integrate halal and procurement to improve the company's performance. This paper empirically examines the influence of supplier engagement and transparency on halal procurement practices in the hotel industry. A quantitative approach was chosen, and a close-ended survey questionnaire was used to collect primary data. A second-generation structural equation method was employed, where SmartPLS 4.0 software was applied to data from 109 hotel establishments in Malaysia. Results show supplier engagement and transparency can help hotel entrepreneurs better comprehend halal procurement practices' intricate role in boosting hotel performance. However, this study was limited to star-rated hotels in parts of Malaysia; therefore, it can be improved by including other industries in the

future. This study contributes to hotel practitioners adopting halal procurement in increasing competitiveness and theoretical contribution to developing the study on the halal supply chain.

Keywords: traceability, integrity, entrepreneurs, performance, competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive world, halal practices is considered as a way to stand out in the market among competitors by meeting the demand of halal products and services. The increase in muslim population, and the high interest among non-muslim on implementation of *Toyyiban* (Al-Ansi et al., 2019) prompt researcher to dwell more in this field. Furthermore, it leads to the growth and emergence of halal tourism as a market segment (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2018), which leads to higher demand for a shariah-compliant services. As the adoption of halal tourism is increasing globally, participating countries developed several criteria to ensure customer satisfaction and standardise halal services (Pamukcu & Sariisik, 2021). Even though halal tourism is targeted at Asia and Middle Eastern countries, it has been reported that this industry would notably benefit Europe and the United States (US) in terms of revenue from Muslim tourists (Liberato et al., 2020). With the emergence of halal tourism, the concept of halal hotel increase significantly. Hotel is one of the emerging industries globally and contributes to general and tourism economic growth. However, since the hospitality industry has grown significantly in recent years, it has given several new challenges worldwide (Jeaheng et al., 2020).

Hence, hotel players need to step up their business games to keep relevant in the industry, where improving performance is crucial. The previous study indicated that the hotel's administration's effectiveness and service quality are directly impacted by the hotel's procurement processes (Lin & Benjasak, 2021). In the hospitality industry, procurement is vital as it drives supply chain management, supplier integration, and cost efficiency, which aids in a company's ability to maintain its competitive advantage (Daghfous & Belkhodja, 2019). Previous studies have shown the impact of supplier engagement (Barbanti et al., 2022) and transparency (Ratnawati et al., 2020) on procurement. Thus, the objective of this study is to empirically investigate the influence of supplier engagement, transparency, and halal procurement practise towards operational performance by proposing a research model based on a literature review in order to fill a knowledge gap in this area.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

This study adopts the theory of Resource-Based View (RBV). According to the RBV, these resources are valuable and unique and may be difficult to imitate or duplicate. This provides a business with a capability for competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). RBV is being implemented in this study by discussing the

relationship between halal procurement practice (HPP) and operational performance (OP). The halal supply chain (HSC) is a valuable competitive capability as customers demand food safety and shariah compliance in this industry, assisting businesses in improving product and service quality. To summarise, RBV indicates that the implementation of halal practices can be utilised as a resource by a company to improve its performance.

Hotel Industry

The hotel's function is based on a unique system that puts the needs of its customers first and provides services that complement its products. Subsequently, revenues are exchanged for services provided by the hotel. The interaction between customers and employees is an integral aspect of the service. As a result, this builds a crucial connection between hotel hosts and guests, and these guidelines govern all hotels (Sangaran & Selvanayagam, 2021). Since the 2008 recession, the hotel business has been steadily rising, with more than 700,000 hotels worldwide contributing US\$3.41 trillion to the global economy. The international hotel business generated US\$570 billion in revenue in 2019. Moreover, growth in the travel sector is fuelled by increased spending power, the desire for travel experiences, and an increase in digital impacts (Condor Ferries, 2021). In Malaysia, the hospitality industry contributed to 23% of national employment. Additionally, through the award of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award 2020, Malaysia continues to receive industry recognition. During the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF), Brunei 2020, Putrajaya, Penang, and Kota Kinabalu received the Asean Clean Tourist City Standard Award (ACTCSA). Moreover, Malaysia ranked third on the Southeast Asian hotel investment list (MIDA, 2021).

