

POST-COVID-19 HALAL TOURISM: A DESTINATION PERSPECTIVE IN EAST JAVA

Martaleni¹, M. Jamal Abdul Nasir¹, Rizqiyatul Khoiriyah², Noor Hidayat³

¹Faculty of Economics and Business, Gajayana University, Indonesia

²Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, Gajayana University, Indonesia
Jl. Mertojoyo Blk. L, Merjosari, Lowokwaru, Malang City, East Java, 65144, Indonesia

³Faculty of Science-, Brawijaya University, Indonesia
Jl. Veteran, Ketawanggede, Lowokwaru, Malang City, East Java, 65145, Indonesia
martaleni@unigamalang.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Almost all sectors of life in all countries have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. One sector that has been hit hard is the tourism industry. So that has forced tourism actors to design efficient marketing strategies to attract tourists. For this reason, tourism destination stakeholders are required to carry out creative strategies and expand market share by entering new segments in order to restore the increased demand for tourism products. In the tourism industry, halal tourism is a growing segment and has the potential to become an attractive new segment and market niche as the global Muslim population increases. Implementation of halal tourism requires efforts to build stakeholder awareness about the meaning and impact of halal tourism. Therefore, this study aims to provide an overview of the attributes of halal tourism that have been offered by existing tourist objects and future marketing strategies. Twenty-nine official websites of tourist destinations in East Java, Indonesia that offer halal tourism attributes were examined. Based on the results of data processing using a qualitative research approach it was concluded that tourist objects in East Java generally offer tourism products and services that meet the needs of Muslim tourists, but very few attributes of food and restaurants are certified and have a halal logo. For this reason, business awareness is needed with the support of stakeholders in order to brand business destinations that are friendly to Muslim tourists but can also be enjoyed by non-Muslim tourists.

Keyword: Halal Tourism, Marketing Strategy, Stakeholder Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Almost all sectors of life in all countries have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. One sector that has been hit hard is the tourism industry. (Martaleni et al, 2022, Sun et al, 2022, Shin et al, 2022) This is because in general people do not dare to visit tourist destinations as a result of fear of contracting disease, as well as government policies through limiting activities outside the house (known as PPKM). Most of the demand for goods or services is relatively unstable and has also changed consumer habits in buying various goods and services (Lee et al, 2023), and has even affected people's moods in carrying out their daily activities (Leung et al, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in tourism actors designing efficient marketing strategies to attract tourists (Shin et al, 2022). However, the end of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in world tourism, including Indonesia, being much better than two years ago. One indicator of increasing public confidence for outdoor activities, such as the abundance of tourist destinations, roads that tend to be jammed and visits to shopping malls have increased.

In Indonesia, tourism is a very important sector and contributes greatly to the economic development of society. These contributions include, in 2019, the tourism sector successfully contributed Rp. 280 trillion, an increase of 3.7 percent from the achievement of the previous year which amounted to around Rp. 270 trillion. However, the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic has become an existential threat that has hampered tourism development. Indonesia continues to struggle with this relatively severe crisis, so that it can play its vital role as a significant driver in the recovery and growth of tourism. Persistent efforts have paid off so that in the last few months local tourism has appeared to be improving. Statistical data shows that the tourism sector in Indonesia has started to move

in the third quarter of 2020. The number of hotel room occupancies has started to increase since July, and people have started traveling between regions as seen from the increase in flight ticket sales. Tiket.com, a provider of online ticket sales services, claims that online flight ticket sales through its platform increased by 240 percent in the third quarter, and hotel room sales increased by 250 percent at the same time. This could be an illustration, the tourism sector is slowly getting up and gradually recovering (Ukar, 2020).

For this reason, if the tourism sector is managed in a sustainable and responsible manner, it will be able to contribute to improving the economy, local culture, demand for local products, and increasing job creation (ILO, 2022). Supported by latent demand, it is estimated that there will be a *pent-up demand* for tourism by the public. However, most experts (65%) believe that until 2024 or more, international tourism will not return to the level as in 2019 (UWNTO, 2023). For this reason, tourism destination stakeholders are required to carry out creative strategies and expand market share by entering new segments in order to restore the increased demand for tourism products. Halal tourism is a special segment that is developing in the tourism industry, has the potential to become an attractive new tourism segment and is a market niche along with the increasing global Muslim population (Ekka, 2023).

