

Halal Purchasing Strategies of MSEs in the Malaysian Food Industry: An Exploratory Study on the Potential Use of CAQDAS in the Qualitative Evaluation of Multiple Case Studies

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Abstract: This paper explores the potential of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), specifically Nvivo 14, in facilitating the qualitative evaluation of multiple case studies. The focus is on halal purchasing strategies within micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the food industry, a critical issue from a Shariah perspective that ensures halal integrity from source to consumer. The issue highlights that MSE leaders in Malaysia's food industry failed to optimize halal purchasing in their management practices, which undermines their ability to increase probability. The objective is to explore the strategies for optimizing halal purchasing performance of MSEs in Malaysia's food industry, on how these businesses navigate the requirements of halal compliance in their operational practices. Through an exploratory study, 10 MSEs were examined to investigate their halal purchasing structures, involving interviews with key stakeholders such as brand owners, company directors, halal executives, and CEOs. In-depth, semi-structured interviews provided insights into company structures, challenges, and halal purchasing strategies. Thematic analysis was employed, using an inductive pattern coding approach where codes emerged organically from the data and were categorized into themes and sub-themes. Findings revealed a variety of business types, with six individually owned companies and four family-run businesses, highlighting differences in employee numbers, business longevity, and owner demographics. The study also suggests a trend of generational succession in family-owned businesses. This research demonstrates the utility of CAQDAS in managing and analyzing complex qualitative data in case study research.

Keywords: *Qualitative, CAQDAS, Inductive approach, Thematical Analysis*

1. Introduction and Background

In Malaysia's food industry, particularly among micro and small enterprises (MSEs), halal purchasing practices are becoming increasingly crucial due to the nation's Muslim-majority population and its position as a global hub for halal certification (Md Husin & Haron, 2020). When choosing suppliers, MSEs prioritize those with JAKIM-recognized halal certification, ensuring that raw materials and ingredients comply with strict halal standards. Many MSEs favor local suppliers over imported ones, as local suppliers are more likely to be JAKIM-certified and familiar with the country's halal regulations. For imported ingredients, MSEs ensure that they are certified by bodies recognized by JAKIM (Paik et al., 2009). Additionally, an increasing number of MSEs are seeking official halal certification themselves. This requires not only purchasing halal-certified inputs but also implementing halal standards throughout their operations, from food handling to storage. However, smaller businesses, particularly micro-enterprises, often face challenges related to the cost and perceived complexity of obtaining halal certification, which can hinder their ability to fully comply with halal purchasing requirements.

MSEs are becoming more aware of the importance of traceability in halal ingredients, ensuring they maintain proper documentation of the halal status of all purchased products so that their final products can be certified and trusted by consumers. To improve transparency and simplify audits by halal certification bodies, some MSEs are adopting digital tools to manage halal documentation (Tieman & Ghazali, 2013). These enterprises also collaborate closely with JAKIM for guidance on halal purchasing practices, benefiting from training and workshops organized by JAKIM and other industry organizations to stay updated on evolving halal standards. The higher cost of sourcing halal-certified raw materials, compared to non-certified alternatives, can be a challenge, especially for smaller enterprises with limited financial resources. Moreover, some MSEs may have limited knowledge about the complexities of halal standards, particularly in ensuring that every step of the supply chain adheres to halal principles. Despite these challenges, MSEs in Malaysia's food industry are becoming increasingly conscious of the significance of halal purchasing practices. This awareness is driven by

consumer demand, regulatory requirements, and opportunities in international markets. While obstacles like costs and certification complexities remain, support from the government and halal bodies is crucial in helping businesses transition towards full halal purchasing compliance.

The integrity of halal purchasing practices is of paramount importance to Muslim consumers, as it ensures adherence to Shariah law from the point of production to the final consumer purchase. In an increasingly globalized food industry, maintaining halal integrity presents a complex challenge, particularly for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) that may lack the resources and infrastructures of larger corporations. Halal purchasing is a critical function in meeting the demand of the halal food industry to maintain the halal integrity of halal products. The initial understanding fails to comprehend why most MSE entrepreneurs were traditionally running their businesses and had the perception that they did not need to obtain halal certification (Tieman & Ghazali, 2013). This study seeks to explore the strategies for optimizing halal purchasing performance of MSEs in Malaysia's food industry, on how these businesses navigate the requirements of halal compliance in their operational practices.

2. Literature Review

Halal purchasing is an innovative fusion of two distinct academic fields: halal principles and purchasing management. This chapter offers a comprehensive exploration of both areas, laying the foundation for a proposed conceptual framework that integrates these disciplines to enhance understanding of halal requirements for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). It begins by delving into essential aspects of purchasing, including foundational concepts, theoretical models, and strategic approaches. Following this, it discusses the nuances of purchasing strategies within the context of halal compliance, covering key topics such as halal certification, regulatory frameworks, market dynamics, and the various challenges and barriers faced by businesses.

