

Enhancing Halal Compliance: The Critical Role of Certification Awareness in Strengthening Managerial Commitment in Hotel Kitchens

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ABSTRACT

The increasing demand for Shariah-compliant hospitality services has heightened the importance of halal certification in hotel kitchens as a key determinant of operational integrity and customer trust. Despite its recognized benefits, many hotels continue to face challenges in maintaining halal compliance due to limited managerial awareness, regulatory complexities, and inconsistent commitment among hotel operators. This study aims to explore the role of certification awareness in strengthening managerial commitment toward enhancing halal compliance within hotel kitchens. Adopting a narrative review methodology, the study synthesizes existing research retrieved from the Scopus database using a structured search strategy that includes relevant keywords related to halal compliance, hospitality, and certification practices. An integrative thematic analysis was conducted to identify dominant themes, theoretical perspectives, and conceptual linkages across studies. The findings reveal that certification awareness serves as a mediating factor that reinforces managerial commitment, leading to stronger ethical compliance, improved operational performance, and enhanced consumer confidence. Theoretically, the study extends institutional theory by illustrating how normative and cognitive mechanisms, such as awareness and education, translate external regulatory pressures into internalized compliance behavior. Practically, it emphasizes the need for targeted training, policy support, and stakeholder collaboration to improve halal certification literacy among hotel managers. The study concludes that greater certification awareness not only strengthens managerial accountability but also ensures the sustainability of halal compliance in hospitality operations. Future research should empirically test the proposed framework across diverse hotel contexts to validate the mediating role of certification awareness in promoting halal excellence.

Keywords - Halal Compliance, Certification Awareness, Managerial Commitment, Halal Hospitality, Institutional Theory

INTRODUCTION

The halal tourism and hospitality sector has emerged as a vital industry segment due to the rising demand for Shariah-compliant services worldwide. Hotel kitchens, as the core providers of halal food, play a central role in

ensuring compliance with halal standards to cater to the expectations of Muslim consumers. Halal certification is not only a religious requirement but also a symbol of trust, quality, and ethical assurance that strengthens customer confidence in hotel services. With Muslim travelers increasingly prioritizing halal-friendly destinations, hotels are compelled to integrate certification practices into their operational strategies (Yama et al., 2019). Thus, enhancing awareness of halal certification has become a critical enabler in strengthening managerial commitment toward sustaining halal compliance in hotel kitchens.

Extant literature demonstrates the significant benefits associated with halal certification, including enhanced consumer trust, ethical compliance, and improved organizational performance (Yama et al., 2019). Furthermore, hotels with halal-certified kitchens have been found to enjoy a competitive advantage in global markets, particularly in attracting Muslim tourists from the Middle East and Asia, who seek high-quality halal dining options (Razalli, 2018). Despite these advantages, challenges remain. Zailani et al. (2011) revealed that a lack of certification awareness among hoteliers often results in negligence or resistance, especially in establishments with predominantly non-Muslim clientele. Regulatory complexities and uncertainties in the certification process further hinder hotels from achieving full compliance (Rahayu et al., 2023). These findings underscore the pressing need to address certification awareness as a critical determinant of compliance.

Nevertheless, gaps persist in scholarly inquiry regarding how awareness of certification influences managerial commitment to halal compliance. While prior research has explored the outcomes of certification on consumer trust and hotel performance, there is insufficient focus on the internal organizational mechanisms that drive compliance behavior (Karim et al., 2022). Specifically, few studies conceptualize the mediating role of certification awareness in shaping managers' ethical responsibility and operational decisions. This study addresses this gap by proposing a conceptual framework that examines certification awareness as a pivotal factor that strengthens managerial commitment to halal compliance in hotel kitchens.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contributions to both academia and industry. By offering a conceptual framework, the paper provides new insights into the dynamics between certification awareness and managerial practices, thereby advancing the discourse on halal management in hospitality. For practitioners, the study highlights practical pathways to enhance compliance by emphasizing education, training, and policy support. Moreover, the framework is particularly relevant for policymakers in Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, where halal certification is both an economic imperative and a religious responsibility (Zailani et al., 2010).