Supplier Engagement

A positive relationship between suppliers and buyers improved the businesses' product quality, cost, and innovation, directly improving companies' performance (Yu & Huo, 2019). With partnerships with suppliers, buyers can establish competitive capacities and achieve superior performance, especially in times of severe business uncertainty (Amoako-gyampah et al., 2018). Additionally, the partnership makes the firms more competitive, helps them increase profits, and provides clients with the best products and services. The discussion is consistent with findings of past studies by Daghfous & Belkhodja (2019), where they discovered a strong relationship between SE and performance. They stated that 61% of the polled teams said they saved more money in 2018 compared to 2017 because of their efforts to increase efficiency and strengthen relationships with their suppliers. Hence, it is posited that:

H₁: Supplier engagement has a positive relationship with operational performance.

Transparency

Transparency refers to the availability of information between parties. A better information will allow customer to have a higher trust towards the organisation by boosting ethical and quality compliance (Balushi, 2020). Novianti et al. (2020) stated that company must have high-quality data gathering and security to ensure a dependable flow of information. The focus on transparency has been increasing due to its capability to improve business performance by improving business interaction and cooperation (Zhu et al., 2018) and promoting sustainability (Brun et al., 2020). Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H₂: Transparency has a positive influence towards operational performance.

Halal Procurement Practice

The procurement process is part of the broader acquisition process, where procurement plays a crucial role in the supply chain's boundary-spanning functions, which act as a competitive advantage (Liu et al., 2020). For the hospitality industry, procurement services are crucial in procuring raw materials and goods, allocating raw materials, and planning supply. Because there are many acquisitions, requisition, and quality control activities occurring, an influx of additional activities such as acquisition and quality control is done in this department (Ibrahim et al., 2020). However, procurement has been under scrutiny for decades because of its inability to adhere to proper processes and procedures (Kakwezi & Nyeko, 2019). Research shown that halal practices provide positive impact towards performance (Giyanti & Indrasari, 2020). Hence, halal procurement practice (HPP) is introduced.

Halal procurement entails several parties handling halal food goods to suit the demands and requirements of customers for both halal and non-halal items (Masudin et al., 2022). Halal raw materials are not only judged by their use in halal products but also by their sources and payment methods (Hasan, 2021). The halal procurement practice focuses on protecting the integrity of the product throughout the process, starting from demand determination until payment process (Halal Times, 2022). Integrity is essential in gaining and maintaining others' trust (Supian & Rashid, 2018). The practices of management risk, supplier engagement, and transparency are proposed in discussing further the HPP. Hence, this study suggested that:

H_{3a}: Halal procurement practice has positive relationship with supplier engagement.

H_{3b}: Halal procurement practice has positive relationship with transparency.

H₄: Supplier engagement and transparency mediate the relationship between halal procurement practice and operational performance.

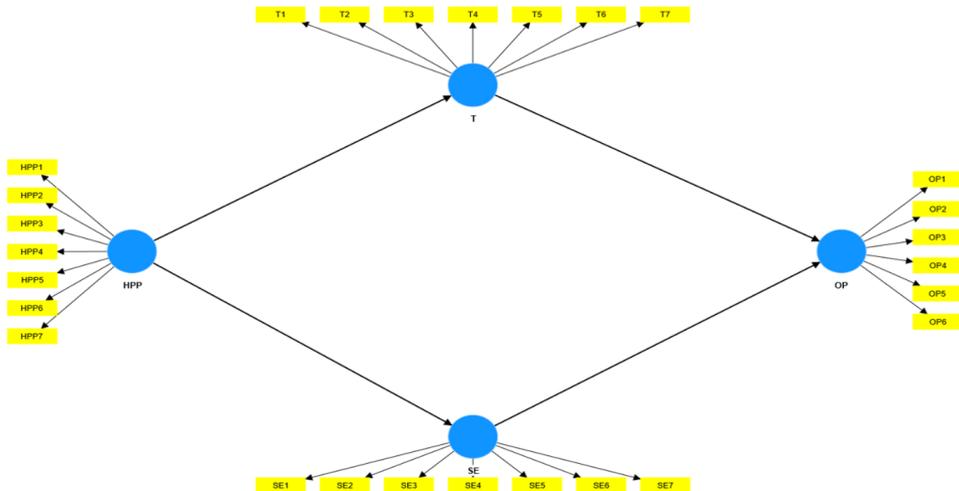


Figure 1: Conceptual Research Framework

METHOD

The unit of analysis of this study is at the organisational level, which focused on those who are involved in the halal or procurement of the hotel industry. The aim of this study is to measure the significant of supplier engagement and transparency towards the hotel's operational performance. Respondents of this study comprised of 3,4, and 5-star hotel located in the Klang Valley area. According to Abdul Rahman and Muhammad Shah (2020), Klang Valley consists of the state of Selangor and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. This area were selected due to high number of halal-certified kitchen (JAKIM, 2022).