Muslim tourism, a religion-based segment, is important on a global level and is growing the fastest in the world. Therefore, globally the demand for a Muslim-friendly tourism industry has been gaining momentum (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2021). In 2022 the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) developed by Crescent, estimates Muslim tourists to be around 26 percent of the world's population in 2030. The development of halal tourism can be a strategy of choice to increase the contribution of the tourism sector, especially since halal tourism is becoming an increasingly popular concept and is being discussed on various occasions. It is one of the highest spending markets for tourism destinations, businesses and tourism-related entities in the world. But even though it has great potential, it is still relatively untouched (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2021). The Halal tourism industry has considered the impact of the covid pandemic has changed the behavior of many people in various aspects. This change in behavior demands a product and service with a new strategy or modified to meet the needs of tourists. Consumer behavior in buying halal products before the COVID-19 pandemic was based on four main factors: buying experience, certification labels, internet searches, and consumption experience. Meanwhile during a pandemic, based on six factors: consumption experience, purchasing experience, certification label, standard specification, internet search, and halal certification label (Lee et al., 2023).

The issue of halal tourism needs to be studied in depth (Carboni & Janati (2016). On the other hand, El-Gohary (2016) states that in order to help an area achieve its goals, the concept of halal tourism needs to be understood completely and well. The intention of tourists to revisit is determined by the reputation of a halal destination. Furthermore, a halal destination must enhance its reputation as a superior provider of halal tourism (Wardi & Trinanda, 2022). Therefore, to support the implementation of the concept of halal tourism, it is necessary to make efforts to build stakeholder awareness and tourists about the meaning and impact of halal tourism. Building stakeholder awareness of halal tourism products requires the development of a marketing strategy. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the attributes of halal tourism that have been offered by existing tourist objects and future marketing strategies. Tourism research before and after COVID has far-reaching implications (Ekka, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal Tourism

Some of the academic studies that have been carried out can be stated that the terminology regarding "halal tourism" is relatively new. However, halal tourism is an interesting study to do considering that the growth of Muslims globally continues to increase (Mastercard-Crescentrating, 2023). Along with this, it needs to be realized that the growing number of

Muslim tourists will provide opportunities for increased demand for tourism services that are carried out with the halal concept. Halal tourism is part of global tourism which has a niche market segment, which is gaining momentum due to its continuous growth and expansion. Despite its growth in tourism, the word halal is not yet clearly understood by many people, and more work needs to be done to make its contents clear to people on a larger scale. Halal" as a term in Arabic means, "permissible, permissible" for Muslims (Namin & Tajzadeh, 2013; Suradin, 2018; El-Gohary, 2016). Therefore, halal tourism is closely related to travel behavior related to Islamic values and norms, so that tourists are expected to comply with sharia law as facilitated by the host as a tourist destination (Ekka, 2022). Although all Muslim tourists around the world are not the same, due to their different historical, economic, geopolitical and social backgrounds, they are the same. Halal tourism terminology is viewed from various perspectives (Slamet et al., 2022).

Globally, the halal tourism market segment is growing remarkably and will expand in the future (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Sanchez & Morals, 2019). The awareness of Muslims consuming halal products and services has become a cause for the increasing development of the halal tourism sector. According to a Muslim, traveling does not mean staying away from religious values, does not mean stopping worship activities, considering that Islam and its teachings are a value system in everyday life. Halal tourism can be interpreted as offering tourism services designed to meet the needs of Muslim tourists in accordance with their religious obligations (Sanchez & Moral, 2019), but can be enjoyed by non-Muslim tourists. Halal tourism management and services are known to all tourists and the surrounding environment (Lestari & Putri, 2021).

Halal tourism is an understanding of the meaning of sharia and its implementation in all aspects of tourism activities, starting from lodging facilities, transportation facilities, food and beverage facilities, financial facilities, and others. system, to facilities providing tourism service products (Slamet et al., 2022). When referring to halal food, the term applies to all products, from raw materials, production, logistics, supply chain, distribution to purchase (Lee et al., 2023). The existence of a halal label on a product will make it easier for Muslim consumers to purchase decision making. With halal information about products, including the ingredients used, social media advertising can help consumers make the right decisions and feel more confident about buying halal products (Lee et al., 2023).