The stage concludes by examining emerging trends and potential opportunities in the field. Additionally, it presents a conceptual framework aimed at optimizing halal purchasing processes for MSEs, emphasizing the importance of aligning purchasing strategies with Islamic principles. In the supply chain process, purchasing management plays a crucial role, particularly in fostering robust buyer-supplier partnerships. The organization in purchasing function is wide and involves all activities of the purchasing process, services or work supplied and the administration actions as Figure 1 halal purchasing concepts below.

Figure 1: Halal Purchasing Concepts



The complexity of sourcing products in today's global market is increasingly influenced by the need to meet halal requirements. As the concept of halal expands into various aspects of purchasing, there is a need for more effective integration of halal principles into purchasing strategies. This includes the development of halal policies, procurement strategies, and purchasing processes, as suggested by Tieman (2020c). According to Porter (1985), within a firm's halal value chain, purchasing serves as a vital supporting activity, contributing significantly to the overall halal compliance of the business (Mulders, 2020). To ensure compliance with halal purchasing standards, all products and services must adhere strictly to halal certification requirements. This

involves a comprehensive process that includes the application, enforcement, and continuous monitoring of halal standards, which is essential for maintaining a sustainable supplier base.

Suppliers must be rigorously vetted to ensure they comply with halal standards, often through contract agreements and regular audits. Additionally, companies must stay abreast of market developments related to halal purchasing by actively monitoring supply risks and obtaining intelligence on the halal market landscape. The development of a halal purchasing process extends beyond the traditional scope of the purchasing department or buyer-supplier relationship. Halal purchasing involves acquiring goods and services that conform to Islamic principles and laws, which are not limited to food items but also encompass various other facets of business and daily life. For instance, when purchasing ingredients, it is crucial to ensure that all components are permissible under Islamic dietary laws. This means avoiding prohibited items such as pork and its derivatives, alcohol, and meats not slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. Furthermore, the processing and manufacturing stages must comply with Islamic regulations, which may include assessing production facilities for adherence to hygiene standards and ethical practices.

Many products carry halal certification from recognized authorities, such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), providing consumers and businesses with a guarantee that the products meet stringent halal standards. Halal purchasing also encompasses ethical and moral considerations, extending beyond dietary laws to include fair trade practices, ethical treatment of workers, and environmental sustainability. In financial transactions, halal purchasing ensures compliance with Islamic finance principles. This includes avoiding interest-based transactions (*riba*) and adhering to principles such as risk-sharing and asset backing. These financial guidelines are fundamental to maintaining the integrity of halal purchasing, as they align with the ethical and moral tenets of Islamic law. Thus, the concept of halal purchasing is comprehensive, covering not only the procurement of goods and services but also ensuring that all aspects of the transaction and supply chain are by Islamic values.

3. Research Methodology

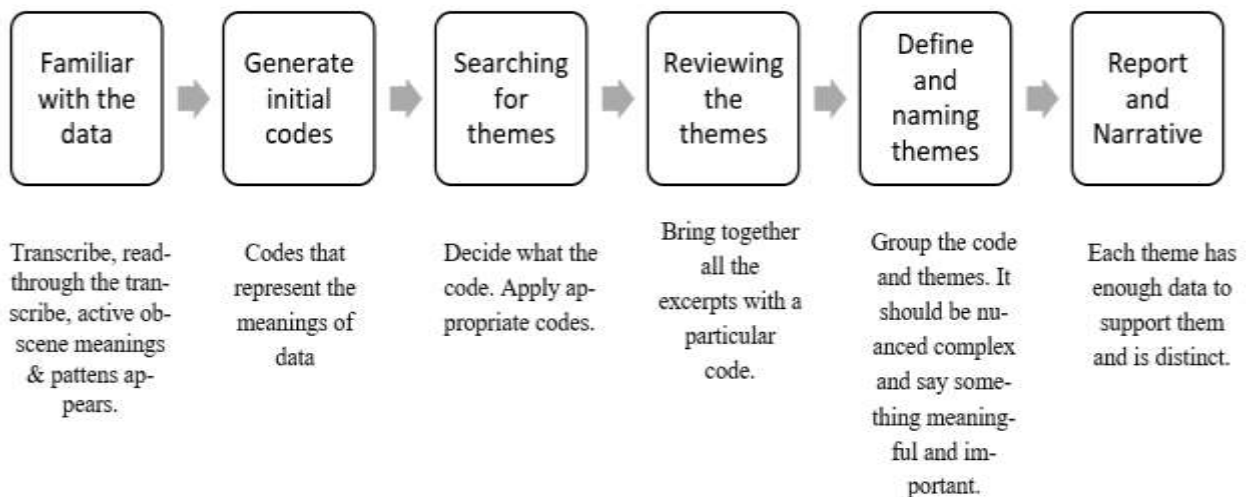
The study will employ a qualitative case study approach, utilizing in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including brand owners, company directors, halal executives, and CEOs. The use of CAQDAS, specifically NVivo 14, will facilitate the coding and analysis of qualitative data. An inductive pattern coding approach will be adopted, allowing codes to emerge organically from the data, which will then be categorized into themes and sub-themes. This exploratory study adopts a multiple case study approach, focusing on 10 MSEs within the food industry. These businesses were selected to represent a range of ownership structures, including individual ownership and family businesses, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the different approaches to halal purchasing. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in each business, including brand owners, company directors, halal executives, and CEOs. These interviews were designed to elicit detailed information about each company's structure, their approach to halal purchasing, and the challenges they encounter in ensuring compliance. The sample will include six individual-owned businesses and four family-owned enterprises, with varying years of operation and employee counts. This demographic diversity will provide a comprehensive understanding of halal purchasing strategies and the succession trends in family businesses. Employing a qualitative focus group interview was deemed most suitable for exploring a phenomenon within its natural real-life context (Burchett, 2014). This method was significant in demonstrating how and why employing qualitative inquiry was beneficial for unpacking complex phenomena (Abdul Kadir et al., 2018).

