



Research article

The contestation of the meaning of halal tourism

Slamet^{a,*}, Irwan Abdullah^b, Nur Quma Laila^b^a Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University, Malang, 65144, Indonesia^b Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, 55281, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and describe the responses of tourist destination stakeholders on halal tourism branding embedded by the government and promoted by many countries, including Indonesia. This research uses qualitative approach and the data are collected through in-depth interviews with key informants. Purposive sampling technique is used to determine key informants. The judgment sampling method is used to determine the validity of the data and confirm the truths of the gathered information among the informants. Interpretive thematic analysis is used to analyze the data throughout its process that consisted of data collection, reduction, interpretation, presentation, and conclusions. The study results showed that halal tourism has been interpreted and understood in different ways, and these depend on the structural position of each group. This problem is not at the conceptual level for community leaders and tour guides, instead of at the actual practical level of halal services. This is because they have understood that most tourists are Muslims with strong religious ideals. Meanwhile, the government interprets the concept of halal tourism as a promotion media dominated by economic and political interests. Therefore, it is important to note that halal tourism branding is irrelevant for all tourist destinations.

1. Introduction

The term 'halal tourism' has been defined from various perspectives. For instance, some people perceive it as an economic commodity that has created a niche market with economic potentials (Vargas-Sánchez and Moral-Moral, 2019) and ideal for business contexts (Ahmed and Akbaba, 2018; Aziz and Athoillah, 2019; Mohsin et al., 2016; Arif Budiman, 2019). According to Ahmed and Akbaba (2018), halal tourism is a part of the tourism industry beneficial to Muslim and non-Muslim countries; thus, it is a global business trend (Aziz and Athoillah, 2019). Halal tourism is increasing in demand, which is in line with the increase in Muslim tourists from year to year (Nurjaya et al., 2021). Bhuiyan et al. (2011) stated that halal tourism contributes to the increasing foreign exchange and employment opportunities. In 2012, this tourism sector was set up as a government policy in Indonesia, with 3 provinces as the pilot projects (Tempo, 2016), which increased to 10 in 2019 (Setiawan, 2019). The Global Muslim Travel Index Data shows a positive trend, with the possibility of approximately 230 million foreign Muslim tourists visiting Indonesia for tourism purposes in 2026 (Mastercard, 2019).

Some parties felt the need to conduct halal tourism branding due to various economic reasons inherent in a particular region or country.

Meanwhile, others stated that tourism is an obligation and responsibility to be created for Muslim tourists. The philosophical foundation emphasizes that tourism destinations provide products, packages, and services that comply with Islamic teachings (Satriana and Faridah, 2018). Different perspectives regarding halal tourism trigger different actions. For instance, a few groups consider it a brand (Subarkah et al., 2020), while others visualize it as an implementation of Islamic principles (Hamida and Zaki, 2020). According to Adinugraha et al. (2018), some consider it an implementation of a Sharia concept on the tourism destination, while different groups regard it as an evaluation of halal implementation (Chanin et al., 2015). For the government, halal tourism is a strategy in branding the nation (Firdausi et al., 2017). These studies are still not comprehensive because they are limited to the business, market, and economic aspects. According to Priyadi (2016:92 in Nurjaya et al., 2021), halal tourism is an understanding of the meaning of Sharia and its implementation in all aspects of tourism activities, ranging from lodging facilities, transportation facilities, food and beverages facilities, financial systems, to tourism service provider facilities.

Therefore, this study explores the tourism destination stakeholders' perspectives concerning on halal tourism branding. The government considers halal tourism an economic commodity likely to increase the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: slametphd@manajemen.uin-malang.ac.id (Slamet).

country's economic growth. This analysis is based on the fact that most Indonesian citizens are Muslims and supported by the positive trend for foreigners to tour abroad. The government also distinguishes halal tourism as a market opportunity that should be properly managed using marketing strategies by executing it in mapped out pilot project areas.

Conversely, the tourism destination stakeholders do not consider branding necessary due to its possible ability to limit the inflow of tourists. Halal tourism branding is assumed to be made only for particular tourists, with the branding services far more essential than those carried out due to political interest.

This study was conducted based on an argument that halal tourism has led different groups to possess various understandings about halal tourism. The diverse perspectives emerged due to each stakeholder's various bases of consideration and interest. Simultaneously, the "halal tourism branding" slogan campaigned by the government has not been regarded as a strategic way for the future of tourism. Instead, it is assumed to narrow the scope of tourism and weaken the movement carried out by the local people and tourists all this time. Therefore, there is a varying conception of meaning on halal tourism between the government and the entrepreneurs working in the tourism business in Indonesia. Therefore, it is essential to conduct this study so that the government can understand that regions in Indonesia have different religious backgrounds and different religious awareness.

