THE EFFECT OF RECOVER SATISFACTION, SEVERITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATION TOWARD BOYCOTT IN HALAL VIOLATION INCIDENT

Nor Asiah Omar¹, Nordiana Ahmad Nordin² and Muhamad Azrin Nazri³

Abstract

Understanding halal violation effect is important as it can harm product through negative behaviors. This study aims to investigate the effect of psychological contract violation (PCV), recovery satisfaction and severity of violation on boycott. Furthermore, this study will also examine the moderating effect of PCV in the relationship between recovery satisfaction and severity of violation on boycott. A total of 212 questionnaires were collected from consumers who were aware and/or had experienced the violation of a halal product in Malaysia. A hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to test the research model. This study found that PCV and recovery satisfaction have a significant influence on boycott. The contribution of this study is obvious as the resulting outcomes can be capitalized as a guideline for managers to design recovery action towards halal violation incident. This study is among the first few attempts towards investigating halal violation and psychological contract violation effect.

Keywords: recovery satisfaction; severity; psychological contract violation; boycott; halal

INTRODUCTION

In Islam consuming halal products is an obligatory to all Muslims. As halal has been growing fast and becoming a profitable industry, countries in Southeast Asia. Europe. Africa and also in some Arab countries have prompted many foods marketed applying for the halal certificate to cater Muslim market demands (Othman et al., 2011). Today, halal is associated with manufacturing clean, safe and hygienic consumer products and services; coupled with innovations towards green manufacturing and technology; and compliances as well as upholding strong ethical and religious values as the centers for the new business operations (Badruldin et al., 2012). Halal is becoming a global symbol for quality assurance and lifestyle choice (Rezai et al., 2012; Haque et al., 2015) as well as food safety, sustainability, and environmental friendliness to non-Muslim (Abdul Aziz & Chok, 2012; Rezai et al., 2010). In order to assure the consistency of quality standard and guidelines, most of the countries around the world have established institution specifically for halal certification such as Religious Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) (Malaysia), Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), Halal Institute of Thailand, Halal

Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Correspondence: norasiah@ukm.edu.my

Department of Business and Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. email: annordiana@feb.unimas.my

Faculty of Economics and Muamalat, Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM), Malaysia. email: muhdazrin@usim.edu.my

Australia, Muslim Food Board (United Kingdom) and ISWA *Halal* Certification (United State of America). As a highly reputed and recognized Islamic country, Malaysia is one of the pioneers in promoting *halal* throughout the world and is well poised to play a leading role in boosting the *halal* industry. The Malaysia government effort and supports are admirable, as setting up *Halal* certification authority, providing incentives for *Halal* businesses, funding research on *Halal* related studies through universities and research institutes as well as organizing *Halal* training for industry practitioners. This is to promote the *Halal* industry with the objective to make Malaysia the global *halal* hub for production and trade in *halal* goods and services (Mohamed *et al.*, 2013).

Due to the importance of halal among Muslim customer, halal violation among companies that have been awarded with halal accreditation is perceived to be unacceptable. There are also cases where halal certificates for restaurants and food factories were canceled because of non-halal compliance. Muslim consumers are becoming more alert when buying and consuming products that have halal certification (BBC World News, 2014; The Malaysia Insider, 2014) after such cases, even if, as some people suggest, the mass media has exaggerated their reports about these issues (Zakaria, 2008). As the trust of Muslims in any halal mark is implicit, such cases are considered as a breach of promise. To add more. severity of violation has been found to affect customer's trust and behavior in trust repair (Bansal & Zahedi, 2015) and service failure recovery (Hess et al., 2003; Weun et al., 2004; McQuilken, 2010). Although consumers may have different perceptions and responses towards the seriousness of halal violation by companies, the incident should not be treated as remote issues. Unfortunately, there is no study that has been carried out on investigating halal violation effect. The previous study on halal is mainly focused to supply chain management (Van der Spiegel et al., 2012; Tieman et al., 2012. Ab Talib et al., 2015), purchase intention (Mukhtar & Mohsin Butt, 2012), halal certification (Marzuki et al., 2012), and halal product such as cosmetic (Abd Rahman et al., 2015; Auon & Tournois, 2015).