The qualitative research method allowed the researcher to probe deeper into understanding the problem rather than examining the external structures of the subject matter (Golden, 2017). Given the multifaceted nature of qualitative research, especially in the context of multiple case studies, this paper also aims to demonstrate the potential of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), specifically NVivo 14, in facilitating and enhancing the qualitative evaluation process. The software's ability to manage, analyze, and visualize large amounts of qualitative data makes it a valuable tool for researchers dealing with complex datasets. Halal purchasing is essential for Muslim consumers, as it guarantees compliance with Islamic law. MSEs play a vital role in the food sector, yet their halal purchasing strategies remain underexplored. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining the current practices of 10 MSEs, focusing on their organizational

structures and challenges in maintaining halal integrity. The researcher conducted qualitative research throughout Malaysia to identify micro, and small, enterprises (MSEs) food industry. The first location for the research was in Bagan Serai, Perak, followed by Melaka and Sungai Petani, Kedah in January 2023. The methods included data recording, telephone calls, and emails. The research resumed from November to December 2023, and this time data collection was carried out physically by visiting the entrepreneurs' premises. The focus areas were the East Coast regions of Kelantan and Terengganu. In total, 10 (ten) companies participated in answering the research questions through in-depth interviews. Halal certification is a crucial component for businesses targeting Muslim consumers, as it reflects a commitment to ethical and religious standards. MSEs in the food industry are particularly vulnerable to challenges related to halal certification due to their limited resources. Understanding their halal purchasing strategies is essential for identifying areas where support and guidance are needed to ensure compliance.

A data analysis process that involves delving through a data set and identifying patterns. Systematically coding, deriving themes, and creating a narrative. The researcher employed a thematic approach to qualitative data analysis, following the methodology advocated by (Mattimoe et al., 2021). The thematic analysis involves systematically identifying, examining, and interpreting patterns and themes present within the dataset. These themes encapsulate significant elements of the data pertinent to the research question, revealing discernible patterns or meanings inherent within the dataset. The qualitative analysis adhered to the structured six-phase thematic data analysis process outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), as follows:

