

The Role of Halal Certification in Increasing the Interest of Muslim Consumers in Halal Tourism Destinations

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Abstract

This research examines the role of halal certification in increasing the interest of Muslim consumers in halal tourism destinations. Through a qualitative literature review approach, this study explores the impact of halal certification on the perceptions and preferences of Muslim consumers in choosing halal tourism destinations. Analysis of various literature sources reveals that halal certification plays a crucial role in building trust and confidence among Muslim consumers regarding the products and services offered in the context of tourism. It is also found that halal certification can enhance the image and attractiveness of halal tourism destinations, as well as provide assurance to Muslim consumers regarding the fulfillment of religious needs and regulations during their travels. The practical implications of this research support the importance of halal certification as a marketing strategy in attracting Muslim consumers to visit halal tourism destinations. In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights for the tourism industry and halal certification organizations in understanding the dynamics of the market and the needs of Muslim consumers in the context of halal tourism.

Keywords

Halal Certification, Muslim Consumers, Halal Tourism Destinations, Consumer Interest.

1. Introduction

Halal tourism has become a primary focus for many countries striving to attract Muslim travelers from around the world (Shmailan, 2023). In recent years, the development of the halal tourism industry has been increasingly significant, driven by the growth in the number of Muslim tourists and the demand for tourism services that align with Islamic religious principles. Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has great potential to become an attractive halal tourism destination (Abror, 2019). The Mastercard Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2023 shows a dramatic change in Indonesia's position as a prominent halal tourism destination. From fourth place in 2021 to second place in 2022, Indonesia finally achieved the Top Muslim Friendly Destination of The Year 2023 award (Bahardeen, 2023). This achievement marks global recognition of Indonesia's efforts in developing Muslim-friendly tourism infrastructure. Indonesia's achievement in the GMTI 2023 raises important questions about the factors contributing to the increased interest of Muslim tourists in halal tourism destinations. One aspect receiving attention is the role of halal certification in influencing the perceptions and preferences of Muslim consumers towards halal tourism destinations (Mustaqim & Fazriani, 2023). Additionally, the growing awareness of the need for halal products and services is not only evident among Muslims but also among travelers from other religious and cultural backgrounds who increasingly recognize the importance of meeting food and lifestyle needs that adhere to halal principles (Silalahi, 2024). Therefore, halal certification can also be a significant factor in attracting the interest of non-Muslim tourists seeking inclusive and friendly tourism experiences (Syarifuddin, Mandey, Tumbuan, & Maramis, 2022).

In the context of increasing globalization and interconnectedness, the growth of halal tourism is not only an economic opportunity but also a tool for promoting understanding and cultural harmony. Tourism destinations that can accommodate the diverse needs of travelers with full awareness of religious and cultural values can serve as a model for building dialogue among religious communities and respecting diversity in global society. However, in developing halal tourism destinations, challenges such as consistent standards, preservation of local cultural authenticity, and integration of local communities remain primary concerns. There needs to be a careful balance between meeting tourist needs and preserving the local environment and culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Halal Certification

Halal certification is a process confirming that a product or service has met the standards set in Islam for consumption or use by Muslims (Ummah, Bahrudin, & Hilal, 2023). This certification process involves a series of careful steps to ensure that the product or service is produced, processed, or presented in accordance with Islamic law. The standards used in halal certification vary in different countries but generally cover aspects such as permissible ingredients, processing methods, and cleanliness (Al-Hammadi, 2019). The halal certification process begins with the registration of manufacturers or service providers with a certification body recognized by local Islamic authorities. The certification body then conducts audits and assessments of the entire supply chain and production processes to ensure compliance with halal standards. These audits include checks on the ingredients used, production processes, facilities, and the use of equipment free from non-halal contamination (Aji, Muslichah, & Seftyono, 2020).

The organizations responsible for halal certification vary in each country, but they are usually organizations affiliated with religious authorities or regulatory bodies authorized to provide certification. In some countries, the government plays a significant role in setting standards and overseeing the halal certification process (Bhoola, 2020). Additionally, there are private institutions and independent certification bodies that may conduct halal certification according to established standards. Halal certification holds significant importance for both producers and Muslim consumers (Han, Lho, Raposo, Radic, & Ngah, 2021). For producers, having halal certification opens access to a large market of increasingly conscientious Muslim consumers regarding the halal aspects of products. Meanwhile, for Muslim consumers, halal certification provides assurance that the products or services they consume adhere to their religious principles (Henderson, 2016). Therefore, halal certification has become a crucial factor in purchasing decisions and has become the foundation for industries such as food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, tourism, and other sectors related to Muslim consumers.