Halal Tourism Attributes

The halal predicate attached to the term tourism will have different consequences from conventional tourism (Martaleni, 2019). Halal tourism is deeply rooted in Islamic law because every Muslim who has the financial means is required to travel for various reasons, especially those directly related to Islamic law itself, such as pilgrimage and umrah trips. Besides that, there are also those who travel with the aim of continuing their education, getting medical care, and to gain skills, and so on (El-Gohary, 2016). Some of the tourism attributes needed by Muslim tourists are the availability of various facilities for: prayer, food and drinks with a halal label, clean and adequate public facilities, availability of clean toilets with sufficient water. Sukiman (2013) and also Jafari (2016) state that Islamic doctrine regulates the type of food and drink that is halal (permitted) and can be consumed by Muslims, about how to dress, about entertainment to be enjoyed, and about how to live or behave. Therefore, the attributes of halal tourism are a series of facilities and services that are permissible according to Islamic law for Muslim tourists to enjoy while traveling. In other words, halal tourism will make it easier for Muslims to travel while still being able to carry out orders according to Islamic law. However, halal tourism does not have to force tourists who adhere to beliefs other than Islam to comply with it (Martaleni, 2022).

Some vacation packages that are in accordance with the halal concept include: halal hotels, halal food, there is a Qibla direction in the room, prayer mats are available, halal flights (Chandra (2014). Halal tourism indicators, according to Battour et al., (2014), Battour & Ismail (2015), include hotel facilities: Al-Quran, Qibla direction, prayer mats, prayer schedules, TV with family-friendly shows, non-alcoholic drinks, friendly toilets for

purification and worship, halal-certified food, trained staff to serve Muslims, female staff for women, women-only floor/family-only floor, swimming pool/separate sports hall for men and women, prayer room (surau/musholla), services and facilities Ramadan.

METHODS

This research is qualitative descriptive research because this research aims to provide an overview of the facts of the attributes of halal tourism offered by tourist objects in tourist destinations in East Java, Indonesia. Qualitative research is research that explains, examines and interprets the meaning of a word (Malhotra, 2007). Meanwhile (Creswell, 2014) states that qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning of problems in a social environment. The data used in this study are qualitative in nature, originating from secondary data. Secondary data was obtained by browsing 19 (nineteen) official web sites for tourist destinations in East Java to find out the tourist attributes offered at each tourist attraction. The attributes of halal tourism are traced by taking into account several dimensions, including: (1) Social environment with 6 (six) indicators, (2) Facilities with 8 (eight) indicators, (3) Food and beverages with 4 (four) indicators, (4) Halal friendly services with 3 (three) indicators, and (5) Halal friendly residents and staff with 3 (three indicators) indicators. After the data is obtained, then data analysis is carried out with the following steps: (1) Carrying out data reduction; (2) Data presentation; and (3) Drawing conclusions and verifying.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2018 East Java was named the 10 (ten) Leading Halal Tourism Destinations at The Inaugural report of Indonesia Muslim Travel Index (IMTI). Since this award, East Java destinations have continued to strive to make their tourist destinations Muslim-friendly. East Java is one of the potential tourist objects and is one of the priority areas for the development of major Muslim tourist destinations or halal tourism which has become a national program by the Ministry of Tourism. In table 1, as many as 29 tourist attractions that are most in demand by tourists in East Java have been observed and identified as related to the availability of halal tourism attributes through various official websites of tourist destinations.

Table 1. Observation Results of East Java Halal Tourism Websites

ATTRIBUTE NAME	ATTRIBUTE	AMOUNT OF ACQUISITION	%
Attractive design or arrangement	AWH1	29	100%
The atmosphere at the tourist spot is comfortable and safe	AWH2	29	100%
The community environment is calm	AWH3	29	100%
Free from illicit goods	AWH4	20	69%
Clean tourist spot	AWH5	28	97%
The people are friendly / Halal-friendly tourist sites	AWH6	29	100%
There is a hand washing area	AWH7	28	97%
There is a mandatory wearing of a mask	AWH8	29	100%
There is easy access to the mosque / prayer room	AWH9	28	97%
Provides many public facilities	AWH10	27	93%
Have gender separated toilet/shower/changing room facilities	AWH11	29	100%
The mosque/musholla has a hijab/gender separator	AWH12	26	90%

ATTRIBUTE NAME	ATTRIBUTE	AMOUNT OF ACQUISITION	%
There is an ablution area with sufficient water	AWH13	29	100%
Clean toilets are available	AWH14	27	93%
Halal logo is available in outlets/restaurants	AWH15	5	17%
Maintain cleanliness of food and drink	AWH16	26	90%
Halal food and beverage safety is available	AWH17	26	90%
Has a Halal food and beverage certificate	AWH18	2	7%
Halal information is available at tourist attractions	AWH19	12	41%
Halal services are effectively offered in different places	AWH20	0	0%
Tourist attractions provide halal services in accordance with Islamic law	AWH21	16	55%
The local people really know how to offer halal products	AWH22	28	97%
Competence of local staff in offering Halal products and services	AWH23	23	79%
Locals' understanding of Islamic rules and Halal	AWH24	16	55%

Source: processed data, 2023

Based on the number of acquisitions of halal tourism attributes at 29 destinations or tourist attractions from 14 cities and regencies in East Java, it is stated that in general tourist destinations already have an attractive design or arrangement, comfortable and safe travel, an environment with a calm community, and have toilet facilities. separately and various other attributes identified in the concept of halal tourism which is gradually being developed. This shows that 20 of the 24 attributes observed are available and have a percentage above 50%.