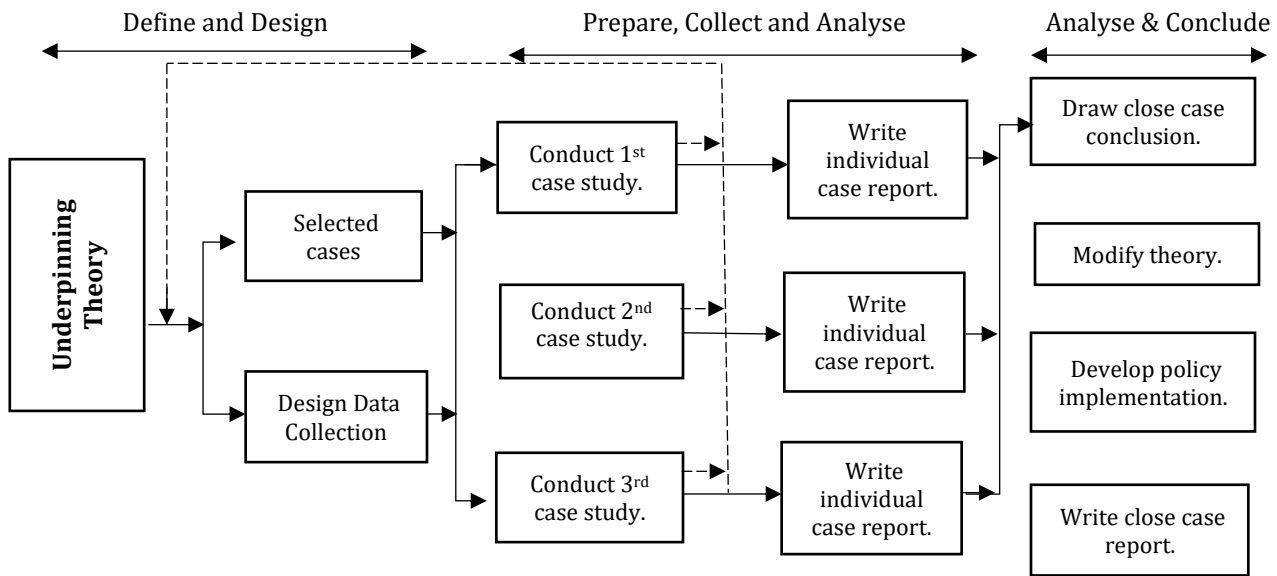
Figure 2: Thematic Analysis



Research Design

Qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meanings people attribute to their experiences, the processes involved in their social interactions, and the contextual factors influencing these experiences. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to quantify variables and relationships, qualitative research aims for a deeper understanding of the phenomena studied. A well-structured research design is essential to ensure that the study produces credible and meaningful results. For this study, the researcher will design an outline of the definition and design for underpinning theory. The provided Figure 2 involves a structured process for conducting multiple case studies, data collection, analysis, and finally conclusion.

Figure 3: Research Design



The provided framework in Figure 2 outlines a structured process for conducting multiple case studies, data collection, analysis, and conclusion. The initial phase begins with defining and designing the research, where the underpinning theory is developed to establish a solid theoretical foundation. This involves outlining the theory that will guide the study, ensuring that the research questions and objectives are grounded in this framework. The design of data collection plans the process for gathering data. This includes determining the methodology, selecting tools for data collection (e.g., interviews, observations), and establishing protocols to ensure consistent data collection across all cases. The next steps involve preparing, collecting, and analyzing data based on the selected cases.

These cases should be relevant to the research objectives and chosen according to criteria that align with the underpinning theory. In conducting the first case study, data is to have been collected according to the designed methodology, gathering detailed information specific to the first selected case. After collecting the data, an individual case report will be written, analyzing the findings and preparing a detailed report on the first case. The process will then repeat for the second case study, following the same data collection procedures. The researcher to analyze the data from the second case and prepare an individual case report. For the third case study, data collection continued in the same manner. Finally, the researcher wrote an individual case report, analyzing and documenting the findings for the third case.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed using Nvivo 14, a CAQDAS tool known for its robust capabilities in handling complex qualitative data. An inductive pattern coding approach was employed, allowing codes to emerge organically from the data. Each code was labelled according to the research questions, and a thematic analysis was conducted to identify, examine, and interpret patterns and themes within the dataset. Thematic analysis will be employed to systematically identify, examine, and interpret patterns within the dataset. Each code in NVivo 14 will be linked to the research questions, facilitating a structured analysis process. By categorizing codes into themes, the study uncovered insights into the halal purchasing structures and strategies employed by MSEs. A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, the cases must be chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory (Yin, 2018). The unit of analysis, in a case study can be in the form of a person, enterprise, institution, program, responsibility or population (Merriam, 2015).

This study has approached 10 (ten) multiple case studies of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSEs) to respond to the halal purchasing structure, with the unit of analysis mostly being the brand owner, director of the company, halal executives, and CEO. In this study, the target population employed nonprobability sampling

or purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was a non-probability sample based on the assumption that the researcher wanted to discover, understand, and gain insight into the characteristics of a population and selected a sample from which most could be learned. (Crossman, 2020). Patton, 2007 Discovered that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lay in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth (Patton, 2007). The data collection steps include the boundaries for the study, collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents and visual materials and visual materials and establishing the protocol for recording information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By identifying purposefully selected sites or individuals in the study, the researcher aimed to best understand the problem and the research questions. The research took place, and the interviews were set at the MSEs factory or participant locations for the convenience and comfort of the participants.