Convenience sampling was used in this study to obtain the data from the from people of the population who are conveniently available to participate in the study (Saunders et al., 2012). Therefore, the most practical option was to conduct an online search to find the sample unit and to gather data such as the hotel's name, location, email address, and phone number. Even though this study used a non-probability sampling method, the researcher kept track of every response submitted online. As a result, the number of replies obtained for each category was meticulously tracked (Rahim Azmi et al., 2018).

Moreover, this study employs a quantitative method in which data are gathered through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents. In collecting the data, questionnaires were developed based on previous studies and information obtained from secondary sources covering all variables. The questionnaires were measured using a 6-point Likert scale. Since halal is related to trust and belief (Rahman et al., 2021), the data collected must reflect the exact understanding of the respondent. Hence, a 6-point Likert scale was adopted, which avoided the "neutral" option.

RESULTS

Demographic Analysis

A total of 109 respondents participated in this study. The female respondents exceeded the male with 56% (n = 61), and 54% of the respondents are Muslim, while non-Muslims covers 46%. Furthermore, the majority of hotels that participated in this study come from 4-star (45%), 5-star (30.3%), and 3-star hotels (24.8%). Lastly, 95.4% of the respondents were from a hotel with a halal kitchen, while 4.6% did not. Table 1 shows the summary of demographics of the respondents of the present study.

Table 1: Results of Measurement Model

Details	N = 109	%
Gender		
Male	48	44.0
Female	61	56.0
Religion		
Muslim	59	54.1
Non-Muslim	50	45.9
Hotel Star Rating		
3-Star	27	24.8
4-Star	49	45.0
5-Star	33	30.3
Types of certificates your company registered to		
MS1500:2019 (Halal Food)	104	95.4
None	5	4.6

Measurement Model

The obtained data were analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) to see whether the hypothesis are relevant to the actual research results, by using SmartPLS 4.0. In recent years, the PLS-SEM has been regarded as a beneficial tool for business-related studies (K. P. Liu & Chiu, 2021). This study employed two stages of analysis, where the first one is the assessment of structural model. In assessing the model, PLS algorithm were conducted in analysing the convergent and discriminant validity. The second stage involve the evaluation of structural model by using bootstrapping in examining the proposed hypotheses.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to how well a measure corresponds with other measures of the same construct. Average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR) and factor loading were analysed to measure the convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2: Results of Measurement Model

Construct	Loading
Supplier Engagement (SE) ($\alpha = 0.927$, CR = 0.942, AVE = 0.702)	
Our company's halal suppliers always provide the information we require.	0.745
Our company's halal suppliers never try to hide something serious that may influence us negatively.	0.905
Our company's halal suppliers are very competent.	0.847
Our company's halal suppliers are always trying to inform us if problems occur.	0.851
We want to maintain a long-term relationship with the halal supplier.	0.700
Our relationship with the current halal supplier reflects a happy situation.	0.926
Our halal company supplier delivers materials using dedicated transport.	0.902
Transparency (T) ($\alpha = 0.924$, CR = 0.934, AVE = 0.686)	
The practice of transparency is applied extensively in our company.	0.836
Transparency is vital in maintaining halal integrity.	0.872
Transparency and traceability can increase consumer trust in the halal industry.	0.872
Halal traceability system can improve transparency in the production line.	0.846
Our company is practising the negotiation process with suppliers during the tender period.	0.733
Information technology capabilities can increase transparency by reducing misconduct in operational activities.	0.762
The supply chain practice in our company is transparent.	0.863
Halal Procurement Practice (HPP) ($\alpha = 0.871$, CR = 0.894, AVE = 0.562)	
We understand what Halal Procurement Practice is.	0.700
We can handle halal materials efficiently.	0.784
We share the halal quality information with our suppliers.	0.786
We can verify halal quality ingredients.	0.795
Halal product has a strong relationship with consumer needs.	0.777
Halal procurement practice can enhance the quality of a product.	0.744
Our company uses halal-certified chemicals.	0.700
Operational Performance (OP) ($\alpha = 0.889$, CR = 0.904, AVE = 0.640)	
Our company produce high-quality halal products that meet customers expectations.	0.787

Our company produce consistent quality products that meet halal requirements.	0.878
Our company can provide desired halal product quantities consistently.	0.768
Our company able to do product recalls efficiently.	0.834
There is an increase in our company's operational cost because of monitoring of halal activities on suppliers.	0.760
There is an increase in our company's operational cost because of enforcement of halal activities on suppliers.	0.764

The acceptable values of loadings and CR as recommended by Hair et al. (2017) is above 0.7, and for the AVE is above 0.5. Table 2 showed that both loading and CR of all constructs recorded value that were higher than 0.7, ranging from 0.700 – 0.926 and 0.894 – 0.938 respectively. Furthermore, the AVE value ranged between 0.562 and 0.702, which exceeded the recommended value. Thus, convergent validity was supported.