This study is grounded in institutional theory, which posits that organizations adopt certain practices due to regulatory, normative, and cultural pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). By applying this lens, the paper argues that certification awareness serves as a normative and cognitive mechanism that drives managerial commitment to halal compliance. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on halal certification and managerial practices; Section 3 outlines the conceptual framework and theoretical underpinnings; Section 4 discusses implications for hotel managers, policymakers, and researchers; and Section 5 concludes with recommendations and future research directions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Enhancing Halal Compliance

Halal certification has long been recognized as a crucial mechanism for strengthening consumer trust and enhancing business performance across the hospitality and food service sectors. Certification signals compliance with Islamic dietary principles while also assuring food quality and safety, thereby fostering customer loyalty and improving organizational reputation (Yama et al., 2019). For hotels, halal certification offers a competitive advantage, particularly in markets targeting Muslim travellers from regions such as the Middle East and Asia, who increasingly demand comprehensive halal experiences in their destination choices (Razalli, 2018). Furthermore, studies reveal that hotels with halal-certified kitchens are perceived as more ethical and reliable, which not only improves customer satisfaction but also directly impacts financial performance (Basarud-din et al., 2022; Othman et al., 2017). These findings emphasize the dual role of halal certification as both a religious

obligation and a strategic business tool.

Despite these advantages, research highlights persistent challenges that hinder the widespread adoption of halal certification in the hospitality industry. Lack of managerial awareness is a major barrier, as some hoteliers perceive halal certification as unnecessary when their clientele is predominantly non-Muslim (Zailani et al., 2011). Additionally, the certification process itself is often criticized for its complexity, with regulatory hurdles, administrative burdens, and financial costs deterring small and medium enterprises (Rahayu et al., 2023; Fathoni et al., 2025). In Malaysia, barriers such as fiscal constraints, inadequate halal literacy, and negative perceptions about certification outcomes further undermine compliance intentions (Md Rodzi et al., 2023). These findings suggest that without adequate awareness and institutional support, many hotel managers fail to recognize the long-term strategic value of certification, thereby weakening their commitment to implementing halal standards within kitchen operations.

The role of certification awareness has thus become a focal point in recent scholarship, with evidence showing that knowledge, attitudes, and sensitivity to certification policies significantly influence managerial compliance behavior (Widigdo & Triyanto, 2024; Othman et al., 2017). Awareness not only improves managers' ethical orientation but also strengthens their intention to integrate halal practices into operational strategies (Basarud-din et al., 2022). Moreover, certification awareness acts as a mediating mechanism that translates external pressures (such as government policies and consumer expectations) into stronger managerial commitment and compliance behavior. For example, studies in Indonesia demonstrate that when awareness initiatives are coupled with training and simplified certification services, managerial compliance improves significantly, even in resource-constrained environments (Zuhrah et al., 2025). Taken together, the literature suggests that enhancing certification awareness is critical for bridging the gap between external halal certification requirements and internal managerial commitment, making it a central determinant of effective halal compliance in hotel kitchens.