The participants included in the research varied from the brand owner, director, CEO of the company, and the halal executive. Most of the interviews were conducted individually because the owners preferred to explain their perspectives and ideas to answer the research questions. The events where participants were observed or interviewed were also included in the meetings. To conclude the process, the evolving nature of events undertaken by the participants within the setting was considered during the interviews.

4. Analysis and Findings

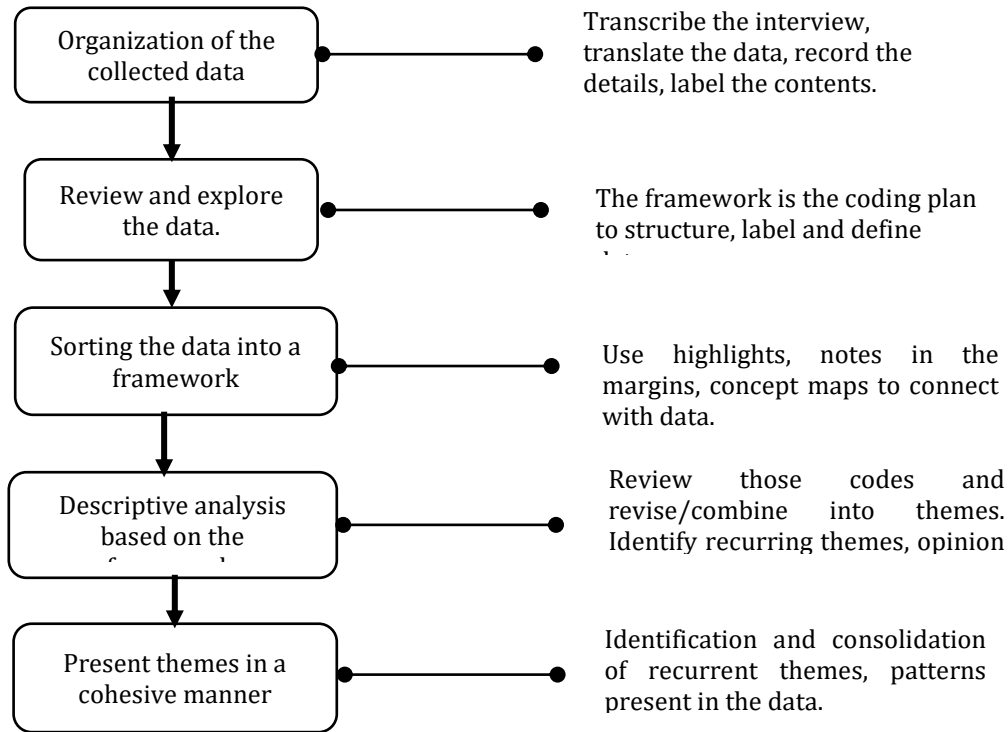
A. Analysis of Qualitative Research Data

The data analysis for qualitative data in multiple case studies followed a rigorous and systematic process aimed at thoroughly examining and interpreting the information gathered from various sources. As Merriam (2015) explains, data analysis is fundamentally about making sense of the data. In this research, the analysis involved several key steps: constructing categories, sorting data into these categories, naming the categories, and refining the categories to develop a more theoretical understanding of the data over time (Merriam, 2015). The researcher conducted ten multiple case studies, utilizing in-depth semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs. These interviews were designed to gain a deep understanding of the organizational structures of their companies and to gradually uncover the challenges they face and the strategies they employ in the halal purchasing process, particularly in the context of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs).

The use of multiple case studies allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the different experiences and perspectives of the entrepreneurs, providing rich, detailed data for analysis. Before the formal data analysis could begin, a substantial amount of preparatory work was necessary to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the interview data. This preparatory phase involved the meticulous transcription of all interview recordings. Each transcription was carefully reviewed and cross-checked against the original recordings to identify and correct any inaccuracies or errors. This step was crucial for maintaining the integrity of the data and ensuring that the subsequent analysis would be based on precise and accurate information. In addition to transcriptions, the researcher also took detailed field notes immediately after each interview. These notes captured initial impressions, contextual details, and any non-verbal cues or observations that were not fully conveyed in the audio recordings. The field notes played a significant role in the data analysis process by providing additional context and helping to triangulate the data obtained from the interviews. Moreover, the field notes aided the researcher in maintaining reflexivity throughout the analysis.

Reflexivity involves the researcher's awareness of their influence on the research process and their ability to critically reflect on their own biases and assumptions. By regularly revisiting the field notes and reflecting on their positionality, the researcher was able to approach the data analysis with a more critical and nuanced perspective. During the analysis, data were sorted into meaningful categories that emerged from the data itself, rather than being imposed by the researcher. This inductive approach allowed the categories to evolve and become more abstract and theoretical as the analysis progressed, moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. This iterative process of refining categories helped the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study, ultimately leading to a more robust and comprehensive conceptual framework. Overall, the data analysis process for these multiple case studies was comprehensive, involving careful preparation, rigorous transcription and validation of data, and reflexive engagement with the material. This approach ensured that the findings were grounded in the data and provided a detailed understanding of the halal purchasing strategies and challenges faced by MSEs.