The problem of customer boycott due to the breakout news of *halal* violation incident is expected to bring damage to company sales, brand, and reputation (Klein *et al.*, 2001). *Halal* violation can be viewed as unethical corporate behavior that may elicit negative consumer emotions and behavior (Lindenmeier, 2012). Prior literature confirms that customer boycott leads to a strong negative impact on brand perception, brand judgment, brand loyalty and brand image of the product and even the company in question (Abosag & Farah, 2014; Al-Hyari *et al.*, 2012). On the positive side, customer boycotts can effectively direct corporate ethics of the company i.e. remedy the 'wrong' and enhance the market position of well-behaving companies (Glazer *et al.*, 2010). Customer boycott due to religiosity has been previously studied by Al-Hyari *et al.*, 2012, indicating that consumer behavior is becoming influenced progressively by religion. Prior literature exhibit that customer boycott can be due to consumer animosity, consumer efficacy (Smith & Li, 2010), self- enhancement and consistency (Klein *et al.*, 2001). There are several ways consumers react to maltreatment by companies. Some consumers

engage actively in negative word of mouth behaviors, complaining, boycotting companies, rage, retaliation, and legal actions that can cause a negative impact to companies (Fisk *et al.*, 2010; Grappi *et al.*, 2013; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). Product boycott refers to consumers who have abstained from purchasing a particular product because of some form of ideological discontent (Lee *et al.*, 2009) or unethical credibility (Lavorata, 2014) with a company or country.

While the severity of customer boycott is critical to the business, there is still lack of study investigating the association of *halal* violation and customer boycott. Therefore, this study aims to study *halal* violation incident by investigating the severity of the *halal* violation, recovery satisfaction and psychological contract violation effect on customer boycott. Furthermore, the study also attempts to examine if psychological contract violation plays a moderating role in the relationship between severity of violation and recovery satisfaction on customer boycott.

The introduction will be followed by brief literature review to support hypotheses development. Next methodology section describes how this study designs. Finding and discussion will explain further the results from analysis and ended with implication and conclusion. This study is expected to provide new insight into the *halal* literature by introducing new variable that is PCV and a new issue that is *Halal* violation. Practitioners will benefit by having an empirical data to support and guide in facing *halal* violation incident.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Both psychological contract theory and social exchange theory are used and integrated into this study in explaining and justifying constructs involved. In addressing the research problems, this study incorporates psychological contract theory as a means of explaining the customer reaction toward the service provider when the service violation occur (Robinson, 1994). This theory illustrates that one party to the exchange need perceive that the contract exists in order for it to be in force. Nonetheless, psychological contract is considered difficult to manage as the violation of the contract is subjectively defined by one of the parties to the exchange, which is mainly the customer (Fullerton & Taylor, 2015). The reaction of violation of a psychological contract largely involves powerful and negative emotions directed toward the company that is responsible for the violation. Since the violation of the contract is subjective, the significant bias in the evaluation of events leading to the perception of violation exists (Fullerton & Taylor, 2015). While, social exchange theory (SET) which focuses on interpersonal exchanges, as well as market exchanges (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958) provides a meaningful explanation of consumer perception of a service failure, service recovery effort and post recovery behavior (Smith et al., 1999; Tax et al., 1998). In most severe violation incidents, consumers tend to feel betrayed, difficult to forgive and likely to punish the firms through the act of punitive damages (Finkel et al., 2002; Koehler & Gershoff, 2003). In social exchange theory perspective, PCV leads to the creation of negative norms of reciprocity. Accordingly, the study utilizes severity of *halal* violation, recovery satisfaction, psychological contract violation and customer boycott as variables to be examined.

