



Consumers' Perspectives on Sustainability Practices of Islamic Banks and Halal Businesses

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Abstract

Given the accelerated climate change, economic woes, growing social inequality and social discontent in various communities, Islamic banks and halal businesses can no longer ignore concerns about sustainability practices if they are to remain viable. To this end, this study intends to ascertain consumers' views on the sustainability practices of Islamic banks and halal businesses. A quantitative research design was adopted, and a survey questionnaire was used to collect data from 302 predominantly young consumers in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Descriptive analyses were performed on the collected data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The results reveal that respondents strongly agree that goods and services from sustainably operating Islamic banks and halal businesses are worth paying for and patronising, that the ethical reputation of Islamic banks and halal businesses influences their decisions to patronise them, that they will not patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses that engage in unethical practices, and that they are willing to pay more for products that show care for the well-being of society. Additionally, they prefer to patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses with a socially responsible reputation compared to other companies without such a reputation. Based on these findings, it is recommended that rather than pursuing profitability at all costs, Islamic banks and halal businesses should adopt a comprehensive approach to sustainability practices—specifically economic, environmental, social, and philanthropic sustainability—that truly advances sustainable development if they are to remain viable.

Keywords: Sustainability practices, halal businesses, Islamic Banks, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, social sustainability

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1. Introduction

Sustainable practices, which are an important aspect of Islamic and halal businesses have attracted the attention of scholars, management and practitioners alike in the halal industry. Given the accelerated climate change, economic problems, growing social inequality, and social dissatisfaction in various societies, it has become increasingly impossible for Islamic banks and halal businesses (henceforth, halal businesses) to ignore issues related to economic, environmental, and social dimensions in today's business landscape (Svensson & Wagner, 2016). These and other relevant issues have made sustainability a critical goal that must be achieved at every stage of a halal business's life cycle and crucial for achieving their long-term developmental plans (Muñoz-Pascual et al., 2019). Despite the crucial roles of the private sector in making the world a better place, Fauzi et al. (2020) note that halal businesses are yet to address sustainability issues holistically, involving the integration of key fundamental aspects including people, planet, and prosperity as they truly deserve. To this end, halal businesses need to focus on all aspects of sustainability to be able to convince stakeholders and promote the

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Article history

Received: 13 July 2024

Accepted: 22 December 2024

essence of Shari'ah.

Briefly, 'halal' originates from the Arabic word meaning allowed or permitted, while 'haram' means prohibited or unlawful by Islamic law. The term 'halal' is applicable to food, cosmetics, personal care, pharmaceuticals, Islamic finance, lifestyle, tourism etc. Specifically, a halal business refers to a business involved in the manufacturing of halal products, offering halal services, and not violating Shari'ah law in all aspects, especially those related to economic, social and environmental factors (Azam & Abdullah, 2020). As businesses that truly subscribe to Islamic principles, focusing on sustainability holistically is tantamount to promoting the essence of Maqasid al-Shari'ah. This is because the overall objective of Shari'ah is to serve the interests of human beings, protect them from danger, and promote peace in our societies (Nor et al., 2019). Given their nature, halal businesses are expected to show adequate concerns for the best way to contribute positively to people and the environment, since one of the critical outcomes of Islamic religious learning practices is to promote well-being (Bensaid & Machouche, 2013). Thus, emphasising the core aspects of sustainability will not only improve public well-being but offer long-term benefits to businesses.

In light of the above arguments, Azam and Abdullah (2020) note that halal businesses should emphasise goods and services that fall into the category of necessity to achieve the objectives of Shari'ah. Jaiyeoba and Azam (2023) assert that businesses that operates within the tenets of Islam must be ethical in seeking economic gain, versatile in serving the community, and active in protecting the environment. Therefore, taking a holistic approach to all aspects of sustainability is an effective way to achieve Maqasid al-Shari'ah for people, communities and business entities. This perfectly aligns with the Qur'an, where Allah says: "*Allah does not intend to make difficulties for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you so that you may be grateful.*" This demonstrates that Shari'ah's goal is to prevent difficulties for human beings, suggesting that the holistic pursuit of sustainability offers financial benefits as well as spiritual benefits for halal businesses. As noted by Jaiyeoba et al. (2023), businesses must pay adequate attention to the elements of sustainability and maintain a balance between these elements. In accordance with this view, there is a need to conduct research on the sustainability practices of halal businesses, essentially to expose these businesses to consumers' perspectives on a holistic approach to sustainability practices. This is because consumers are likely to provide an unbiased view as respondents (Nor et al., 2019). Through such a holistic approach, halal firms can better comprehend the necessity of genuinely fulfilling their economic, social and environmental obligations.