Figure 4: Qualitative Data Analysis Process



Every research had a different approach to data analysis, and there was no single or best way to analyze and interpret data (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003) It was also unique in the sense that the data analysis occurred as soon as the data was collected (Merriam, 2015). According to Taylor-Powell & Renner (2003), the focus of analysis could be done either by question or topic, period, or event, or by case, individual, or group. The researcher conducted 10 multiple case studies, and the theoretical saturated data was reached when no new information about the subject emerged from repeated cases. The researcher analyzed each set of data before proceeding to interview the next participant. Data saturation was critical here to determine when adding new participants stopped yielding new or novel insights (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

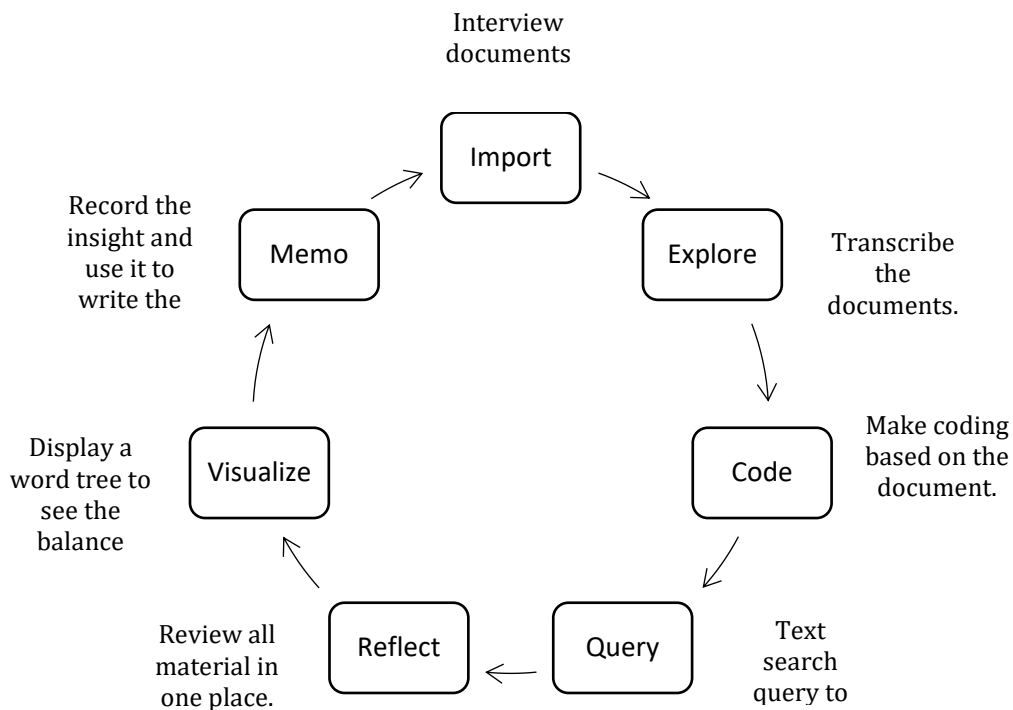
B. Qualitative Data Analysis using CAQDAS

According to Mason (2002), qualitative research is not just about analyzing words; it is fundamentally about understanding a practice that is socially constructed (Mattimoe et al., 2021). This approach requires researchers to embrace subjectivity to interpret data effectively. Unlike quantitative research, which often focuses on numerical data, qualitative research involves a deeper engagement with the data to uncover meanings and insights that are contextually grounded. This approach is inherently labour-intensive due to the large volume of data collected and the substantial effort needed to develop themes and patterns from the data. Given the extensive work involved in manual qualitative analysis, researchers have increasingly turned to Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) as an alternative. CAQDAS tools, such as NVivo, provide powerful capabilities for importing, organizing, and analyzing diverse data sources, including audio recordings, video files, emails, images, spreadsheets, online surveys, social media content, and web content (Baxter & Jack, 2015). In this paper, the researcher utilized NVivo 14 to facilitate the qualitative data analysis process. The use of NVivo 14 allowed the researcher to efficiently manage the data collected during the study. During the interviews, most respondents provided comprehensive answers to the questions posed. They shared their perspectives on various issues, such as the structure of their business initiation, challenges in sourcing suppliers for goods, and strategies their companies employ to optimize the use of materials from suppliers.