Boycott

Dissatisfaction experiences are ordinary events in the marketplace. Unethical corporate behaviors frequently result in strong reactions from consumers and may elicit negative consumer emotions and behavior (Lindenmeier et al., 2012). There are several ways consumers react to mistreatment by companies. One of it is boycott participation. Boycott involves consumers abstain from purchasing products owing to some form of ideological discontent with a companies or country (Lee et al., 2009). Lavorata (2014) argue that boycott occurs when some consumers avoid specific products and brands due to companies' ethical credibility. Most consumers participate in boycotts as a way to express severe dissatisfaction (Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011). They claim that consumers participate in boycott because they want to force the company to change or abandon behaviors that are considered to be unethical or socially irresponsible. In the case of Halal, once a product is found to violated the halal certification awarded whether it is a speculation or actual incident, consumer especially Muslim consumers are expected to feel betray and angry. This will lead them to engage in negative consumption behavior such as boycott. Grégoire and Fisher (2008) reported that the higher level of the feeling of betrayal higher the level of retaliation. Thus in this study, we predicted that boycott participation on the product that is found violating halal certification will be higher when the case is more severe, the higher feeling of betrayal and low recovery satisfaction by the consumer.

Severity of Halal Violation

Severity refers to the customer's perceived intensity of the service failure (e.g. Weun et al., 2004) or the magnitude of loss experienced by customers as an outcome of the service failure or violation (Hess Jr, 2008; Hsieh, 2012). The impact of the violation on customers is likely to be related to their subjective evaluation of the intensity or seriousness (severity) of the violation. Additionally, customers' losses due to violation could be a tangible monetary loss or intangible emotional losses such as frustration, feelings of betrayal or inconvenience (Hess Jr, 2008). Based on this, this study operationalizes severity of violation on halal as customer's perceived seriousness of the violation and the magnitude of loss experienced by customers as an outcome of the violation. It is expected that higher loss is incurred from a severe violation compared to a minor violation and the higher the severity of the violation on halal, the higher the retaliation and engage in a boycott.

Recovery Satisfaction

Once a company faces halal violation incident, recovery action should be taken immediately. Recent studies found that consumers with resilient relationships with

the company are likely to react the most negatively (Trump, 2014). Accordingly, customers who feel more betrayed by the company are more prone to feel betrayed, which leads them to a higher level of retaliation (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). This hostile response happens when these consumers disbelieve that the company will hold up its end of the relational bargain, such as treating the consumer dishonestly or by failing to right a transgression. Therefore, Trump (2014) proposes that if the company experiences a product performance failure, it would be wise to target recovery efforts to those who were personally affected by the problem, compared to investing in broad campaigns to solve the crisis. Reports of the investigation, public announcement, apologize, rebranding and new advertisements are some of the strategies taken by companies to recover from the damage.

Service recovery is designed not just to resolve the problem but also to alter negative behavior from dissatisfied customers, and ultimately retain these customers (Gronroos, 1988; Miller et al., 2000). While there is lack of study examining the link between recovery satisfaction and customer boycott, several past studies found that recovery satisfaction is strongly associated with customer behaviour or reaction such as revisit intention (Kim et al., 2009; Tax et al., 1998), word-of-mouth (Maxham III & Netemeyer, 2002; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004; Balaji & Sarkar, 2013). Interestingly, studies indicated that customer satisfaction after receiving adequate recovery is higher than the satisfaction before service failure arises (de Matos et al., 2007) even though it does not necessarily mean that the customer will develop equally high level of relationship quality with the company (Weun et al., 2004). Thus, it is crucial to ensure that consumer is satisfied with the recovery efforts by the company. However, until recently, research on the customer satisfaction following service recovery has been limited. Thus, consumer satisfaction towards the recovery action taken following to the halal violation issues will be tested.