This invariably suggests that halal businesses are encouraged to lead their operations and conduct their activities in accordance with virtue and moral awareness as commanded by Shari'ah (Jaiyeoba et al., 2024). As halal businesses are required to respond to economic, social and environmental concerns in a balanced manner, rather than as self-centred utility-maximising economic agents idealised in neoclassical economics (Dusuki & Bouheraoua, 2011), it is envisaged that this study will encourage them to develop a holistic sustainability strategy with a positive effect on the country's economic development and halal business sustainability. The study will help halal businesses realise that low morale, lack of ethics or inadequate attention to the sustainability framework could lead to poor financial performance by emphasising the importance of addressing the economic, social and environmental dimensions effectively. Therefore, investigating consumers' perspectives on the sustainability practices of halal businesses will not only increase their understanding of the importance of sustainability to consumers but also provide a comprehensive view to support the long-term sustainability of their operations. This study is expected to establish a foundation for halal businesses to operate more efficiently and profitably while simultaneously achieving the desired economic, social and environmental value over the long term.

Moreover, responsible consumers will gain insight into the importance of sustainability practices in Malaysia and, by extension, understand why it is crucial to consider such practices when making purchasing decisions or patronising halal businesses in the country. Following this introduction, the remainder of the study is structured into four main sections. The next section reviews relevant literature, focusing specifically on business sustainability and an empirical analysis of sustainable practices. Section three outlines the data and methodology. The subsequent section presents and interprets the findings of this study. The penultimate section discusses the implications of the findings, while the final section concludes by highlighting the study's limitations and providing recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Business sustainability practices

Business sustainability refers to the practice of managing a company's financial, social and environmental responsibilities in a way that ensures its long-term success and contributes positively to society and the planet. According to [Tonello and Singer \(2015\)](#), business sustainability involves allocating financial resources for non-financial factors, i.e., environmental, social, and governance (ESG) or corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, to seize growth opportunities. Sustainability has been hailed as a critical new phenomenon that organisations, including stakeholders, such as investors, customers and regulators must comprehend and implement ([Sheth et al., 2011](#)). Many researchers who have discussed sustainability strongly agree that it has had and will continue to have a significant material influence on business strategy and operations. Many business managers have acknowledged that sustainability practices are crucial for firm competitiveness, reducing company expenses and risks, improving brand reputation, attracting top talent, and enhancing competitiveness ([Dyllick & Muff, 2016](#)). Business sustainability practices are crucial for discovering competitive advantages and generating long-term value for profitability and ongoing growth by integrating these practices into corporate strategy to address global issues ([Jaiyeoba, 2023](#)). While business sustainability practices have been widely explored by numerous scholars, business executives have recognised, more than ever, the need to take steps towards sustainability practices to ensure the long-term sustainability of their businesses.

Business sustainability involves entrepreneurial activities aimed at improving the environment, reducing human impact, and promoting social well-being, while also helping businesses generate more revenue to sustain themselves. [Jaiyeoba et al. \(2024\)](#) document that there are ample justifications from a Shari'ah perspective for integrated sustainability practices. They also reveal that there is a need for increased awareness regarding the importance of businesses adopting a holistic approach to sustainability through the implementation of suitable sustainability strategies that ensure compliance with social and environmental standards. [Jaiyeoba and Azam \(2023\)](#) identify commitment to halal best practices, zakat and charitable donations, halal economic responsibility, legal responsibility, environmental responsibility, employee welfare, and responsible dealing with clients as the CSR of Islamic banks and halal businesses in the post Covid-19 pandemic era. [Peterson et al. \(2021\)](#) note that firms that strongly pursue sustainable business practices would receive support from consumers who are passionate about business playing a role in protecting the natural environment and increasing social justice. They aver that sustainable business practices cover effective and responsible investing in their financial capital as well as simultaneously contributing to certain environmental and social causes that assure environment protection and social justice. [Viciunaite and Alfnes \(2020\)](#) reiterate the need for sustainability-oriented firms to be aware about consumer preferences for pro-social and pro-environmental attributes to put forward a value proposition that can convince consumers to buy their product.

In terms of ideology, [Söderbaum \(2009\)](#) documents that business sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are inherently linked. For instance, [Carroll's \(2000\)](#) study argues that CSR can benefit businesses by promoting a sustainable environment and having a social impact due to the focus on CSR. [Closs et al. \(2011\)](#) note that there has long been a belief that controlling the triple bottom line will increase a company's efficiency and profitability in the long run. However, [Hassini et al. \(2012\)](#) assert that no study has yet comprehensively addressed the economic, environmental, and social components of sustainable practices in an integrated manner. This argument is supported by [Gao and Bansal \(2013\)](#), who claim that only a few studies have attempted to articulate the business model linking the economic, environmental and social aspects of business sustainability. Moreover, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be met by 2030 represent initiatives aimed at promoting a more sustainable approach to addressing global issues such as economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection ([Morton et al., 2017](#); [Collste et al., 2017](#); [Fleming et al., 2017](#)). [Morton et al. \(2017\)](#) believes that implementing SDGs should involve not only government measures but also non-governmental players, such as halal businesses. Although businesses often have multiple objectives to achieve, entrepreneurs must focus on sustainability alongside financial success and strategic objectives to develop sustainable capabilities, practices, and resources to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors ([Murthy, 2012](#)). Thus, [Linnenluecke and Griffiths \(2010\)](#) suggest that companies need to undergo a process of transformation and cultural change to effectively respond to social and environmental challenges.