2. Literature review

2.1. Halal tourism

Halal tourism is a new term found in the tourism industry. Several studies have been using various terminologies to define the term halal tourism, such as halal tourism (Ahmed and Akbaba, 2018; Battour and Ismail, 2016; Chanin et al., 2015; Chookaew et al., 2015; El-Gohary, 2016; Chandra, 2014; Jaelani, 2017; Mohsin et al., 2016; Muhamad et al., 2019; Qaddhat and Attaalla, 2016; Rasul, 2019; Sriprasert et al., 2014; Perbawasari et al., 2019), Islamic tourism (Bhuiyan et al., 2011; Gabdrakhmanov et al., 2016; Kovjanic, 2014; Lina Munirah and Hairul, 2013; Shafaei and Mohamed, 2015; Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010), and Sharia tourism (Rosyid, 2014). Nowadays, issues related to this industry has been the center of attention of various authors with diverse perspectives, such as the prospect and potentials in terms of economic growth (Aziz and Athoillah, 2019; Jaelani, 2017; Subarkah, 2018), religion, politics, social viewpoint, culture, and economic adjustment (Fauzi et al., 2019), and the potentials of a country or region (Ahmed and Akbaba, 2018; Bhuiyan et al., 2011). In addition, it deals with opportunity, implementation, and associated challenges (Battour and Ismail, 2016; Qaddhat and Attaalla, 2016; Vargas-Sánchez and Moral-Moral, 2019; Rasul, 2019). Therefore, halal tourism has been analyzed from various perspectives (Chandra, 2014).

In the previous literature, halal tourism is assumed to be similar to other terms, such as Islamic tourism, Shariah tourism, Shariah travel, halal-friendly tourism destination, Muslim-friendly travel destinations, and halal lifestyle (Jaelani et al., 2017). Halal Tourism is any object or action allowed to be used in the tourism industry and based on Islamic teaching. Therefore, the success of its development and marketing process needs to be guided by Islamic principles in all aspects of tourism activities (Battour and Ismail, 2016). This is in line with the research carried out by Mohsin et al. (2016), which stated that the perspective used to comprehend halal tourism is associated with products that are allowed and made according to the commands of God (Allah the Almighty). In other words, the term 'halal tourism' is developed to fulfill the needs of Muslim tourists, comprising any products that have been set based on the Islamic law (halal) (Ambali and Bakar, 2014; Shafii and Wan Siti Khadijah, 2012; Tieman, 2011). A product needs to comply with the Islamic law that is made based on the holy Quran (the Islamic holy book) and Sunnah (the teachings and guides of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) to be fulfilled (Chintiyatmi et al., 2013).

Halal tourism is assumed as the religious tourism subcategory created based on Islamic law (Santoso and Argubi, 2019). In history, it is the foundation used to instill a motivation or religious value within the life of Muslims by going to the places of worship, cemeteries, or historical places offering religious or Islamic values; thus, it is known as religious tourism (Subarkah, 2018). Similarly, one of the principles that support this type of tourism is infrastructure. The Islamic principles are also implemented in other aspects, such as halal food (Ali, 2016), transportation, hotel (Widyarini, 2013), logistics, Islamic finance (Hidayanto, 2010), and travel package. In addition, the provision of worship places is also an essential part of halal tourism development (Wahidati and Sarinastiti, 2018). The growing contemporary halal tourism causes many countries, such as Turkey, to carry out a tourism promotion and marketing process within the scope of halal tourism. Therefore, in several case studies, numerous hotels have changed their concepts to suit halal by modifying their infrastructures, such as constructing prayer rooms and providing separate swimming pool and gymnasium for males and females. They also changed their hotels' interior design and atmosphere to reflect the cultural values of Islam and conducted staff training regarding the ways to provide quality services (Boğan and Saruşik, 2019). Therefore, halal tourism has conceptually encouraged the halal tourism managers to provide quality services to both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.

2.2. State-driven tourism

Tourism is an industry that grows globally (Chen et al., 2016). According to Lee et al. (2015), it is a resource-based industry comprising climate, landscape, socio-cultural inheritance, customs, and food, all of which are completed with compact customer service, such as transportation, hotels, restaurants, and attractions as a whole experience for tourists. In the last several decades, tourism has gotten wide attention and is identified as a potential economic resource because of its potency for the global economy contribution (Aratuo et al., 2019; Akadiri and Akadiri, 2019). The government play crucial roles in tourism development through their policies (Adu-Ampong, 2017). Although tourism development is visualized as a private sector activity, it is the government that holds the authority within the policy scope as the state acts as a key to its development (Adu-Ampong, 2017). The government plays a vital role in many regional constructions through tourism by influencing the local people's lives, both positively and negatively (Yu, 2011:87). Therefore, the government has an essential role in developing a regions' or a country's tourism sector.

In some developing countries, the policies facilitate their tourism industry development provided by the transnational companies in the form a package, i.e., the all-in vacation (Lee et al., 2015). Moreover, state-based tourism is also shown on the macro-level of a country that prioritizes the fund for infrastructure improvement projects to boost economic growth, which is beneficial for the tourism sector (Aratuo et al., 2019). Meanwhile, tourism has become a national strategy in China because the central government has identified it as an essential sector which is capable of triggering domestic consumption and changing its economics through a development pattern from an export to economic-based investment (Yu, 2011).