However, because the interviews were conducted with open-ended questions, the responses were often unstructured and varied greatly. Respondents did not always answer linearly, making it challenging to categorize their responses according to the specific questions. This complexity highlighted the benefits of using an inductive approach to coding, where patterns and themes naturally emerge from the data, akin to painting on a blank canvas. In an inductive coding process, researchers do not begin with preconceived categories; instead, they allow the data to guide the creation of codes and themes. This approach can be particularly time-consuming if done manually, as it requires careful reading and re-reading of the data to identify meaningful patterns and insights. By using NVivo 14, the researcher was able to streamline this process significantly. The software was used to import audio recordings from the interviews, which were then transcribed into text format. NVivo 14 facilitated detailed transcription by allowing the researcher to organize each interview according to the respondent. Once transcriptions were completed, the researcher classified and coded each piece of data, aligning each code with the relevant research question. The software's ability to label and categorize data efficiently helped in systematically developing themes and sub-themes from the coded material.

NVivo 14 provided a structured and systematic approach to coding, creating a clear audit trail that is essential for qualitative data analysis. This audit trail helps in maintaining transparency and rigor in the research process by documenting every step taken during data analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Furthermore, NVivo's organizational capabilities allow researchers to manage large volumes of qualitative data effectively, facilitating a multi-layered analysis that can reveal deeper insights. The use of NVivo also enabled the researcher to develop valuable skills in qualitative data management and analysis. These skills are highly beneficial for future research projects, as they allow for a more nuanced and sophisticated analysis of complex qualitative data sets. Overall, NVivo 14 proved to be an invaluable tool in managing the complexity associated with qualitative data analysis, offering a systematic approach that enhances both the efficiency and depth of the research process.

Figure 5: Qualitative Data Analysis using CAQDAS NVivo 14



CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software)

CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) offers significant advantages over manual coding methods, particularly in terms of efficiency and accuracy, especially when dealing with large and complex datasets. Regarding efficiency, key aspects of CAQDAS include speed and organization. The software

allows for quick coding through features such as drag-and-drop functionality and efficient data retrieval. This stands in stark contrast to manual coding, which can be time-consuming and cumbersome, particularly as data volume increases. Manual methods often involve physically sorting through documents, which can lead to disorganization and inefficiency. Data management is another crucial advantage of CAQDAS. These tools are specifically designed to handle large datasets, enabling researchers to easily organize, categorize, and retrieve coded segments. In contrast, manual coding can become unmanageable, risking data coherence and increasing clerical workload. Collaboration is also a significant benefit of CAQDAS. Many of these tools support remote collaboration, allowing multiple researchers to work simultaneously on the same project.

This is a considerable improvement over manual methods, which typically require physical presence and can create logistical challenges in sharing and organizing data. In terms of accuracy, CAQDAS offers substantial benefits as well. Enhanced coding capabilities allow for the application of multiple codes to a single text excerpt and the creation of subcodes. This flexibility enhances the granularity of analysis, a level of detail that is more challenging to achieve manually. CAQDAS also provides robust search and query functions, enabling researchers to quickly find and analyze patterns across multiple documents. This feature improves the accuracy of thematic analysis by helping researchers identify relationships and co-occurrences within the data that might be overlooked with manual coding. Finally, the systematic approach of CAQDAS enhances the audibility and rigor of qualitative research, making it easier to track coding decisions and maintain consistency. This contrasts with manual methods, where tracking changes and ensuring consistency can be labor-intensive and prone to human error. While manual coding may offer a tactile connection to the data and can be sufficient for smaller datasets, CAQDAS significantly enhances both the efficiency and accuracy of qualitative data analysis.

The ability to manage large volumes of data, collaborate effectively, and utilize advanced coding and search capabilities makes CAQDAS an invaluable tool for qualitative researchers. However, researchers should also be aware of the potential learning curve and costs associated with these software tools. In this part of the research, the qualitative data focuses on data reduction. Using NVivo 14, significant information that addresses the research question is extracted from the data provided by the informants. The process begins with coding, where labels are assigned to the important information identified in the data. After developing a large number of codes, these need to be categorized to develop themes or sort the data accordingly. In qualitative analysis, two common approaches are thematic analysis and content analysis. The thematic analysis involves generating themes based on the data. For this research, the findings are divided into thematic descriptions, themes, sub-themes, codes, and initial verbatim quotes.