Moreover, sustainability is widely recognised as a critical component of long-term business success.

Organisations that integrate sustainability into their marketing strategies are seen to gain a distinct competitive advantage over their competitors (Crittenden et al., 2011). The increasing importance that consumers place on the environment, firms are encouraged to promote sustainable packaging (Wandosell et al., 2021). This business phenomenon is a factor that brings about fundamental and long-term changes in how businesses compete. In addition, initiatives that can assist halal businesses in becoming sustainable, improving and enhancing their competitive edge and supporting their strategic position require business executives to understand sustainability activities and incorporate sustainability framework strategies throughout the organisation and business network, not just at the corporate level, but to enable smooth operation in a competitive environment too (Schulz & Flanigan, 2016; Ferro et al., 2017). In this regard, businesses can enhance both their short-term and long-term profitability. Many businesses in the industrial sector, including private and non-profit organisations, now utilise a sustainability framework to assess their performance. Therefore, every level of management from lower to upper, must engage in constructive learning for firms to achieve sustainability targets, mitigate the risks of increased public scrutiny, implement large-scale adaptive policies, develop employee competencies and sustain profitability (Jackson et al., 2011).

In his book titled “Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business,” Elkington (1999) argues that businesses should aim for goals beyond profit by developing strategies that include environmental and societal sustainability practices. He emphasises the significance of the sustainability framework for small and medium businesses, highlighting that its value extends beyond multinational corporations. Elkington examines the process of greening capitalism and proposes an audit method to assess a corporation’s sustainability, while rethinking the role of business and enterprise in a society that prioritises environmental and social concerns. The implication of the discussion so far is that businesses, including halal businesses, must adopt a holistic approach to sustainability practices to remain sustainable in the long run. It is evident that sustainability practices encompass three main components: economic, social and environmental. Additionally, philanthropic responsibility, as a voluntary contribution is considered an essential aspect of social sustainability. Hence, paying attention to sustainability practices is crucial for the long-term performance and viability of halal businesses.

2.2. Empirical review of literature on sustainability practices

Over recent decades, sustainability has evolved beyond a fad to become an important business strategy aimed at appealing to stakeholders and attracting customers. It is no longer news that sustainability practices are beneficial to businesses when conscientiously integrated into business strategy. To some individuals, sustainability is associated with environmental concerns, while others use the term interchangeably with CSR (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Some generations now want to live in the same way as their parents did, and they want their children to have comparable and perhaps better opportunities. This concept can also be applied in the business world, where business executives desire their companies to earn a profit that grows over time. Given the fact that many firms have pledged to be more environmentally friendly or sustainable, it is critical to focus on how these practices enhance company performance, protect ecosystems, preserve natural resources and safeguard people’s lives (Porter & Derry, 2012). In accordance with Barack Obama’s speech at the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Summit 2015, the former US president urged everyone to take sustainability concerns seriously and take action to address them (Lambert, 2015). Sustainability, including economic, environmental and social dimensions is a global issue that affects every aspect of human life. Thus, understanding how consumers perceive the idea of sustainability is a crucial first step in encouraging sustainable consumption.

To this end, Mahdzan et al. (2024) examine the influence of Islamic financial literacy and motives on the holdings of Islamic financial products based on the data that were collected from 234 bank customers in Klang Valley, Malaysia, they find that Islamic financial literacy and religious motives positively influence holding Islamic financial products. Jan et al. (2019) evaluate the nexus between sustainability practices and financial performance from the Islamic banking perspective based on a decade of sustainability data from 2008 to 2017. They find that sustainability practices have a significant positive association with the financial performance indicators of the Islamic banks. Their analysis further reveal that an improvement in sustainability practices will add financial values to the management, shareholder and the market financial performance indicators of the Islamic banking industry across. Peterson et al. (2021) investigate whether consumers’ perceptions of the marketplace practices of firms influence their support for those firms pursuing sustainable business practices.

Their results suggest that consumers' nature-based values have the most positive influence on consumers' support for sustainable businesses. This is followed by attitude toward firm benevolence, and the concern about the ethicality of firms. Štofejová et al. (2023) examine the relationships between consumer behaviour when shopping online for green products and the factors that influence it are from the point of view of sustainability. The results showed that digitisation in green marketing has a significant impact on environmental attitude such as environmental attitude, environmental oriented lifestyle, willingness to pay for green products, and subjective norms have a significant impact on environmental purchasing behaviour. Additionally, they also found that environmental oriented lifestyle, willingness to pay for green products, subjective norms and environmental purchasing behaviour have a significant impact on future purchase intention.