2.3. Conflict of interest

Every conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibilities, disagreements, or differences either inside or outside social entities, such as individuals, groups, organizations, etc (Rahim, 2017). According to Fisher (2015), a conflict is "a social situation involving perceived incompatibilities in goals or values between two or more parties, to control each other, with antagonistic feelings toward each other." Therefore, a conflict has three general components, namely the different values or goals of individuals or groups, the efforts to influence each other, and the feeling to confront all existing social situations. From a management science perspective, a conflict is a behavioral or psychological interaction that

occurs due to the varying divergence or orientation of subjects (organizations, groups, or individuals) and objects (interests, authorities, values, or relations). Meanwhile, in tourism, the conflict of interest refers to any unstable condition of uneven economic distributions, political interests, society and culture (Liu and Zheng, 2010). These conflict of interests often occur due to the claimed inconsistency, leading to conflicting sentiments (Wang and Yotsumoto, 2019).

In the tourism sector, conflicts frequently arise among stakeholders, who influence one another intentionally and in a competitive way (Yang et al., 2013). According to Teng (2019), such social conflicts are triggered by tourism development. These are rooted in limited owned resources, social status, and political power unevenly distributed in the society (Purwanto, 2017). An example of a conflict of interest in the tourism sector occurs in China due to unsuitable claims among stakeholders in tourism development (Wang and Yotsumoto, 2019). Furthermore, the case also happens in Bunaken National Park (TNB) between the Bunaken National Park Office (BTNB) and tourism businesses; this conflict relates to the regulation's implementation of management regulations. In this case, the tourism businesspeople need to have the Nature Tourism Service Business Permit and Nature Tourism Facilities Business Permit. Another potential conflict occurs between BTNB and the Bunaken National Park management board in dealing with tariff system implementation in the TNB area since they refer to different regulations (Santoso et al., 2015). Halal tourism also causes conflicts derived from different perceptions.

3. Method

This study was carried out in Batu City, East Java, Indonesia. The city is one of the Halal tourism destinations that has been existing since the 10th century and is called "Kota Wisata Batu". It consists of more than 30 tourism destinations around the city. In 2019, Batu City was rewarded as the top ten halal tourism destination by Tourism Ministry (MalangVoice, 2019; Richa, 2019; SurabayaPost, 2019). This study is a qualitative research in which the primary data were collected from stakeholders responses to halal tourism branding launched by the government. The informants were selected using the purposive sampling approach with certain criteria. Therefore, the informants were parties with a direct interests and play an important role as proponents of halal tourism outside the government structure. They included the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Head of the Local People's Representative Council (DPRD), *Lurah* (The Head of the Village), hotel/villa managers, and tour guides. In total, seven respondents were selected. One of the respondents worked for the government; he was the Head of the Batu City Tourism Office. These informants were knowledgeable about tourism development and response patterns contributing to Batu City as the largest tourist destination in East Java.

This study was carried out in several stages. The first stage formulates the main study question related to "stakeholder responses to tourist destinations regarding halal tourism in Batu City pinned by the Central Government. Second, the data collection was performed through unstructured in-depth interviews for four months with an effective time of more than 255 h. These interviews were conducted naturally and did not follow a strict structure. This method was intended to build a friendly atmosphere between the authors and the informants and avoid suspicions. The interview approach uses the judgment sampling method, in which one informant gave instructions on the suitability of another. This method is also used to obtain validity between the answers of one informant with another. During the interview, reflection activities were conducted continuously.

This study uses a qualitative analysis with a thematic analysis approach through several stages, namely data collection, reduction, interpretation, and display. During the data collection process, interviews and observations were conducted. All the informations were recorded and transcribed. The reduction stage is the process of identifying raw data, in which the data were sorted and summarized, coded,

and categorized based on the research questions. Furthermore, an interpretive thematic analysis approach is used to carry out this stage, while the authors tried to understand the entire interview transcript carefully by reading it repeatedly.

Kongsamutr (2010) argues that thematic analysis is a process of reducing data grouped into more meaningful data and obtaining important themes. In this case, the data can be underlined, italicized, or coded to get the theme. Given (2008) asserts that thematic analysis is a data reduction strategy in which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed by capturing important themes in the data set. Grbich (2013) also states that thematic analysis is a data reduction process before the final interpretation. In addition, thematic analysis is a descriptive strategy that facilitates searching for themes in qualitative data sets. Therefore, Guest et al. (2012) suggest that the thematic analysis requires more involvement and interpretation from researchers. The thematic analysis identifies and describes implicit and explicit ideas based on data transcription. The code is representative of the themes in the data that have been identified. At the same time, the meaning (interpretation) is given based on the data categories. The interpretive thematic analysis approach aims to obtain important patterns or ideas repeatedly appearing from the real data. Furthermore, thematic analysis requires interpretation and in-depth understanding of the researcher (Given, 2008).