Discriminant Validity

In measuring the discriminant validity, the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) by Henseler et al. (2015) was measured. Henseler et al. (2015) introduced the HTMT as a more thorough and less limited way to discriminant validity testing for researchers employing PLS-SEM. A high HTMT score denotes a lack of discriminant validity (HTMT > 0.90). However, a lower and more conservative threshold value of 0.85 appears justified when the route model's components are conceptually more different. Table 3 showed that the HTMT value were justified, which signified the discriminant validity.

Table 3: Result of Discriminant Validity

	HPP	OP	SE	T
HPP				
OP	0.827			
SE	0.657	0.799		
T	0.719	0.830	0.491	

Structural Model Evaluation

In evaluating the PLS-SEM model, the path coefficient and PLS bootstrapping with 5000 resampling were conducted. The most commonly used indicator of model fit in linear models is the R^2 , referring to the percentage of the adjusted sum of squares that the model explains (Piepho, 2019). In other words, the R^2 assesses how well the model predicts the combined effects of the exogenous and endogenous factors. The values of R^2 of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 denote significant, moderate, and weak predictive accuracy, respectively (Hair et al., 2014). The

results shows that the model explained 43.0% (SE), 46.1% (T), and 80.6% of the variance for operational performance. Table 3 presented the analysis which shows that halal procurement practice had a positive influence on supplier engagement ($\beta_{HPP\ SE} = 0.656, p < 0.001$) and transparency ($\beta_{HPP\ T} = 0.679, p < 0.001$). Moreover, both SE ($\beta_{SE\ OP} = 0.517, p < 0.001$) and T ($\beta_{HPP\ SE} = 0.525, p < 0.001$) had a positive impact on operational performance.

Additionally, by following recommendation by Hair et al. (2014), indirect and direct effect were analysed to explored into mediating effect. This study suggested that supplier engagement and transparency have mediating effect on the relationship between halal procurement practice and operational performance. The result was presented in Table 4 which shows that ($\beta = 0.696, p < 0.001$) was positive, that indicate mediating effect were present. Thus, in particular, SE and T strengthened the relationship between HPP and OP.

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing Result

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta (β)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	t-value	Result
H1	SE -> OP	0.517	0.031	11.089*	Supported
H2	T -> OP	0.525	0.043	16.169*	Supported
H3a	HPP -> SE	0.656	0.059	16.816*	Supported
H3b	HPP -> T	0.679	0.042	12.227*	Supported
H4	HPP -> SE -> OP	0.696	0.030	23.292*	Supported
	HPP -> T -> OP				Supported

Note: $p < 0.001$ *

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine the relationships between supplier engagement, transparency, halal procurement practice, and operational performance. The conceptualised research model was established based on the extant literature. Four hypotheses were consequently established. Drawing from the empirical results, all four hypotheses were statistically supported and found to be significant. Findings shows the significant relationship of SE, and T with OP, which shows that H₁, H₂, and H₃ were supported. Additionally, this study examined the relationship of HPP with SE, and T, where all three hypotheses were positive, hence H_{3a}, and H_{3b} were supported. Furthermore, the employed mediating analysis depicts that SE, and T pose a mediating effect on the relationship between HPP and OP. Hence, H₄ was supported. The positive relationship between HPP with SE, and T shows that 3,4, and 5-star hotel in

Klang Valley committed in improving their operational performance, through proper practices of halal procurement. Lastly, these findings is coherent with study by Ambekar et al. (2020), and Ahmed and Omar (2019), who discovered that SE, and transparency can improve OP.

CONCLUSION

As one of the highest contributors to the national gross domestic product (GDP) and overall employment rate, improving the hotel industry's performance is crucial. Moreover, it has been shown that incorporating Islamic traditions into a company's operations was beneficial due to the possible advantages produced by the halal market. The halal procurement practice, which is the subject of this study, focus on the procedure before purchasing raw materials. This continues until the finished product is delivered to customer. This study has demonstrated the significance of HPP's development and its influence on OP within the context of the hotel sector. This study is a necessary first step to investigate the connections in light of halal service operations. Last but not least, this paper serves as an initial step in elucidating the HPPs, and the proposed framework can be adopted in future study.

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