Hanss and Böhm (2011) conducted research on 123 Norwegian consumers' understanding of basic sustainability principles and how that understanding influences their purchasing decisions. They discovered that, to varying degrees, the aspects of environmental, social and economic sustainability play a crucial role in consumers' purchasing decisions. The environmental and social aspects are particularly significant and are frequently considered in tandem. Consumers' understanding of sustainability is based on both factors, and when it comes to the environmental dimension, user understanding varies the most. Nonetheless, several studies have demonstrated that customers who claim to have ethical beliefs frequently fail to translate their intentions into ethical purchasing behaviour. This has resulted in an "intention-behaviour gap" phenomenon among individuals or consumers (Markkula & Moisander, 2012). As a simpler example, communities express concerns about environmental problems but are hesitant to take appropriate action to address those problems. Another qualitative study by Goworek et al. (2012) focuses on the opinions of 99 UK consumers regarding the sustainable use of clothes; they find that they were unaware of the environmental impact of clothing. These findings have larger societal and environmental consequences, as retail practices may have a substantial influence on the planet's resource sustainability.

Hill and Lee (2012) explore the real knowledge and perspectives of 80 young Generation Y students, aged 18-25 years on sustainability and environmental issues, both in general and within the apparel industry. They find a lack of understanding of the concept of holistic sustainability and some of the negative consequences of the garment business on social and environmental aspects. The planet cannot support the current level of clothes manufacturing and disposal due to a lack of natural resources, dyeing and printing processes, transportation, and disposal. This problem will negatively impact the environment's long-term sustainability (Gam and Banning, 2011). Other instances of the negative influence of the business industry on society include child labour, forced labour, human rights abuses and large-scale pesticide usage, all of which are regarded as highly complicated in terms of social sustainability (Khurana and Ricchetti, 2016). Aslam and Jawaid (2023) examine the impact of green banking adoption practices on banking performance, encompassing financial, operational, and environmental dimensions. Their findings indicate that the adoption of green banking practices positively influences all three aspects of performance. Notably, the results reveal that these practices have the greatest impact on environmental performance, followed by operational performance, and finally financial performance.

Jung and Ha-Brookshire (2017) examine customer expectations of CSR towards sustainability objectives and find that consumers with greater incomes tend to embrace more ethical purchasing because most sustainable items are more expensive. On the other hand, those with low incomes may have a strong belief that businesses have a moral responsibility to provide adequate employment conditions and protect the environment, pointing to a possible ethical purchasing gap among low-income consumers, which is the largest in the sustainable consumption literature. Furthermore, Tasci (2017) surveyed residents in the US to measure consumer awareness and expectations for various types of benchmarks, standards, licences, and certificates including those linked to sustainability. According to the researcher, consumers in the US lack awareness and enthusiasm for sustainability-related standards. Thus, consumer awareness and attention may be needed by organisations that advocate for sustainability. Suki (2013) investigates 200 college students in Labuan, Malaysia, to examine the impact of environmental concerns, green product awareness, pricing and brand image on customers' green product purchasing decisions. He finds that consumers are aware of pricing and brand image, and such awareness has a significant impact on their green product purchases. This actively demonstrates that consumers who are concerned about environmental sustainability have a high awareness of green products as the demand based on pricing and image branding factors is increasing in the Malaysian market. However, customers' environmental concerns have no impact on their green product purchase

selections to preserve environmental safety (Suki, 2013). According to a survey conducted by Joung and Park-Poaps (2013) in the US, the main motivation for consumer donations is altruistic concern (helping people).

Jaiyeoba and Azam (2023) review literature to discuss the CSR activities of Islamic banks and halal businesses. The CSR activities advocated include commitment to halal best practices, zakat and charitable donations, halal economic responsibility, legal responsibility, environmental responsibility, employee welfare, and responsible dealing with clients. Meanwhile, sustainable development has become a new wave, bringing listed companies to the attention of the government and society. In addition to corporate social responsibility (CSR), philanthropic responsibility has become one of the pillars of a sustainable development strategy (Idowu et al., 2013). As a result, altruistic concern (helping people) is the primary reason for consumer donations (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013). Interestingly, extant literature has suggested that sustainability practices have become one of the crucial factors considered by consumers when making decisions to patronise or purchase certain brand; however, little is known about the perspective of consumers on sustainability practices of halal businesses. Having reviewed relevant studies in the domain of this research, it is pertinent to discuss the gaps that this study intends to fill with respect to its novelty and uniqueness. While some researchers have examined corporate social responsibility from an Islamic perspective (Muhamad et al., 2008; Nor et al., 2019), an extensive review of the literature suggests that studies on consumers' views on the sustainability practices of halal businesses are lacking. Therefore, this study fills this gap by investigating this issue from the perspective of consumers in Malaysia.

Based on the reviewed empirical studies, most of the research conducted in this area has focused on other countries, indicating that more studies need to be conducted on Malaysian halal companies. Additionally, as interest in sustainability practices has recently been renewed, there is a need for more empirical studies, particularly to reveal stakeholders' opinions on sustainability practices across countries. As reiterated, this research investigates the consumers' perspectives on halal business sustainability, this study is likely the first of its kind in this regard. Thus, the researchers' thorough literature search reveals that no previous studies have been conducted in this manner.