4. Results

4.1. Halal tourism branding from the Government's perspective

Halal tourism attracts global attention both from Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Indonesia has been promoting this type of tourism since 2012, thereby making it one of the government's strategic programs (Tempo, 2016). The government's consideration for halal tourism includes its ability to drive local economic success, increase exchange, and create numerous activity chains (Minister of Tourism, 2018). Based on the Muslim Travel Index of 2019, at the time, there was 6% of significant market growth for Muslim travelers, which was predicted to increase by a total amount of approximately USD 300 billion or IDR 4,200 trillion in 2026 (Mastercard, 2019). The main requirement for Muslim tourists is halal tourism (Minister of Tourism, 2018). In addition, more than 207 million people or around 87.20% of Indonesian citizens are Muslim, thereby making it an excellent opportunity for halal tourism to thrive (Portal Informasi Indonesia, 2020). Muslims must obey the established Islamic teachings and principles while travelling (Zamani-farahani & Henderson, 2010). Therefore, the government's primary consideration in establishing this tourism sector is to support the country's economic growth.

Therefore, to achieve this objective, it is essential to prepare strategies for building halal tourism in Indonesia through branding, a marketing strategy concept of a country or city (Nawangari and Suksmawati, 2019). This branding process was established using the slogan Halal Tourism Indonesia and Pariwisata Halal Indonesia, which cater for various destinations (Regulation of the Minister of Tourism Number KM.40/UM.001/MP/2018, 2018). The logo of Halal Tourism is a policy of the Indonesian government in developing and accelerating the realization of halal tourism. In 2016, Indonesia appointed three provinces, namely West Sumatera, Aceh, and West Nusa Tenggara, as halal tourism destinations (Tempo, 2016). However, in 2019, The Ministry of Tourism increased the number to 10 provinces, namely Riau-Kepulauan Riau, DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java (Malang Raya), Yogyakarta, and South Sulawesi (Makassar) (Setiawan, 2019).

The followings are two excerpts from an interview with the Head of the Tourism Office on the reasons for Batu City to become a halal tourism destination.

"The determination of halal tourism in Batu City is based on the survey results from the Ministry of Tourism of the Central Government. The survey

is based on several aspects, including tourist attraction, public and tourism facilities, accessibility, investment, and government support. Therefore, these aspects are successfully fulfilled; hence, the Central Government inaugurated Batu City as a halal tourism destination" (Informant_1, +55 years).

The MUI of East Java Province strongly supports the development of the halal tourism industry, which the Governor of East Java initiated. He stated that:

"The East Java MUI and the Regency/City MUI fully support the halal industry program initiated by the Governor of East Java. This priority economic program must be accelerated because it is related to business competition. MUI is also ready to facilitate the halal certification of small and medium industries and small and medium enterprises in East Java. The East Java MUI instructed the Provincial and Regency/City MUI institutions to cooperate with the provincial government and other stakeholders to realize halal tourism for the empowerment of Muslims through small and medium enterprises based on halal products. The value chain of industrial development and halal tourism in East Java starts from the White Sands Marine Tourism Beach in Situbondo and is expected to follow other regional areas". (Kominfo Jatim, 2021)

Coding: (M1) economic growth; (M2) Indonesia's population is primarily Muslim; (M2) Muslims who travel for tourism are growing at 6% per year.

Theme: the government's motivation to transform tourist destinations through halal tourism branding.

Therefore, halal tourism branding in Batu City is determined by the central government, and the concept emphasizes more on the marketing and promotion aspects both abroad and domestically.

The branding of Halal Tourism Indonesia aims to attract foreign and domestic tourists. It is proven that the slogan as a government marketing strategy in attracting Muslim tourists to Indonesia has shown significant results. Therefore, based on the Mastercard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index of 2019, Indonesia was ranked first in halal tourism (Mastercard, 2019). According to Fariha (2019), with this achievement the total number of foreign Muslim tourists was likely to reach 158 million in 2020. Meanwhile, The Ministry of Tourism projected five million foreign Muslim tourists by 2019 compared to 2.6 million in the previous year (Reily, 2019). According to Eko Wahyudi (2019), the ministry also accommodates 7.3 million foreign tourists by 2024. Therefore, the halal tourism branding in Indonesia aims to improve the country's economic sector.

4.2. Halal tourism from the perspective of public figures (local People's Representative Council, Indonesian Ulema Council, urban village head)

Different perceptions are inevitable among government, public figures, and hotel managers. Public figures consider halal tourism a need for Muslim tourists. However, a controversial response was shown by the head of the Indonesian Ulema Council of Batu City:

"Indonesian Ulema Council of Batu City does not support the branding of Batu City as halal tourism. According to the council, halal tourism is different from the term halal and haram in the fiqh terminology. It refers to the condition of providing halal service, inn or hotel, the place for ablution, and worship for Muslim tourists. Therefore, the main point is to make the tourists comfortable" (Informant_2, ±60 years old).

The statement above shows a fundamental difference in perceiving the concept of halal tourism. The head of the Local People's Representative Council agrees that halal branding is unnecessary, as stated in the following excerpt:

"Batu City, as a Tourism destination, does not have to brand itself as a halal tourism city because the society or tourism management might feel uncomfortable or offended. This is because the community and business

people come from various regions and religious backgrounds." (Informant_3, ±50 years old).