2.2 Halal Tourism Destinations

Halal tourism destinations are travel destinations designed and operated with the consideration of the needs and preferences of Muslim travelers. These destinations not only offer generally appealing tourism experiences but also provide facilities and services in line with Islamic religious principles (Mas'Ud, 2022). Several key aspects that make halal tourism destinations Muslim-friendly include accommodation facilities, restaurants, activities, and rules following halal principles. Firstly, accommodation facilities in halal tourism destinations typically provide environments suited to the needs and beliefs of Muslims (Isa, 2018). Hotels and accommodations often offer amenities such as Qibla directions indicating the direction of Mecca and provide adequate facilities for prayers, such as prayer areas and Qurans in hotel rooms (Jaelani, Handayani, & Karjoko, 2020).

Secondly, restaurants and dining venues in halal tourism destinations offer halal food and beverages in accordance with Islamic dietary principles. They ensure that ingredients used in food preparation do not contain prohibited items according to Islamic law and often hold halal certification from recognized bodies (Akhsanty, Setyowati, Musyafa, & Destyana, 2023). Thirdly, activities offered in halal tourism destinations often include activities aligned with Islamic values and traditions. These may include tours to historical and religious sites, cultural events highlighting Islamic heritage, and recreation that does not conflict with religious principles (Ali & Ahmad, 2023). Finally, halal tourism destinations implement rules following halal principles in certain aspects such as entertainment, attire, and general behavior. They ensure that activities and services provided do not contradict Islamic teachings and maintain a friendly and respectful environment (Amir & Tjibtosubroto, 2019).

Overall, halal tourism destinations offer tourism experiences that cater to the needs and preferences of Muslim travelers, ensuring they can enjoy their vacations with comfort and confidence in line with their religious principles. This creates an inclusive and welcoming environment for all visitors, promoting interfaith harmony and enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

2.3 Consumer Interest

The concept of consumer interest in tourism encompasses a range of factors that influence individuals' decisions in choosing destinations and tourism activities. In the context of Muslim travelers and halal tourism destinations, consumer interest is influenced by several complex factors (Bashir, 2019). The need for the fulfillment of religious aspects is a key factor affecting the interest of Muslim travelers in halal tourism destinations. They seek destinations that provide facilities and services that allow them to comfortably practice their religious rituals, such as easily accessible prayer facilities, restaurants serving halal food, and Muslim-friendly accommodations (Itang & Peristiwo, 2023).

Furthermore, security factors are also a significant consideration for the interest of Muslim travelers. They tend to choose destinations that provide assurances of physical safety and food security in line with halal principles (Akter & Hasan, 2022). Destinations with a good reputation for security and service quality are more attractive to Muslim travelers. Additionally, the authenticity of culture and local wisdom also plays a role in attracting the interest of Muslim travelers. They often seek destinations that offer rich cultural and historical experiences and have social norms that align with Islamic values (Amalia & Gunawan, 2023).

Moreover, information and promotion of halal tourism destinations also greatly influence consumer interest. Clear and easily accessible information about the facilities, services, and activities available at the destination can help Muslim travelers make their travel decisions (Hasan, 2023). By better understanding the factors influencing the interest of Muslim travelers in halal tourism destinations, stakeholders in the tourism industry can develop more targeted marketing strategies and improve the quality of their services to attract more Muslim travelers. In the era of globalization and rapid tourism growth, understanding consumer interest is key to achieving success in the increasingly expanding halal tourism industry (Lestari, Saidah, & Putri, 2021).