Psychological Contract Violation

A psychological contract occurs when an individual's belief that another party is obligated to perform certain behaviors (Rousseau, 1989). This belief is predicated on the perception that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Psychological contracts are broader in nature than legal contracts, and they include perceptual, unwritten, and implicit terms that cannot be explicitly incorporated into a legal contract. This term has been widely used in the management field to picture the relationship between employee and the employer.

Psychological contract has been important studies in industry and any organization (Mohamed & Nor, 2013; Kiazad, Seibert & Kraimer, 2014) for its positive outcome (Conway & Briner, 2002; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002). However, the psychological contract can be a breach if any of the parties failed to meet their obligation and may lead to psychological contract violation (PCV) (Rousseau, 1989; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). The failure of one party to fulfill their promise can be expected to erode both the relationship and the affected

party's beliefs in the reciprocal obligations. Based on the literature that has validated the fundamental role of on psychological contract violation (PCV) and its potentially destructive impact on organizational relationships (e.g., Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Niehoff & Paul, 2001; Pugh et al., 2003; Rousseau, 1989), this study propose that PCV should be central to the understanding of halal violation effect. Most of the psychological contract literature has focused on employee-employer relationships, it is reasonable and desirable to extend the evaluation of this theory to relationships at another context (Hill et al., 2009).

Extending the literature (Rousseau, 1989) to halal violation, a consumer may perceive PCV if an individual seller or company fails to adequately fulfil its contractual obligations which are by following the guideline provided in achieving and maintain JAKIM Halal certification due to hygienic issues or traces of porcine or alcohol during the production process and the end product. Based on the social exchange theory (SET), people tend to view relationships as social exchanges, and they mostly rely on trust to guide their behavior (Pavlou & Gefen, 2005). Whenever the trust is broken, suspicion takes over and trust becomes a lesser factor in determining their behavioral intentions (Blau, 1964). According to Pate, Martin, & McGoldrick (2003), violation of the psychological contract is associated with negative attitudes and behaviors. Previous study shows that PCV has been used as a moderating variable in the relationship between seller and buyers context (Pavlou & Gefen, 2005) and between authentic leadership and organizational deviance (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013). Therefore, in the context of halal a company failure to fulfill its promises to the customer in convincing the halal status of its product is expected to moderate the relationship between severity of violation and recovery satisfaction on the boycott. Figure 1 below portrays how each of the variables discussed above expected to relate.

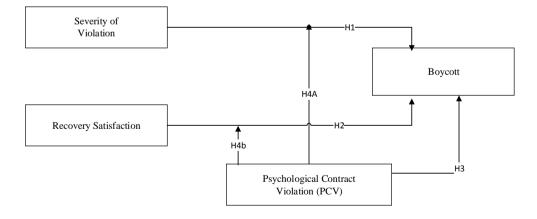


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

This study is developed to tested the following hypotheses:

- H1: Severity of halal violation is associated with boycott.
- H2: Recovery satisfaction is associated with boycott.
- H3: Psychological contract violation is associated with boycott.
- H4a: Psychological contract violation will moderate the relationship between severity of *halal* violation and boycott.
- H4b: Psychological contract violation will moderate the relationship between recovery satisfaction and boycott.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Design, Subjects and Procedures

The target population for this study involves consumers who are aware and/or had experienced the violation of a halal product. Respondents were given a list of Halal violation incidents in Malaysia and they were required to choose a specific incident in answering the questions based on the Halal violation issues. This study used a convenience sampling where the questionnaires were distributed in Selangor area. The reason for choosing Selangor is because most studies on consumer behavior in Malaysia used Selangor as the sampling area (Chamhuri & Batt, 2013; Omar et al., 2015; Omar et al., 2013) because the area is regarded as one of the best representative population of interest and viewed as the most advanced region in terms of economic and social aspects. Moreover, it is a densely populated area and encompasses of people from various ethnicities, education backgrounds and income levels (Euromonitor International, 2011). Data was collected via selfadministered questionnaires. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability, an English version was developed first, reviewed and then translated into Bahasa Melayu. Then, the Bahasa Melayu version was translated back into English. The backtranslated English version was then checked against the original English version. Questionnaires were distributed to consumers in Selangor for the period of one month. Questionnaires were drop-off and collect from consumers after they were completed. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their returned questionnaires. At the end of the data collection period, a total of 250 questionnaires were collected. However, only 212 useful questionnaires were usable for further analysis (85%).