Both the Indonesian Ulema Council and the head of the Local People's Representative Council refuse to articulate halal tourism as a branding. However, one of the urban village heads in Batu city had a different opinion, as stated in the following excerpt:

"For me, halal tourism branding is acceptable. I believe that all families, especially Muslims prefer it, including in Songgoriti. However, structurally as an urban village head, I am poised to obey the Batu City government's policy. Therefore, the Local government in the urban village must obey the city government's policy" (Informant_4, ±55 years old).

Coding: (Z1) does not support Batu City as a halal tourism destination; (Z2) the term halal tourism is different from the meaning of halal and haram in fiqh terminology; (Z3) Batu City is branded as an unimportant halal tourism destination; (Z4) Batu City, as a tourist destination, has provided services following Sharia (Islamic Law); (Z5) structurally, the people of Batu City are predominantly Muslim and religious; (Z6) halal tourism branding is not acceptable in Batu City; it is feared that there will be tourist restrictions.

Theme: Responses to halal tourism branding by public figures.

The statements by the Indonesian Ulema Council, the head of the Local People's Representative Council, and the urban village head show differences in perceiving halal tourism implementation.

These statements further show that branding of an area as halal tourism is not essential, rather it is imperative to provide halal service to make Muslim tourists feel comfortable.

4.3. Halal tourism, according to villa and hotel managers

Some villa and hotel managers considered the term halal tourism unsuitable and they refuse to use it due to society's and tourists' diversity. Furthermore, they were worried that the branding might decrease tourist visits. One of the villa managers stated the following:

"I do not think that Batu needs halal branding because this strategy is dependent on the tourist market target. So far, Batu has provided halal food and worship places therefore branding is not necessary. Insya Allah, almost all of the restaurants and tourist destinations have "musholla", and the villas provide at least a praying mat" (Informant_5, ±32 years old).

In line with Informant_5, some villa managers in Songgoriti stated the following:

"We disagree on using halal tourism branding since the Songgoriti tourism area does not violate the rules. Furthermore, people want to run their businesses smoothly and support their family's economic condition. We also disagree on the use of the term "halal tourism" (Informant_6, +35 years old).

"Halal tourism branding will surely affect tourist interest. This is because the term halal refers to a certain religion. Furthermore, the visitors also come from various backgrounds." (Informant_7, ±39 years old)

The head of Songgoriti Villa Association stated the following:

"Branding it "halal tourism" means that it refers to a certain religion. This is unacceptable because Batu City, and Songgoriti, consist of people of different religions. Songgoriti offers "musholla," mosque, church, and Hindu temples" (Informant_8, ±40 years old).

Coding: (Q1) Batu City as a tourist destination does not require halal tourism branding; (Q2) the managers of villas, hotels, and restaurants have provided Islamic (halal) services; (Q3) halal tourism branding is unnecessary; (Q4) tourist destinations, hotels, and restaurants already provide religious facilities and halal food; (Q5) worship facilities (mosques) in Batu City are more than 100 mosques; (Q6) tourism actors have awareness about services to Islamic tourists;

Theme: Responses to halal tourism branding by villa and hotel managers.

Therefore, the branding for halal tourism as marketing media needs to be carried out differently using related terms. Halal tourism is an actual action and not just a marketing strategy used in a tourist destination area.

The informants' statements above can be presented quantitatively, as shown in Table 1.

Figure 1 shows that most of the informants rejected halal tourism branding. The impact of halal tourism branding on tourist destinations that are predominantly Muslim can lead to misperceptions. Therefore, most of the informants rejected the government's embedding of halal tourism branding. This condition is contrary to the government's view. The government assumes that halal tourism branding can increase tourist visits and increase economic growth from the tourism sector.

5. Discussion

This study shows differences in the interpretation of halal tourism between the government and stakeholders of tourism destination. Studies on the importance of halal tourism branding have shown that it is insignificant in supporting tourist destinations in Batu City. Despite the absence of halal tourism branding, the tourism industry has been going on for a long time and services to tourists have been carried out in Islamic way. For the government, halal tourism branding is aims to promote and grow the country's economy. Meanwhile, for the tourism industry halal tourism branding is a threat. In fact, the government and stakeholders of tourist destinations have shared common interest, namely the economy.

In line with the study results, the contestations or controversies regarding the meaning and use of halal tourism branding between the government and stakeholders of tourist destinations. For stakeholders, the meaning of halal tourism is the practice of actual halal services. They view that Muslim tourists need services, facilities, and areas which are in line with Sharia (Islamic Law). The concept of halal tourism has long been manifested in the stakeholder activities of a tourist destination. This view is in line with Satriana and Faridah (2018) and Hamida and Zaki (2020), which state that the philosophical foundation of halal tourism is to provide a proper place to pray, products, packages, services that comply with Islamic teachings and implementation of Islamic principles. Battour and Ismail (2016) explained that halal tourism is any tourist object or act in accordance with Islamic teachings in the tourism industry. This definition requires Islamic law (Sharia) as the basis for providing tourism products and services to Muslim tourists, such as Sharia hotels, Sharia resorts, halal restaurants, and Sharia travel. Furthermore, they also claimed that halal tourism is not only relevant for Muslim countries, but also for non-Muslim countries.