Preliminary Findings

The initial analysis revealed several key themes related to halal purchasing strategies and challenges. The businesses studied displayed a variety of approaches, reflecting differences in company size, ownership structure, and years of operation. Notably, a distinction was observed between the strategies of founder-owned companies and family businesses, with the latter showing signs of a succession trend aimed at maintaining the business's heritage. The thematic analysis also highlighted common challenges, including the complexity of ensuring halal compliance across all stages of the supply chain, the financial burden of certification, and the need for more accessible guidance and support from regulatory bodies. This exploratory study aims to provide valuable insights into the halal purchasing strategies of MSEs, highlighting the challenges faced and the organizational structures in place. The findings will contribute to the understanding of halal integrity in the food industry and may inform future practices and policies for MSEs. The researcher has approached respondents from several background business types in the food industry. Based on the 10 companies approached by the researcher, six of them are owned by founders, while the remaining four were founded as family businesses. The business age of the companies owned by founders' ranges from one year to 20 years, whereas for family businesses, the duration is much longer, spanning from 25 to 47 years. The number of employees in companies owned by founders' ranges from 2 to 7 workers, while for family businesses, it varies from 6 to 15 workers. There is a notable age difference among the business owners: founders' ages range from 28 to 50 years old, while family business owners or legacy enterprises are typically between 34 and 40 years old. This indicates that family business owners are succeeding their elders to continue the business heritage.

Table 1: Theme Development

Themes Category	Themes	Codes
The Strategies in Optimising Halal Purchasing of MSEs	Market Dynamic	Price strategies
		Market segmentation
		Distribution strategy
		Market strategy - vendor placement
	Customer Diversity	Market strategy - personal engagement
		Customer satisfaction
		Customer loyalty
	Operational efficiency	Customer convenience
		Bulk purchase strategy
		Storage consideration
		Impact of external factors on pricing
	Business Strategy and Development	Automation for cost efficiency
		Marketing strategy
		Long term focus on automation
		supplier relationship and dependability
		Expansion and export goals
Ethical business practices		
Flexible payment and collaboration		
global branding and marketing reach		
	Cultural identity	

Table 1 outlines a comprehensive set of strategies used by micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to optimize halal purchasing, categorized into four key themes: market dynamic, customer diversity, operational efficiency, and business strategy and development. In the market dynamic category, strategies include price adjustments, market segmentation, distribution strategies, and vendor placement, with a focus on personal engagement to build trust and ensure halal compliance. Customer diversity highlights efforts to maintain customer satisfaction, loyalty, and convenience by offering accessible, high-quality halal products. Operational efficiency emphasizes bulk purchasing, proper storage, pricing adjustments based on external factors, and automation for cost reduction, all while preserving halal integrity. In the business strategy and development category, strategies focus on long-term goals such as marketing, supplier relationships, expansion, and export goals, underpinned by ethical business practices. Businesses also promote flexible payment options, global branding, and cultural identity to foster trust and meet the specific needs of Muslim consumers. These strategies collectively enhance the halal purchasing processes of MSEs while ensuring compliance with Islamic ethical standards and market demands.

5. Conclusion

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge by providing a detailed examination of halal purchasing strategies employed by Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the food industry. This area has been relatively underexplored in academic literature, and this research addresses this gap by highlighting the unique challenges and approaches that MSEs face in adhering to halal standards. Through its focus on halal purchasing, the study provides insights into how these enterprises navigate the complexities of halal compliance, which is essential for accessing and competing in markets where halal certification is a critical requirement. Moreover, the study illustrates the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), specifically NVivo, in managing and analyzing data from multiple case studies. Qualitative research often involves the collection of large, complex datasets, which can be difficult to manage and analyze manually. By employing CAQDAS, the study demonstrates how such tools can streamline the process, allowing for more efficient data organization, coding, and thematic analysis. This not only enhances the accuracy and reliability of the findings but also allows researchers to delve deeper into the data to uncover nuanced insights. The findings from this study have important practical implications for

policymakers and industry stakeholders. For policymakers, the study highlights the need to provide more targeted support and resources to assist MSEs in the halal food sector.

This could include offering training programs, developing clearer guidelines for halal certification processes, and providing financial or logistical support to help MSEs meet halal standards. For industry stakeholders, understanding the strategies and challenges faced by MSEs can lead to better collaboration and support systems, ensuring that smaller enterprises are not disadvantaged in markets where halal certification is increasingly important. Additionally, the study emphasizes the value of using advanced qualitative data analysis tools to enhance the rigor and depth of qualitative research. Traditional qualitative analysis can be time-consuming and prone to human error, especially when dealing with extensive datasets. By leveraging software like NVivo, researchers can ensure a more systematic and comprehensive analysis process. This not only improves the quality and validity of the research findings but also allows for more complex and layered interpretations of the data. The study, therefore, advocates for the broader adoption of CAQDAS in qualitative research to improve analytical precision and contribute to the field's methodological advancement.

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