3. Methodology

This study follows a descriptive approach to analyse the data collected from participants who are consumers and customers of halal businesses and Islamic banks. The descriptive approach was used to gather data on the consumers' backgrounds as well as to identify sustainability practices from respondents' perspectives. According to Sekaran (2003), descriptive research can provide a detailed picture of all the elements of the study topic, generating fresh ideas. As noted by Chan and Saad (2019), a quantitative research design is the most appropriate approach, especially when investigating issues such as sustainability practices among halal businesses. Accordingly, the research population for this study comprises consumers and customers of halal businesses and Islamic banks in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The Klang Valley area was chosen for this study because it makes up a large proportion of the Malaysian population, representing approximately a quarter of the entire Malaysian population. Another important reason for selecting this location is that this area of Malaysia is a rapidly developing metropolitan entity encompassing five major areas: Kuala Lumpur's Federal Territory, Gombak, Hulu Langat, Klang, and Petaling, which also covers Selangor's neighbouring cities and villages. Given the level of development and literacy rate in Klang Valley, it was envisaged that respondents here would find it easy to respond to the survey questionnaires used to collect data for this study.

As mentioned, the Klang Valley area of Malaysia represents approximately a quarter of the entire population of the country, 32.39 million as of 2019 according to the Department of Statistics. Asiamah et al. (2017) note that collecting data from a location with a large population will produce a bigger sample, which in turn produces estimates that are closer to population parameters. Thus, conducting a survey in a location with a large number of participants may reduce the possibility of accidentally including extreme or biased groups. Meanwhile, the researchers collected data from 302 respondents who are consumers of halal businesses and customers of Islamic banks using a questionnaire developed based on extensive review of literature. Considering the scope of this study, this sample size is deemed appropriate (Hair et al., 2014). Since halal products are also consumed by non-Muslims and Islamic banks are patronised by non-Muslims, the choice of respondents was not limited to Muslims only but included anyone with a good understanding of sustainability practices of halal businesses. Despite the source of data, the researchers ensured that the data used did not deviate from the main aim of this study. In addition, a non-probability sampling technique, specifically a

convenience sampling method, was used to collect data for this study.

In the social science domain, the most commonly used research instruments for data collection include survey questionnaires, interviews, observations, and checklists (Hair et al., 2014). Among these tools and based on the adopted research design, the researchers selected a survey questionnaire for the present study. The questionnaire used for data collection was developed based on existing literature and was structured into two main sections. The first section focused on the demographic profile of respondents, while the second section contained questions on sustainability practices of Islamic banks and halal businesses. The developed questionnaire was sent to six experts for content validity and grammatical structure. Subsequently, the questionnaire was revised based on the comments received from the competent experts. Data were collected through an online platform (Google Meet) (Jaiyeoba et al., 2023). Although data collection through online platforms is widely acknowledged for being convenient and cost-effective, this method also faces several limitations that can impact data quality and representativeness. One notable challenge of data collection through online platforms is sampling bias, as it often excludes populations without internet access or digital literacy, such as older adults or rural communities, and tends to attract only motivated participants, leading to self-selection bias. To address this challenge, partnerships with community organisations and several local institutions were established to engage populations that are typically underrepresented in online surveys. To prepare the data for analysis, the completed questionnaires were processed into a single SPSS file downloaded from Excel sheets via Google Forms. The specific analysis performed on the data after processing them in SPSS is descriptive analysis.

4. Analysis

4.1 Descriptive analysis

The questionnaire was distributed to consumers of halal businesses in Klang Valley via an online platform. A total of 302 usable responses were collected. As shown, Table 1 summarises the descriptive statistics on respondents' gender, age, level of education, religious affiliation, and the importance of halal businesses operating responsibly. Regarding gender, 205 female respondents (67.9%) and 97 male respondents (32.1%) participated in the survey. Female respondents outnumbered male respondents by a significant margin, indicating a higher response rate from females to the distributed questionnaire links. In terms of age, respondents aged between 19 and 35 years constituted the largest proportion of participants in this study, amounting to 290 respondents, which is 96% of the total sample size. This suggests that more data were collected from young adults compared to other age groups. The remaining respondents were aged between 36 and 55 years, comprising 12 respondents, or 4% of the total sample size. Regarding respondents' level of education, bachelor's degree holders comprised the majority at 201 respondents (66.6%). Following this, diploma holders accounted for 72 respondents (23.8%) of the total. Postgraduate degree holders represented 29 respondents (9.6%) in this research. Moreover, 93% of the respondents agreed that it is extremely important for halal businesses to operate responsibly. This is followed by respondents who believe that operating responsibly is less important, comprising eight respondents (2.6%). Only one respondent (0.3%) indicated that it is unimportant for halal businesses to operate in a socially responsible manner.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

S/N	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Female	205	67.9
		Male	97	32.1
2	Age	19-35	290	96.0
		36-55	12	4.0
3	Educational level	Diploma holder	72	23.8
		Degree holder	201	66.6
		Post-graduate degree holder	29	9.6
4	Importance of halal business operating responsibly	Extremely important	293	97.0
		Less important	8	2.6
		Not important	1	0.3