Certification Awareness in Strengthening Managerial Commitment in Hotel Kitchens

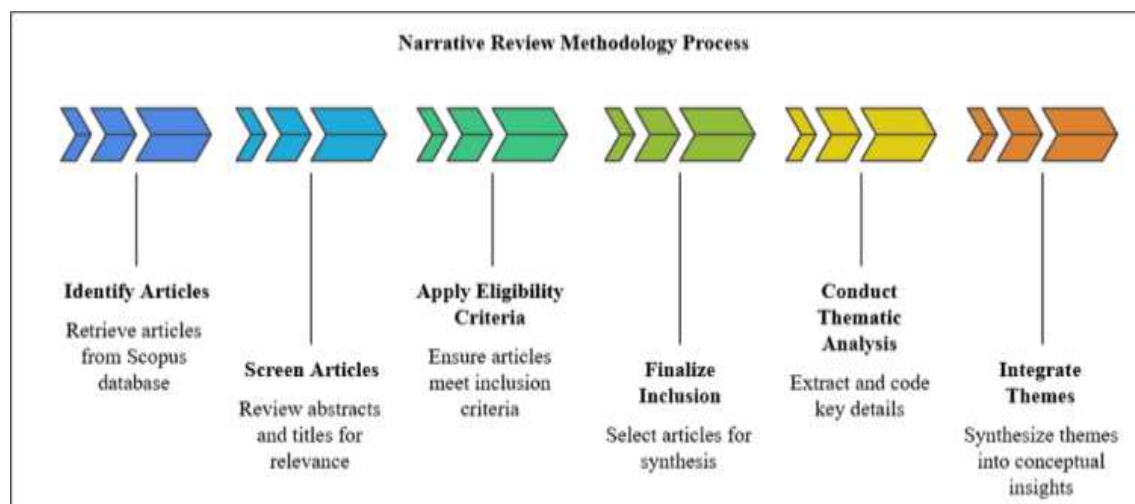
Certification awareness is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant in strengthening managerial commitment toward halal compliance. Awareness of certification processes and benefits influences managerial decision-making, shaping ethical responsibility and behavioral intentions to comply with halal standards (Basarud-din et al., 2022; Widigdo & Triyanto, 2024). Studies show that when managers possess adequate knowledge and positive attitudes toward certification, their sensitivity to government policies and industry requirements translates into stronger compliance and improved organizational performance (Othman et al., 2017). Conversely, inadequate awareness often leads to resistance or neglect, particularly in establishments serving mixed clientele, undermining long-term compliance efforts (Zailani et al., 2011). To overcome these challenges, initiatives such as targeted training, financial support, and stakeholder collaboration have been recommended to raise certification literacy, reduce misconceptions, and strengthen managerial accountability (Zuhrah et al., 2025; Md Rodzi et al., 2023). Therefore, certification awareness functions as both a knowledge-based enabler and a normative force that consolidates managerial commitment to halal compliance in hotel kitchens.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design – Narrative Review Methodology

This study adopts a narrative review methodology to explore and synthesize existing literature on halal compliance in hotel kitchens. Unlike systematic reviews that emphasize rigid protocols and quantitative aggregation, a narrative review allows for flexibility in integrating diverse theoretical, empirical, and contextual insights across disciplines such as hospitality management, Islamic studies, food safety, and organizational behaviour (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). This approach is appropriate given the fragmented nature of research on halal certification, managerial practices, and compliance standards, enabling the researcher to critically interpret, compare, and connect findings rather than merely summarize them. Narrative design is particularly valuable for building a conceptual framework, positioning certification awareness as a mediating variable that strengthens managerial commitment and thereby enhances halal compliance in hotel kitchens.

Picture 1: Narrative Review Methodology Process



Key Steps in Conducting a Narrative Review – Data Collection through Scopus Database

The data collection process relied primarily on the Scopus database, chosen for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and book chapters in relevant fields such as business, management, hospitality, tourism, and Islamic finance. Scopus ensures academic rigor and credibility, making it the most suitable platform for retrieving scholarly works on halal compliance. The review followed several steps: (1) Identification, retrieving articles published between 2010 and 2025 to capture both historical and contemporary perspectives; (2) Screening, reviewing abstracts, titles, and keywords to ensure alignment with the study's focus; (3) Eligibility, applying inclusion criteria (English-language, peer-reviewed, relevant to hotels or food service operations) and excluding grey literature or studies outside hospitality; and (4) Inclusion, finalizing a refined set of articles for synthesis. These steps ensured that the collected data was not only comprehensive but also directly relevant to the aim of understanding the role of certification awareness in strengthening managerial commitment.

Data Collection and Review Strategy

To capture relevant scholarship, the study employed a Boolean search strategy with the following string: ("halal" OR "permissible" OR "lawful" OR "kosher") AND ("compliance" OR "adherence" OR "conformance" OR "regulation") AND ("hotel" OR "hospitality" OR "accommodation" OR "lodging") AND ("kitchen" OR "catering" OR "food service" OR "culinary") AND ("standards" OR "guidelines" OR "practices" OR "protocols").