2.4 Muslim Travelers

Muslim travelers refer to individuals who identify themselves as Muslim and practice Islam in their daily lives, including during travel. From a religious perspective, Muslim travelers tend to fulfill their religious obligations, such as performing prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and adhering to halal food rules (Wardi & Trinanda, 2022). Additionally, they may seek facilities and services that facilitate their religious practices, such as mosques for prayers and restaurants that provide halal food. Culturally, Muslim travelers often bring values, traditions, and cultural customs from their countries or communities (Adel, Dai, Roshdy, & Yan, 2020). They may have specific preferences

regarding the types of tourism, food, and activities that reflect their cultural and religious identity. This may include an interest in visiting historical or religious sites, sampling local halal cuisine, or participating in cultural events that resonate with them (Ahmadova & Aliyev, 2021).

In addition to religious and cultural aspects, preferences in travel for Muslim travelers can also be influenced by other factors such as comfort, safety, and accessibility. They may seek Muslim-friendly destinations where they feel accepted and respected for their identity and religious beliefs (Al-Mamun, Haque, & Jan, 2020). When choosing accommodations, transportation, and other services, Muslim travelers often look for those that provide facilities that understand their needs as Muslims (Battour, Salaheldeen, & Mady, 2022). In the context of their travels, Muslim travelers may also prioritize experiences that enrich spirituality and connections with Islamic history and culture. They may seek opportunities to deepen their understanding of their religion, visit holy sites, and interact with local Muslim communities at their travel destinations (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2020).

3. Methods

The research method employed in this study focuses on a qualitative approach to literature review. This approach was chosen to allow for an in-depth analysis of the role of halal certification in enhancing the interest of Muslim consumers in halal tourism destinations. Through a qualitative approach, researchers can explore various perspectives emerging from existing literature and understand the complex aspects related to this topic. Data for the study were obtained through a search of scholarly literature related to halal certification and halal tourism. Researchers utilized various sources, including academic databases, scholarly journals, books, reports, and other relevant literature sources for this research. The selection of literature was based on strict inclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and reliability of the information obtained.

Data analysis was conducted meticulously, where researchers identified patterns, major themes, and findings emerging from the collected literature. Coding and categorization techniques were used to organize and interpret the information found in the literature, with the aim of exploring the role of halal certification in enhancing the interest of Muslim consumers in halal tourism destinations. By explaining the research method clearly and in detail, readers can understand how this research was conducted and how its findings can be interpreted more effectively. This method also provides a strong basis to support the validity and reliability of the research findings.

4. Results and Discussion

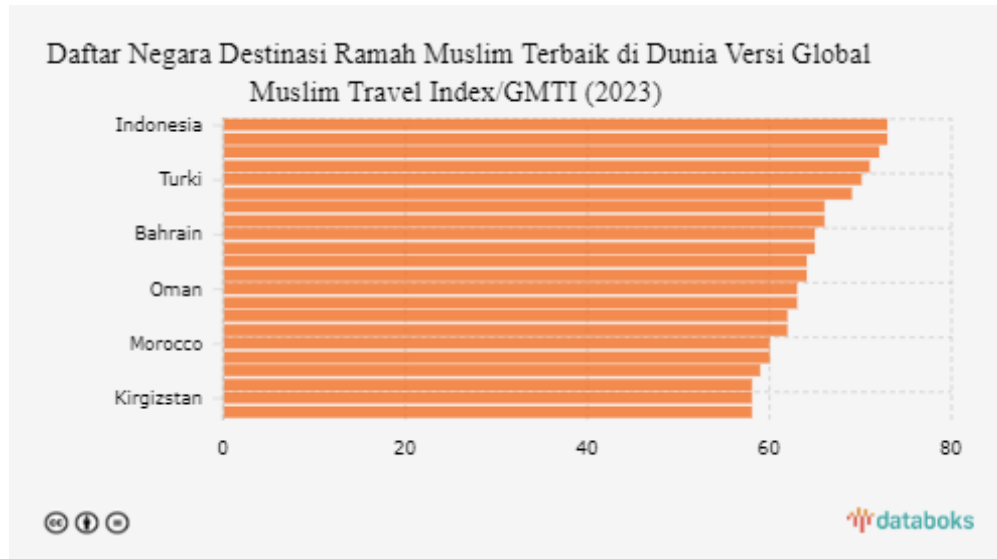


Figure 1. Global Muslim Travel Index/GMTI (2023)
Source: (Annur, 2023)

Indonesia and Malaysia, according to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2023 released by Mastercard and CrescentRating, have solidified their positions as the top destinations friendly to Muslim travelers worldwide. In the index that evaluates 138 tourist destinations, both countries scored the highest with 73 points each. The criteria assessed in the GMTI include access, communication, environment, and services, where Indonesia and Malaysia have proven to excel. Previously, Indonesia had been the champion in the GMTI 2019, while Malaysia consistently held the top ranking since 2015. The GMTI assessment particularly highlights communication and service aspects, where Indonesia and Malaysia stand out in destination marketing and services tailored to the needs of Muslim travelers.