4.2 Consumers’ perspectives on sustainability practices of halal businesses

This section discusses consumers/customers’ perspectives on the sustainability practices of halal businesses based on the information in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5 and Table 2. Starting with respondents’ views on the importance of halal businesses operating in a socially responsible manner, 123 respondents (40.7%) strongly agree that goods and services from sustainably operating Islamic banks and halal businesses are worth paying for and patronising. This is followed by 100 respondents (33.1%) who agree to pay more for goods and services of halal businesses that are operating sustainably. Additionally, 72 respondents (23.8%) are neutral with respect to the above question. Five respondents (1.7%) disagree with the statement, while 2 respondents (0.7%) strongly disagree. Regarding the consumers/customers’ views on considering the ethical reputation of halal businesses and Islamic banks before deciding to patronise them, 153 respondents (50.7%) strongly agree that ethical reputation of halal businesses influences their purchasing decisions. This is followed by 93 respondents (30.8%) who agree that ethical reputation plays an important role in their purchasing decisions. 48 respondents (15.9%) are neutral on this statement, while eight respondents (2.6%) disagree. This finding supports the findings of Nicolaides (2021), who found that the performance of a business (in the hospitality industry) will rise if it has a positive ethical reputation, either directly or indirectly.

Figure 1: I would be willing to pay more to purchase products or patronise sustainably operating halal businesses and Islamic banks.

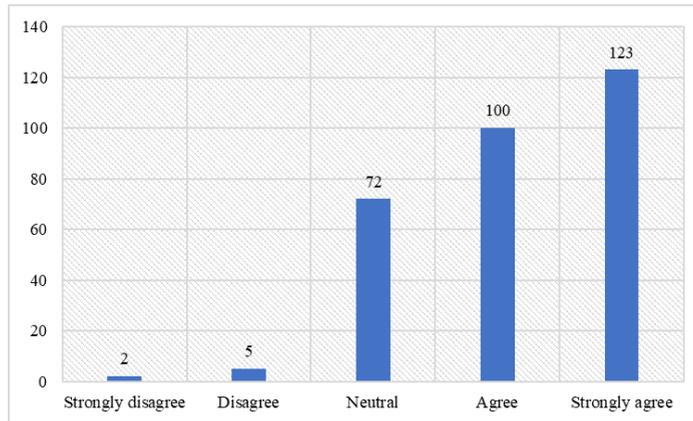
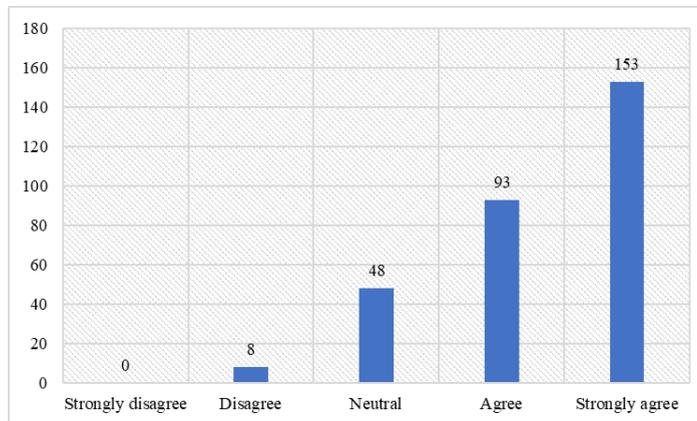


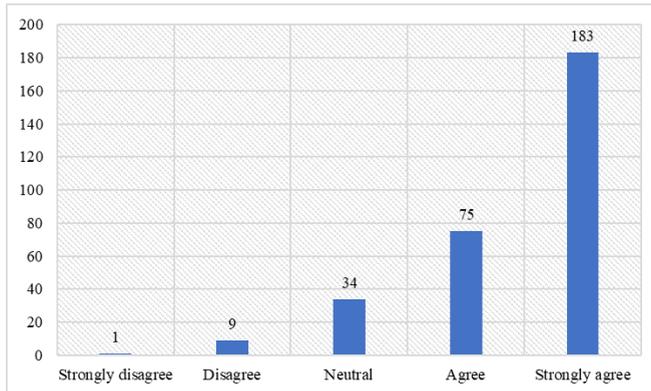
Figure 2: I consider the ethical reputation of halal businesses and Islamic banks before deciding to patronise them.



Regarding whether consumers/customers will patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses that are engaged in unethical practices with respect to economic, social and environmental sustainability, most of the respondents, 183 (60.3%), strongly agree that they will not purchase products from halal businesses that are