The term *halal tourism* is not literally mentioned in the Qur'an. However, some terms related to travel and tourism have been used in

different contexts. The word tourism in Arabic is always associated with "siyaha" which is taken from the word "saha" which means "to move or flow" (Samori et al., 2016). The command to travel in Islam can be found in the surah of the Qur'an, one of which means "so have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts". Likewise, the order to carry out halal-oriented acts are numerous found in the Qur'an; once of which means "O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy". This particular verse implies that all stakeholders of halal tourism should be responsible for and aware of the provision of products, services, and tourism facilities that are aligned with Islamic teachings. The stakeholders of tourist destinations have a high awareness of Muslim tourist needs and understand that Muslims dominate visiting those destinations. Similarly, their public figure with authority encourages these stakeholders and people in general to be friendly to Muslim tourists. Halal tourism is assumed as a religious tourism subcategory created based on the Islamic Law (Santoso and Argubi, 2019). Although a tourist destination is not branded with halal tourism, it provides services, facilities, and areas based on Muslim tourists' demands and needs, irrespective of their backgrounds.

To ensure the "halal compliance", halal certification guarantees all Muslim tourists that all the products, services, and tourist facilities have met the requirements stipulated in the Sharia (Samori et al., 2016). Therefore, to strengthen tourism policy in Indonesia, the government, through the Ministry of Tourism and the Indonesian Ulema Council, issued regulations, guidelines, and fatwas, such as (1) Decree of the Minister of Tourism (Regulation of the Minister of Tourism Number KM.40/UM.001/MP/2018, 2018), (2) Guidelines for the Implementation of Halal Tourism (Deputy for Industrial and Institutional Development of the Ministry of Tourism), and (3) Fatwa of the National Sharia Council-Indonesian Ulema Council Number 108/DSN-MUI/X/2016 on the Guidelines for the Implementation of Tourism Based on Sharia Principles (Fatwa of the National Sharia Council - Indonesian Ulema Council, 2016).

Besides being a command in Islamic teachings, halal tourism can also be viewed from an economic point of view that it is a new phenomenon in the tourism industry. As halal tourism provides economic opportunities and has a potential for the economic growth and the welfare of the community and the country, the government is responsible for developing halal tourism and promoting it both at national and international levels (Devi and Firmansyah, 2019). Halal tourism branding is carried out by Muslim countries (such as Indonesia or Malaysia) and by non-Muslim countries, one of which is Japan. In addition to branding, Japan also provides halal products and Muslim tourists need. For example, at Narita and Kansai International Airports, many prayer rooms and halal-certified Japanese foods, such as Udon and Ramen,

Table 1. Summary of the informant's statement.

Nu.	Informant	A view on halal tourism			The impact of halal tourism			Responses to halal tourism branding		
		Agree	Not agree	Other	Increase tourists	Misper-ception	Other	Accept	Reject	Other
1.	Informant_1	√					√	√		
2.	Informant_2		√		√			√		
3.	Informant_3		√			√			√	
4.	Informant_4	√			√					√
5.	Informant_5			√			√		√	
6.	Informant_6		√				√		√	
7.	Informant_7		√			√			√	
8.	Informant_8		√			√				√
Total		2	5	1	2	3	3	2	4	2
%		25%	62.5%	12.5%	25%	37.5%	37.5%	25%	50%	25%

The informant's statement is presented graphically in Figure 1.

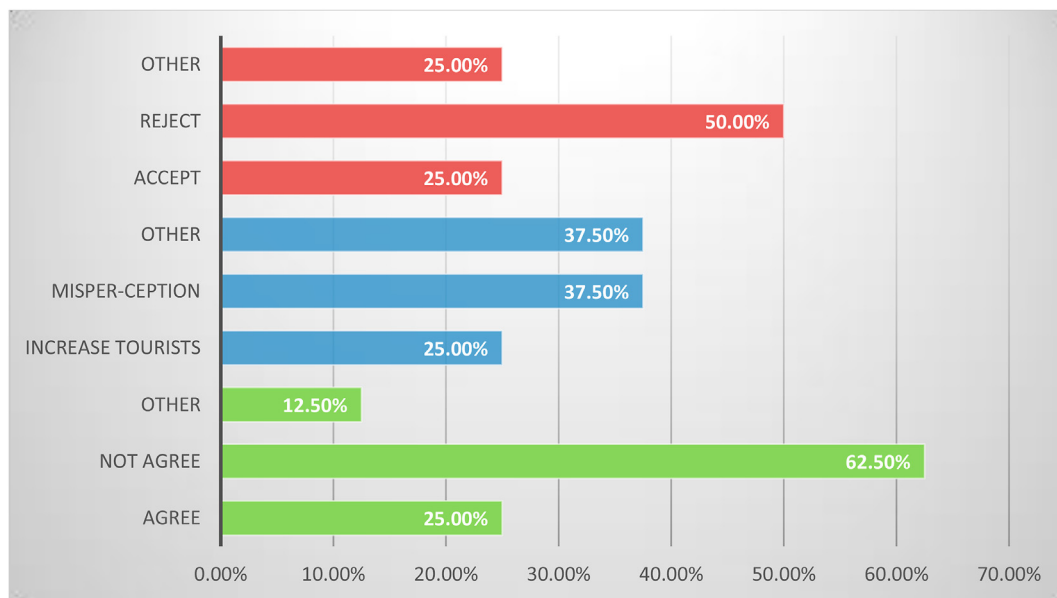


Figure 1. Percentage of views, impacts, and responses to halal tourism branding.

mushrooming in big cities. Prayer rooms are also available in shopping centers in big cities, such as Osaka, Kyoto, and Tokyo (Samori et al., 2016).