Fazal Bahardeen, the Founder and CEO of CrescentRating, emphasizes significant growth in the Muslim travel market in 2022, with the number of international Muslim visitors reaching 110 million, or about 68% of the pre-pandemic level in 2019. He also predicts further increases to 140 million in 2023 and a return to pre-pandemic levels by 2024, reaching 160 million visits. Forward projections indicate that the Muslim travel market will continue to grow, with estimates reaching 230 million Muslim tourist arrivals with expenditures of around US\$225 billion by 2028. This indicates significant potential for countries with Muslim-friendly facilities and services to continue attracting Muslim travelers from around the world.

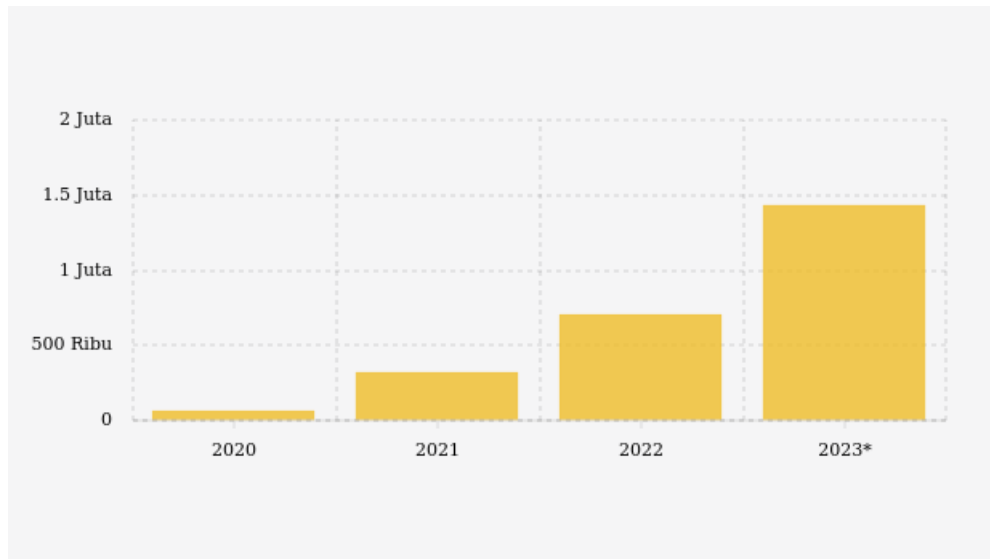


Figure 2. The Number of Halal Certified Products (2020-2023)
Source: (Santika, 2023)

Based on data processed by the Presidential Staff Office (KSP) through the SiHalal application, it is evident that the number of halal certified products in Indonesia has experienced significant growth over the past four years. In 2020, the number of halal certified products reached 59.40 thousand, which then rapidly increased to 315.66 thousand the following year. In 2022, the number of halal certified products soared to 704.98 thousand. The latest data collected until September 20, 2023, indicates a figure of 1.42 million products, marking the highest achievement in the past four years. The KSP notes that these halal certified products come from various types of businesses, ranging from micro, small, medium to large-scale enterprises.

On the other hand, the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Maruf Amin, highlights that the halal lifestyle has now become an integral part of the daily lives of global Muslim communities. According to him, the consumption of halal food by Muslims worldwide reached US\$1.27 trillion in 2021 and is estimated to increase to US\$1.6 trillion by 2025. Furthermore, investment in the halal food sector almost reached US\$4 billion in the 2020-2021 period. Maruf also emphasizes that the consumption level of halal products and services in Indonesia itself is projected to increase by about 15% in 2025, equivalent to US\$281 billion. This indicates that halal certification is a prerequisite for the halal lifestyle, as it ensures the cleanliness, safety, and healthiness of products. In regulations such as Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance, halal certification is considered a necessity that regulates all products circulating and traded in Indonesia.