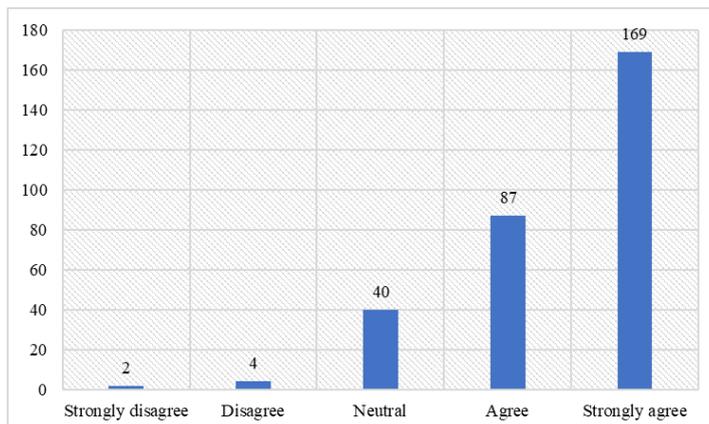
engaged in unethical behaviour. This is followed by 75 respondents (24.8%) who agree to avoid buying products from companies that are engaged in immoral actions. The next are 34 respondents (11.3%) who are neutral on the above statement. Whereas nine respondents (3.0%) disagree with the above statement, and only 1 respondent (0.3%) strongly disagrees with the statement. This finding is consistent with the findings of [Namkung and Jang \(2014\)](#), which indicated that customers are willing to pay extra for green products. The study also shows that green purchasing behaviour was unaffected by income and education levels.

Figure 3: I will not patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses that are engaged in unethical practices with respect to economic, social, and environmental sustainability.



Concerning whether consumers/customers would be willing to pay more for products from Islamic banks and halal businesses that show care for the well-being of society, most of the respondents, 169 (56.0%), strongly agree that they are ready to pay more to buy products from halal businesses that show care for the well-being of our society. This is followed by 87 respondents (28.8%) who also agree to pay more to buy products from halal businesses that show care for the well-being of our society. Besides, 40 respondents (13.2%) are neutral regarding this statement. Four respondents (1.3%) disagree with this statement, and just two respondents (0.7%) strongly disagree with this statement. This finding supports the findings of [Cuesta-Valiño et al. \(2019\)](#), where it was discovered that CSR has a positive relationship with customer loyalty, as measured by customer satisfaction. This suggests that if a business behaves in a socially responsible manner, customers' trust in the business will grow. This trust is also influenced by their level of satisfaction with the product's quality. It is expected that loyal customers will recommend a product or brand to others, even if the business charges a higher price.

Figure 4: I would be willing to pay more for products from Islamic banks and halal businesses that show care for the well-being of society.



Regarding whether consumers/customers would prefer to patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses with a socially responsible reputation compared to other companies without such a reputation if the price and quality of two products or services are the same, most of the respondents, 189 (62.6%), strongly agree that they will prefer to buy from halal businesses with a socially responsible reputation compared to other companies without such a reputation. This is followed by 69 respondents (22.8%) who prefer to buy from halal businesses with a socially responsible reputation compared to other companies without such a reputation. The next are 40 respondents (13.2%) who are neutral regarding the above statement. While only four respondents (1.3%) disagree with the statement.

Figure 5: If the price and quality of two products are the same, I would prefer to patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses with a socially responsible reputation compared to other companies without such a reputation.

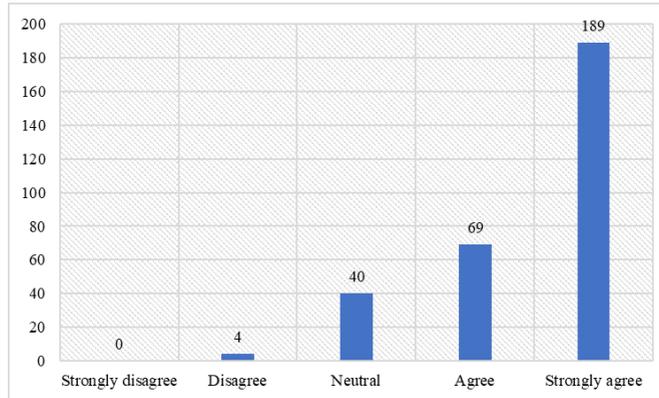


Table 2: Consumers' perspectives on sustainability practices of halal businesses

S/N	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	I would be willing to pay more to purchase products or patronise sustainably operating halal businesses and Islamic banks.	Strongly disagree	2	0.7%
		Disagree	5	1.7%
		Neutral	72	23.8%
		Agree	100	33.1%
		Strongly agree	123	40.7%
2	I consider the ethical reputation of halal businesses and Islamic banks before deciding to patronise them.	Disagree	8	2.6
		Neutral	48	15.9
		Agree	93	30.8
		Strongly agree	153	50.7
3	I will not patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses that are engaged in unethical practices with respect to economic, social, and environmental sustainability.	Strongly disagree	1	0.3
		Disagree	9	3.0
		Neutral	34	11.3
		Agree	75	24.8
		Strongly agree	183	60.3
4	I would be willing to pay more for products from Islamic banks and halal businesses that show care for the well-being of society.	Strongly disagree	2	0.7
		Disagree	4	1.3
		Neutral	40	13.2
		Agree	87	28.8
		Strongly agree	169	56.0
5	If the price and quality of two products are the same, I would prefer to patronise Islamic banks and halal businesses with a socially responsible reputation compared to other companies without such a reputation.	Disagree	4	1.3
		Neutral	40	13.2
		Agree	69	22.8
		Strongly agree	189	62.6