The government has branded halal tourism as a medium for marketing and promoting some areas in Indonesia. This branding aims to increase visits by both local and foreign tourists, which will automatically elevate the country's economy. Indonesia is a developing country, so it needs a strong economic growth. Yu (2011) stated that tourism had become a national strategy because the central government has identified it as an essential sector capable of triggering domestic consumption and changing its economy through a development pattern from export to economic-based investment.

For the government, halal tourism branding is only a strategy to increase Muslim tourist visits from other countries. This finding is supported by the previous study, which reveals that the government narrows down the meaning of halal trademark as a symbol and strategy in branding the nation (Firdausi et al., 2017). However, its implementation is not yet in line with the concept of halal tourism. A study by Khoiriati et al. (2018) states that the implementation of halal tourism in Lombok (NTB, Indonesia), declared as the best in the world, has not been supported by the development of halal tourism institutions and infrastructures. The Indonesian government has pinned Lombok as a halal tourist destination based on branding rather than value. In addition, it is designed as a pilot project for halal tourism destinations in Indonesia. Devi and Firmansyah (2019) emphasized that infrastructure development is the highest indicator in halal tourism. Churiyah et al. (2021) study also highlights the non-holistic provision of halal tourism services and the application of Islamic values even though Indonesia has earned the prestigious label as the best halal tourism in the world. They also stated that holistic Islamic values and sharia must find halal tourism with services provided for both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.

Therefore, halal tourism creating different perspectives for its interpretations could result in limiting opportunities for tourism actors including its workers, as experienced in Padang (Adona et al., 2019). However, halal tourism also tends to have a positive impact when viewed philosophically. The brand impacts the attitude and satisfaction of Muslim tourists in halal tourism destinations (Rahman et al., 2019). Consequently, halal tourism tends to be relevance to Indonesians' various aspects because they are predominantly Muslims. It provides satisfaction for Muslim tourists, and it enables them to get hotel services, restaurant/restaurant/cafe services, and tour or travel/transportation services

in accordance with Islamic Law. However, it also provides various joints of life for the whole community, especially those in tourist destinations, such as socio-religious and economic life.

Meanwhile, the term halal tourism for stakeholders or operators of halal tourism destinations must be realized in the form of products and services aligned with the values and principles of Islamic teachings. This view is supported by Aziz and Athoillah (2019), who state that tourist destination stakeholders perceive halal tourism as an accurate tourism service and facility for Muslims under Islamic principles. Tourist destination stakeholders then aim to ensure that Muslim tourists feel comfortable and that their psychological and spiritual needs are met. Ambali and Bakar (2014) state that the term halal tourism is developed to fulfill the needs of Muslim tourists, comprising any products that have been prepared set based on the Islamic Law (halal). A product needs to comply with the Islamic Law enforced based on the holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to be certified as halal (Chintiyatmi et al., 2013).

A halal tourism is area with an attractive complementary facility and accessible to tourism under the sharia principle (Fatwa of the National Sharia Council - Indonesian Ulema Council, 2016). Halal food availability is a priority for Muslim tourists, such as Muslim-friendly hotels and airports, no alcoholic drink, and pork products (Battour and Ismail, 2016). Meanwhile, the government's philosophical basis is promoting Indonesia tourism through the "Halal Tourism Indonesia" logo (Regulation of the Minister of Tourism Number KM.40/UM.001/MP/2018, 2018). Actually, both stakeholders and the government have one common concern, i.e., the economic problem. Halal tourism is actually utilized through products and services for economic purposes for tourism service actors. For the government, halal tourism is used as a promotional medium through the Halal Tourism Indonesia logo to benefit economic growth of the country. Both can bring about impacts on increasing the people's welfare (Jaelani, 2017; Adinugraha et al., 2018).

Therefore, there are differences in the perception of halal tourism between the government and stakeholders. The Government sees halal tourism as an economic commodity, while stakeholders define it as a halal service in line with Islamic principles. This is caused by the different perspectives of the two parties on the philosophical basis, which is committed to realizing halal tourist destinations and economy in the actual condition for stakeholders and the government, respectively. Therefore, there is a difference in halal 'tourism's philosophical basis between the government and tourist destination stakeholders. However,

both the government and stakeholders of tourist destinations have the same interests, namely prosperity and economic growth.