The role of halal certification has a significant impact on increasing the interest of Muslim consumers in halal tourism destinations, as reflected by the achievements of Indonesia and Malaysia in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2023. Both countries, with the highest scores in the index, demonstrate their commitment to providing a Muslim-friendly environment, including facilities and services that meet the needs and religious beliefs of tourists. The increasing number of halal certified products, as highlighted by the Presidential Staff Office (KSP) through the SiHalal application, also indicates an important indication of the growth of the halal market. With the increase in the number of certified products, Muslim consumers in Indonesia can feel more confident and assured about the products they purchase, including products related to travel and tourism.

More than just a halal label, halal certification reflects principles of product cleanliness, safety, and health, as highlighted by the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Maruf Amin. The halal lifestyle has not only become a trend but also an integral part of the daily lives of global Muslim communities. The consumption of halal food, investment in the halal food sector, and projections of increased levels of consumption of halal products and services in the future indicate that halal certification is an important prerequisite in meeting the needs and preferences of Muslim consumers. In halal tourism, the existence of halal certified products and services is a determining factor in attracting the interest of Muslim travelers. Tourism destinations that can provide facilities and services that are

Muslim-friendly, including halal food, places of worship, and accommodations that adhere to halal principles, will have greater appeal to the global Muslim tourism market. Halal certification is not only about compliance with regulations but also an investment in building a positive image of halal tourism destinations. Through strict and reliable halal certification, tourism destinations can strengthen their position as desired destinations for Muslim travelers and create memorable and meaningful experiences for them.

The role of halal certification in increasing the interest of Muslim consumers in halal tourism destinations also includes aspects of trust and comfort. Muslim travelers tend to seek assurance of the halal status of the products and services they consume during their travels. Halal certification provides confidence that the products and services they use have met internationally recognized standards for halalness. In an increasingly competitive tourism market, halal certification can also be a differentiator for destinations committed to attracting Muslim travelers. Destinations that actively promote the presence of their halal facilities and services can attract a significant market segment and enhance their competitiveness in the global market. The importance of halal certification in the context of halal tourism also demands cooperation between governments, the tourism industry, and halal certification bodies to ensure compliance with relevant standards and regulations. This partnership can ensure that the products and services offered truly meet the needs and expectations of Muslim travelers.

Awareness of the importance of halal certification can also trigger the growth of local industries in tourism destinations. With the increasing demand for halal products and services, local businesses have the opportunity to develop and expand their businesses to meet the growing market needs. Thus, halal certification is not only a regulatory requirement but also a long-term investment in the development of inclusive and sustainable tourism destinations. By strengthening Muslim-friendly infrastructure and services, tourism destinations can create positive experiences for Muslim travelers, which in turn will enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness in the global market.

5. Conclusion

In the development of halal tourism, the role of halal certification has proven to be a key factor in increasing the interest of Muslim consumers in tourism destinations. The achievements of Indonesia and Malaysia in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2023 serve as tangible evidence of both countries' commitment to providing a Muslim-friendly environment, including access, communication, environment, and services that meet the needs of Muslim travelers. Data from the Presidential Staff Office (KSP) and statements from the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Maruf Amin, affirm that the increasing number of halal certified products reflects the overall growth of the halal market. This also illustrates the importance of halal certification in meeting the needs and preferences of Muslim consumers, both in the context of food and tourism. In efforts to enhance the competitiveness of halal tourism destinations, cooperation between governments, the tourism industry, and halal certification bodies is crucial. This partnership can ensure compliance with relevant standards and regulations, as well as effectively promote the existence of halal facilities and services.

Governments need to strengthen regulations related to halal certification and provide support to tourism industry stakeholders in meeting the established standards. Tourism industry stakeholders should increase awareness of the importance of halal certification as a differentiation factor and invest in the development of products and services that meet the needs of Muslim travelers. Additionally, effective promotion of halal facilities and services needs to be enhanced to attract Muslim travelers. Halal certification bodies are also expected to enhance transparency and reliability in the certification process, thereby providing greater confidence to Muslim consumers about the halal status of the products and services they consume.

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