The questionnaire was developed by adapting measurements from various studies. Five Likert- scale ranging from strong agree to strongly disagree were used for item measurement of boycott, severity of the violation, recovery satisfaction, and psychological contract violation. All the items were adapted from the existing literature as listed in Table 1. The internal consistency or reliability of the scale was assessed by Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.70 and thus acceptable in such a study (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Hierarchical regressions were then run to test whether PCV significantly moderated the association between severity of violation and boycott, and recovery satisfaction

and boycott (Frazier *et al.*, 2004). Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest that moderator variable is variable that presumed to change the causal relationship between an independent and dependent variable. Moreover, hierarchical linear regression was used in this study because it allows the researchers to enter variables in steps and in the order that the researchers deem relevant to the development impact of each predictor variable on the outcome variable (Warner, 2008). The independent variables were mean-centered before calculating the interaction terms to minimize the effects of multicollinearity.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The majority of the participants were female (59.4%). The age group of 20-29 years (47.3%) account for the biggest portion of the sample followed by age 30-39 (33.8%) and 40-49 years (13%). For education attainment, about 27% possessed a postgraduate degree (Master and Ph.D.), 43% bachelor, and 16% diploma. In terms of respondents' marital status, 43% were single and 55% were married. The majority of the participants were Malay (85%) followed by Chinese (9%), and Indian 5%.

Table 1: Measurements and reliability

Construct	Item Measurement	Sources	Alpha Cronbach
Boycott	Feel guilty if bought product from company	Abosag & Farah (2014)	0.948
	Whenever possible, avoid buying company products.		
	Do not like the idea of owning company products.		
	If two products were equal in quality, but one was from company and the other from other company, would pay more for the product from the other company.		
Psychological contract violation	When think about the <i>Halal</i> incident, I feel betrayed by Company	Morrison & Robinson (1997)	0.936
	I feel that Company has violated the awarded Halal certification by JAKIM		
	I feel extremely frustrated by how I have been treated by Company		
	When I think about the <i>HalaI</i> incident, I feel a great deal of anger towards Company		
Recovery satisfaction	Overall I was satisfied with company in handling with the <i>Halal</i> issues.	McQuilken, (2010)	0.952
	In general, I was satisfied with the response from company in dealing with the <i>Halal</i> issues		
	I was happy with the overall process of company		

in handling the Halal issues.

I was satisfied with the recovery of the *Halal* incident provided by Company

Company ... provided recovery that met my needs.

Severity of halal violation	The Halal incident involving Company is severe	Weun et al., (2004); Bansal & Zahedi (2015)	0.806
	The <i>Halal</i> incident involving Company may result in a major problem		
	The <i>Halal</i> incident could cause a great deal of inconvenience		
	I believe that the <i>Halal</i> incident is not threatening at all		

Table 2: Predicting boycott: hierarchical linear regression result

Independent variable: Recovery Satisfaction, Severity, Psychological Contract Violation (PCV)

(. 0.)		
	Model 1	Model 2
Recovery Satisfaction	246*	266*
Severity	.104*	.101
PCV	.585*	.573*
PCV x Recovery Satisfaction		.055
PCV x Severity		019
F	102.109*	.835
R ²	.604	.607
Adjusted R ²	.598	.597
ΔR^2	-	.003