The study of halal tourism tends to be discussed in economic aspects and business opportunities. According to [Jaelani \(2017\)](#), it is a part of tourism that contributes to 'Indonesia's economic growth. He further stated that halal tourism become the tourism industry's development. The benefits of halal tourism are aimed at Muslim tourists, but it is open to everyone in the form of halal products and services. Halal tourism is not only branding, but it must comply with halal standards (halal certified). Therefore, the implementation of halal tourism must be carried out through the tourism ecosystem. By doing so, halal tourism has a potential opportunity to increase economic welfare for the community and help the 'country's economic growth. This is in line with the research carried out by [Aziz and Athoillah \(2019\)](#), which stated that halal tourism is an alternative to economic development with the potential to be developed for both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists. [Battour and Ismail \(2016\)](#) stated that halal tourism provides business opportunities. In addition, [Hamida and Zaki \(2020\)](#) reported that those running a business in the tourism sector have a positive response in applying sharia principles. Therefore, this research differs from preliminary studies because it focuses on the meaning of halal tourism perceived by the destination's stakeholders and the government.

Studies on halal tourism are discussed in terms of economic aspects and business opportunities. However, the government needs to understand its philosophy because it is not sufficient to see it as an economic commodity marketed and promoted alone through the Halal Tourism logo. Furthermore, the government needs to ask the district head of an area assigned as the tourism destination to realize the natural concept. The process of strengthening human resources and institutional structures needs to be appropriately prepared by providing facilities, infrastructure, and the availability of halal food. Stakeholders also need to strengthen their commitment and knowledge on the management of halal tourism. Meanwhile, the government is responsible for developing stakeholder competence as a buffer for the halal tourist destination. Therefore, both parties are expected to develop halal tourism in Indonesia.

The study results have contributed to scientific development, the managers and businesses supporting tourist destinations, and policymakers in the government. As a contribution to scientific development, halal tourism is a relatively new concept in the tourism sector. This concept emerged based on the phenomenon of the needs of Muslim tourists when traveling. Not many comprehensive halal tourism concepts have been found. Therefore, the concept of halal tourism is a new thought that must be researched and studied continuously so that the concept of halal tourism can be used as a reference by stakeholders of tourist destinations. Contributions to the management and supporting businesses of tourist destinations cannot be achieved with Halal Tourism just as a slogan. However, halal tourism must be implemented in managing tourist destinations, services, providing facilities, and providing the food needed by Muslim tourists. Another contribution is for the government as a policymaker about halal tourism. With the results of this study, it is expected that the government will understand that each region does not have to be branded with halal tourism. Still, it is far more essential to provide knowledge about the concept of halal tourism to the parties involved in tourist destinations.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that halal tourism has ideological and various meanings. Furthermore, it has become a symbolic slogan to build a more political image associated with tourism promotion as a source of foreign exchange. From a societal perspective, halal tourism is considered more of a social practice related to the provision of honest service by the region to meet the value and measure of halal. Therefore, this type of tourism is more responded to as the "responsibility" of the tourism 'sector's business workers in fulfilling the facility and providing service according to the halal criteria. On the other hand, the government uses halal tourism as a regional development communication framework branding.

This study analyzes issues associated with tourism from a different perspective. It asserts that halal tourism is a term with a religious nuance and an arena where meaning and interest are negotiated. Each party provides meaning and valuable content in the arena, making it constative. With this approach, the 'study's concept is not only placed generically, rather it is a different concept in which the meaning is exchanged and negotiated to provide validity for a practice. This study of halal tourism also shows the need to use different perspectives in determining multiple truths as the consequences of the involvement of many parties in interpreting the meaning. There are two important messages behind this study, firstly halal tourism branding must not be embedded in tourist destinations where the majority of the people are Muslims. Halal tourism at the practical level is much more important than the branding level embedded by the government. The community, stakeholders, and tour guides at this tourist destination view that services and the provision of facilities in accordance with Islamic Sharia principles have more important urgency and values than just symbols of halal tourism. This is because they are also more aware that most tourists in Indonesia are Muslims whose rights should be fulfilled in carrying out religious orders while traveling. They also understand that Muslim tourists have very strong religious ideals. Secondly, halal tourism branding is more relevant to be embedded in tourism areas where most of the population is non-Muslim, for example, in Manado, Bali, East Nusa Tenggara, Tanah Toraja, etc. It aims to provide certainty to Muslim tourists aiming to travel to these areas by providing facilities and fulfilling services in accordance with the Islamic rules. Therefore, halal tourism branding does not have to be embedded in all tourist destinations in Indonesia.

This study is limited to one tourist destination in a predominantly Muslim area. The tourist destinations have urban planning and socio-religious life in Muslim communities that are strong in carrying out worship. The second limitation is that all the informants are Muslim with the same understanding in interpreting the urgency of halal tourism. Furthermore, this study is limited with its inability to accommodate tourist destinations in other areas where most of the population is non-Muslim and experiences halal tourism branding. Different locality contexts with varying cultural characters provide different nuances in interpreting the concept. In line with that, it is recommended that studies in a comparative perspective are needed, especially in tourist destinations with different cultures, attitudes, socio-religious, and regional characters to provide deeper understanding, comprehensively on the discourse and practice of halal tourism. Therefore, further studies also need to be directed on how religious economization occurs not only in economic commodities rather in different concepts.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Slamet: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

Irwan Abdullah: Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data.

Nur Quma Laila: Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

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Data availability statement

Data included in article/supplementary material/referenced in article.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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