This strategy ensured inclusivity by considering synonymous terms for halal practices, compliance, hospitality settings, and operational standards. Once relevant literature was identified, an integrative thematic analysis was conducted in three phases: (1) familiarization, extracting key details such as authors, context, and findings; (2) coding, grouping ideas into recurring clusters such as consumer trust, managerial awareness, regulatory barriers, and policy support; and (3) theme integration, synthesizing clusters into broader conceptual insights. This approach enabled the review to identify, analyze, and integrate key themes, concepts, and theoretical perspectives across studies, ultimately leading to the formulation of a conceptual framework highlighting certification awareness as a critical mediator.

Key Findings from the Narrative Review

Theme	Key Findings	Description and Relevance to Study	Supporting Sources
1. Consumer Trust and Business Performance	Halal certification enhances organizational reputation, ethical image, and consumer loyalty.	Certification serves as a symbol of quality and integrity, strengthening consumer confidence and improving financial performance in the hospitality sector.	Yama et al. (2019); Razalli (2018)

2. Market Competitiveness in Hospitality	Halal-certified hotels gain an advantage in attracting Muslim tourists.	Certification acts as a marketing and operational strategy, particularly effective in attracting high-spending Muslim travelers from the Middle East and Asia.	Razalli (2018); Basarud-din et al. (2022)
3. Challenges of Awareness and Implementation	Limited managerial understanding and regulatory complexities hinder adoption.	Many hotel managers underestimate the need for certification, while procedural challenges and costs discourage compliance, especially in SMEs.	Zailani et al. (2011); Rahayu et al. (2023); Md Rodzi et al. (2023)
4. Role of Certification Awareness	Awareness mediates managerial commitment and compliance.	Knowledge and understanding of certification benefits strengthen ethical decision-making and managerial accountability, bridging external policy pressure with internal motivation.	Widigdo & Triyanto (2024); Othman et al. (2017)
5. Policy and Training Support	Education and stakeholder collaboration enhance certification adoption.	Government-led awareness programs, financial incentives, and industry training improve managerial readiness and operational compliance.	Zuhrah et al. (2025); Fathoni et al. (2025)
6. Managerial Commitment and Ethical Leadership	Strong awareness translates into higher ethical compliance and operational integration.	Managers who are aware of certification principles implement comprehensive halal management practices that align with Shariah and business ethics.	Basarud-din et al. (2022); Karim et al. (2022)

The narrative review underscores that halal certification is not only a religious requirement but also a strategic driver of competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. Hotels with certified kitchens demonstrate higher customer trust, brand credibility, and market competitiveness (Yama et al., 2019; Razalli, 2018). However, compliance remains inconsistent due to managerial unawareness, regulatory complexity, and financial constraints (Zailani et al., 2011; Rahayu et al., 2023). The findings reaffirm that certification awareness functions as the mediating force that transforms managerial commitment (IV) into sustained halal compliance (DV). When managers are adequately informed about certification benefits, they exhibit stronger ethical leadership, strategic engagement, and adherence to halal standards (Widigdo & Triyanto, 2024; Othman et al., 2017). Moreover, institutional support through training, education, and government facilitation enhances both awareness and compliance outcomes (Zuhrah et al., 2025; Fathoni et al., 2025).

In relation to the research focus, the review clearly demonstrates that strengthening certification awareness is pivotal in reinforcing managerial commitment to halal compliance in hotel kitchens. The integration of these factors, managerial commitment, awareness, and compliance—forms the basis of the proposed conceptual framework, which positions certification awareness as the key mediating mechanism linking ethical management with operational halal excellence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The narrative review identified six dominant themes—consumer trust, market competitiveness, managerial awareness, regulatory challenges, policy support, and ethical leadership—that collectively explain the dynamics of halal compliance in hotel kitchens. The synthesis confirms that halal certification functions not only as a religious assurance but also as a strategic organizational mechanism that strengthens both operational integrity and customer confidence. Prior research (Yama et al., 2019; Razalli, 2018) consistently demonstrates that certification enhances consumer trust and brand reputation, positioning halal hotels as preferred choices among Muslim travelers. However, the present study goes beyond performance outcomes by examining the organizational mechanisms through which these effects occur—particularly how certification awareness mediates the relationship between managerial commitment and halal compliance. This integrative perspective advances the discussion from outcome-based understanding toward a process-oriented framework that links