5. Implications of the Study

The researchers have sought to conduct research that is critically relevant, and its findings will have serious implications for various entities, including Malaysian halal businesses, Islamic banks, the halal industry, the community and government entities. With respect to the implications of this research for halal businesses, the findings of this study suggest that paying attention to sustainability practices is crucial for halal business performance and sustainability. Moreover, integrating sustainability strategies to their operations will promote the essence of Shari'ah, help them achieve higher growth through innovative approaches, strengthen their relationships with stakeholders, enhance business value and reputation, increase productivity, and enable them to attract and retain highly qualified personnel. Therefore, the findings of this study will assist halal businesses and Islamic banks in refocusing their efforts on taking a holistic approach to sustainability by integrating sustainability into their business strategic planning. Additionally, by promoting the essence of the sustainability framework to halal businesses, the findings of this study will benefit Malaysian communities. When halal businesses ensure their economic, social, philanthropic and environmental sustainability, the communities will be safer to live in, and people will be able to go about their everyday lives in peace. Consequently, the involvement of halal businesses will improve their relationships with stakeholders and contribute to solving social problems such as poverty, homelessness, and climate change.

In addition, this study will be beneficial to the halal industry in Malaysia. As the halal industry is increasingly recognised as an engine of economic growth, this fact cannot be ignored. If halal businesses pay serious attention to the sustainability practices, the contribution of the halal industry could significantly boost Malaysia's halal ecosystem, as suggested in the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030. With the potential of the Malaysian halal industry, Malaysia could compete with non-Muslim countries to become the largest halal producer if halal industry players adopt the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework as their primary strategy. Therefore, this study will help halal industry players to recognise the opportunities that are possible through sustainability practices. Furthermore, the findings of this study will be beneficial to government entities. This study will benefit Malaysia's government in its efforts to make the country more inclusive and address social challenges. Relevant government entities would be encouraged to promote Malaysia's sustainability agenda to halal businesses in the country. Finally, this study will benefit researchers in this domain. Researchers will be aided in identifying the critical reasons for promoting holistic sustainability in halal companies, particularly within the context of the Triple Bottom Line framework and Shari'ah principles. This foundation will encourage further studies globally to advance this field of study among halal businesses.

Meanwhile, halal businesses can implement sustainability practices to strengthen consumer loyalty and enhance brand reputation in the competitive halal market. For example, adopting eco-friendly production methods, such as using biodegradable packaging or sourcing materials from sustainable suppliers, can justify ethically produced goods to attract environmentally conscious consumers. To build a strong ethical reputation, they can adhere to fair trade practices, provide equitable wages to employees, and engage in transparent financial reporting, particularly for Islamic banks. By actively avoiding unethical practices like exploiting labour or polluting the environment, halal businesses can ensure they retain customers who prioritise ethical operations. Demonstrating care for societal well-being through initiatives like funding educational programs or supporting underprivileged communities not only appeals to socially conscious buyers but also positions the brand as a responsible market leader. Moreover, promoting their socially responsible reputation through collaborations with reputable organisations can differentiate halal businesses from competitors, ensuring consumer preference for their products and services. Ultimately, these sustainability efforts can significantly enhance brand loyalty and market position in the halal industry.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate consumers' views on the sustainability practices of halal businesses and Islamic banks in Malaysia. Through several analyses, this research has achieved the research objectives, showing that sustainability practices, covering economic sustainability, social sustainability, environmental sustainability and philanthropic responsibility are crucial from the perspectives of consumers in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The findings of the study suggest that consumers and customers of halal businesses as well as Islamic banks value businesses that pay more attention to sustainable practices. They are also less likely to support halal businesses that violate ethical work standards and lack vision in protecting the environment, employee welfare, and society. Thus, paying attention to sustainability practices is essential for halal businesses to remain

sustainable, since doing so will not only benefit halal businesses but also other stakeholders, such as consumers, the community, and government.

While conducting this study, the researchers encountered several limitations that are worth mentioning. Firstly, the respondents were predominantly drawn from Klang Valley. Therefore, future research could benefit from including consumers outside Klang Valley, particularly those from rural areas, as they may have diverse demographic backgrounds including income levels, education levels, understanding of halal and sustainability, and access to markets. Next, this research focused solely on consumers' views on the sustainability practices of halal businesses and Islamic banks. For future research, it may be necessary to explore the influence and interactions between the independent variables (economic, social, environmental sustainability and philanthropic responsibility) to understand how they interact with each other. Additionally, this research did not investigate whether respondents actually act against businesses that violate the sustainability practices. Future studies could delve into this issue to provide deeper insights. Furthermore, this research was conducted based on data that were collected solely through online surveys. It could be beneficial for future studies to consider employing physical data collection methods to provide researchers an opportunity to explain the purpose and background of study to respondents, this could potentially enhance their knowledge before responding to the survey. This research does not represent perspectives from consumers above 55 years old. Hence, future research could aim to include a broader age range of respondents to capture a more diverse demographic perspective. Furthermore, future studies on sustainability practices in halal businesses could explore the influence of sustainability practices on consumer loyalty and brand reputation in the halal market. Finally, future research could examine how demographic variables shape consumer willingness to support sustainably operating halal businesses and Islamic banks, and how these preferences translate into loyalty.

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