Note: *p<.05

Table 2 illustrates the regression results. In Model I, all the independent variables (recovery satisfaction, severity, and PCV) were entered to test the impact on the dependent variable (boycott). In Model II, PCV was entered as moderating variables that interaction with recovery satisfaction and severity. The results indicated that in Model 1, recovery satisfaction is negatively and significantly associated with boycott participation while, severity and PCV are positively and significantly associated with boycott participation. These findings support H1, H2, and H3. In Model 2 when PCV was entered as moderator to interact with recovery satisfaction and severity all variables were found not significant, thus, H4a and H4b were rejected. However, Model 2 that tested the presence of moderator is found not significant due to the insignificant value of F change. The result implies

that regardless of the level of PCV experienced by the consumers, it will not significantly influence the strength of the contribution of the severity of the *halal* violation and recovery satisfaction towards consumers who were taking part in the boycott. Recent study found no support for the interaction of severity and recovery effort on recovery disconfirmation, loyalty, and negative word-of-mouth and partial support for satisfaction (Balaji & Sarkar, 2013). Even a successful and satisfactory recovery could not compensate for the loss when the severity of failure is high. Customers that experiencing poor recovery effort may sense contract violation or betrayal and exit the relationship with the company (Balaji & Sarkar, 2013).

This study shows that severity of violation on halal is positively related to boycott. The finding is in line with past studies that suggest failure severity lead to anger and desire for revenge (Joireman et al., 2013), and negative word of mouth (de Matos et al., 2012). Moreover, we find that in an incident involving a halal violation, no matter how severe and serious the incident (low or high), consumers felt betrayed to the promise and obligation by the company to provide a Halal product. Positive relationship indicated that the more the consumer feel betray, more likely they will engage in a boycott. It is consistent with previous research that PCV leads to destructive impact to the organization (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Niehoff & Paul, 2001; Pugh et al., 2003). In this study, recovery satisfaction is also found to be significant. The negative association between recovery satisfactions to boycott explained that the more satisfied customers towards recovery action by the company on the halal violation incident, less likely they will engage in a boycott. As this is confirmed, company should pay attention to react wisely when the product involves in violation incident. Immediate, satisfactory and trustworthy actions are important to reduce the damage.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The uniqueness of this study exists in the fact that it is one of few studies that investigates *Halal* violation issues and the first to known to examine the moderating effect of psychological contract violation in the context of *Halal*. The results of this investigation show that once a product is found to violate *Halal* certification awarded, severity of violation, PCV and recovery satisfaction are found to be significantly related to boycott. This study also tested PCV as moderated but was found to be not significant.

With the growth demand for *Halal* food among Muslim and non-Muslims market due to its purity and quality standards been maintained through certification, the significance of this empirical research to the *halal* industry is undeniably important. The *halal* certification acts as a symbol of confidence, quality and trust for product consumption in which once violated will impact on consumer negative behaviors such as boycott. The contribution of this study is obvious as the resulting outcomes can be capitalized as a guideline for managers to design recovery action towards *halal* violation incident.

In a *Halal* violation case, the manager needs to ensure that the strategy to reconcile the incident is satisfactory, genuine and trustworthy. Severity, recovery satisfaction, and PCV have been pointed as an important ingredient to hinder

boycott by consumers. Furthermore, this study proved that it is essential and crucial that the *Halal* certification and its quality standards need to be strictly followed to prevent a breach of trust, continuous assurance for product consumption and protecting and preserving the *Halal* certification authenticity. With regards to the direction for future research, an important line to further study is to examine the role of trust recovery in the context of *halal* violation in motivating certain behaviors in response to service recovery experiences. It will also be interesting to test the model to other Muslim consumers from other countries. In addition, with the increase of awareness as well as the association of *halal* with environmental friendliness and food safety among non-Muslim (Abdul Aziz & Chok, 2012), it is suggested for future study to test the model from the non-Muslim perspective. This will allow the model to be useful to the academic research, *halal* manufacturers as well as marketing practitioners.

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