awareness, ethics, and institutional behavior.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings reaffirm the relevance of Institutional Theory in explaining compliance behavior within hospitality organizations. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), institutional pressures—regulative, normative, and cognitive—shape organizational practices. In the halal context, certification awareness acts as both a normative and cognitive mechanism that internalizes halal principles into managerial behavior. Managers who understand the ethical, operational, and reputational implications of certification are more likely to align their decisions with institutional expectations, leading to stronger halal compliance. This study extends Institutional Theory by introducing certification awareness as a mediating construct that converts external regulatory pressure into internalized managerial commitment. In contrast to the Resource-Based View (RBV), which emphasizes internal competencies and capabilities as the basis for competitive advantage, Institutional Theory better captures the external legitimacy pressures faced by halal-compliant hotels. Nevertheless, the two perspectives converge when certification awareness is viewed as an intangible resource that enhances organizational capability and market differentiation.

The discussion also highlights the ethical and behavioral dimensions of managerial commitment. Certification awareness does not merely reflect procedural understanding but embodies an ethical orientation toward Shariah-compliant governance. Managers who are aware of halal certification principles tend to demonstrate proactive leadership, transparency, and accountability—traits associated with ethical leadership theory (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This alignment between ethical awareness and institutional conformity suggests that halal compliance is sustained not only through external enforcement but also through internal moral conviction. The study, therefore, positions managerial commitment as both a behavioral and ethical response to awareness, creating a reinforcing cycle of compliance where institutional legitimacy and moral responsibility coexist.

Furthermore, the review emphasizes that achieving consistent halal compliance necessitates more than managerial effort; it requires systemic policy and educational interventions. Empirical evidence from prior studies (Zuhrah et al., 2025; Fathoni et al., 2025) indicates that training programs, financial support, and stakeholder collaborations significantly enhance certification adoption rates. When hotels receive structured support from regulatory bodies such as JAKIM or international halal authorities, managerial awareness transforms into tangible operational changes—such as standardized procurement, segregation of kitchen equipment, and Shariah-compliant supply chain management. This finding reinforces the argument that certification awareness serves as the bridge between policy formulation and on-ground implementation, anchoring managerial practices in both institutional legitimacy and market competitiveness.

Overall, this discussion consolidates the conceptual framework whereby Certification Awareness (MV) mediates the relationship between Managerial Commitment (IV) and Halal Compliance (DV). The proposed model advances theoretical understanding by linking institutional, ethical, and resource-based perspectives within a unified narrative. It contributes to the hospitality and Islamic management literature by articulating how awareness functions as a transformative mechanism that operationalizes values into compliance behavior. Practically, it offers guidance for policymakers, educators, and industry leaders seeking to strengthen halal governance through knowledge empowerment and value-driven leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

This conceptual study concludes that enhancing halal compliance in hotel kitchens depends significantly on the interplay between managerial commitment and certification awareness, which serves as a mediating mechanism translating institutional and ethical pressures into practical compliance behaviors. The narrative review reveals that halal certification not only reinforces consumer trust and brand integrity but also functions as a strategic asset that differentiates halal-compliant hotels in a competitive global market. Theoretically, this study advances Institutional Theory by framing certification awareness as a normative and cognitive force that internalizes external halal standards into managerial behavior, while also bridging insights from the Resource-Based View and Ethical Leadership Theory to explain how awareness-driven commitment can generate sustainable compliance. Practically, the study underscores the need for targeted training, continuous education, and stronger policy coordination between regulatory bodies and the hospitality industry to cultivate halal literacy and operational consistency. However, the study's conceptual nature limits its empirical generalization, as it relies

on secondary data and theoretical synthesis rather than primary evidence. Future research should empirically validate the proposed framework using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to examine the causal relationships among certification awareness, managerial commitment, and halal compliance. Further investigations could also explore cross-cultural differences and comparative analyses across Muslim and non-Muslim majority countries to broaden the applicability of the framework. Overall, this study provides a theoretically grounded and practically relevant foundation for enhancing halal governance and ethical management practices within the hospitality sector.

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