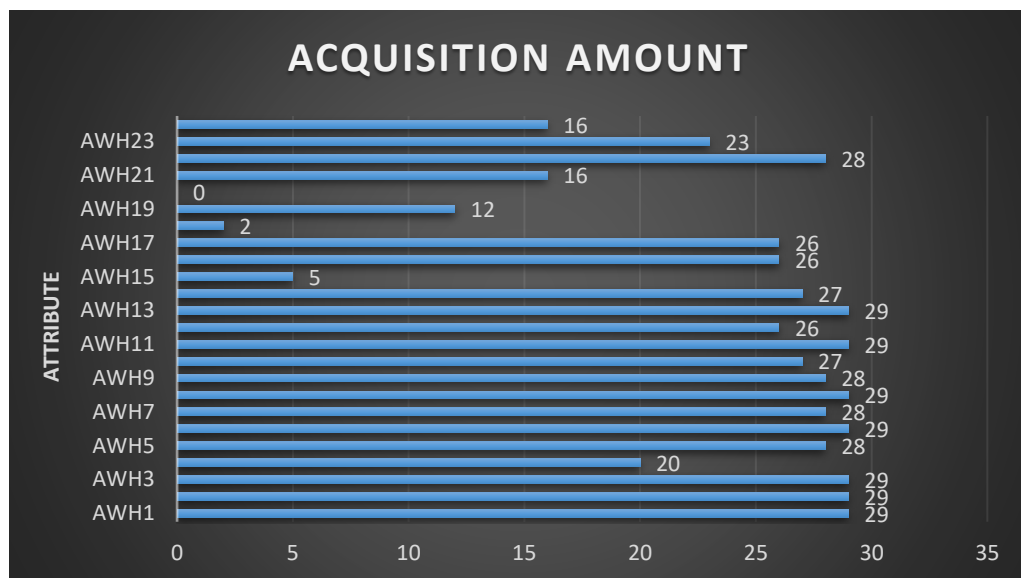


Figure 1. Data on Acquisition of Halal Tourism Attributes in 29 East Java Tourism Destinations

Source: processed data, 2023

In more detail in figure 1, the attribute that has not been fulfilled in the 29 destinations is that halal services are offered effectively in different places. This could be because halal

services are more identically available in hotels or inns, while the 29 destinations studied are tourist destinations (tourist attractions) that are usually visited by tourists. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has made arrangements with new normal customs *such* as the availability of hand washing facilities and the mandatory wearing of masks regulations more adapted and applied to tourist destinations through adjustments to the concept of halal tourism in East Java.

Meanwhile, in terms of halal certification and the halal logo, it is only available in less than 6 outlets or restaurants in tourist destination areas in East Java. This shows that the halal certification or logo, which is one of the identical characteristics and part of the concept of halal tourism, is still minimally recognized by the relevant stakeholders. Meanwhile, for Muslim tourists, halal certification, especially in food and beverages, is one of the important things (Syed & Evans, 2015). So that halal quality certification should be displayed to convince Muslim tourists, especially that sharia requirements are met (Mohsin et al, 2020). The results of this observation support the results of the study of Rahman (2023) which shows that East Java has not fully implemented the development of the concept of halal tourism in most of its tourist destinations. Nevertheless, in providing various attributes with the concept of halal tourism, the majority of the tourism industry is still played by the presence of the government (Sjuchro et al, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

Halal tourism is a growing market segment in the tourism industry, which has the potential to become an attractive new segment and a market niche along with the increasing global Muslim population. This study aims to reveal the attributes of halal tourism that have been offered by tourist objects as a marketing strategy for a destination in East Java. Based on qualitative data analysis, it can be concluded that in general the existing tourism objects have offered tourism products and services that can meet the needs of Muslim tourists, but the attributes of food and restaurants that are halal certified are still very minimal. This shows that the halal certification or logo, which is one of the identical characteristics and part of the concept of halal tourism, is still minimally recognized by the relevant stakeholders. For this reason, business awareness is needed with the support of stakeholders in order to brand business destinations that are friendly to Muslim tourists but can also be enjoyed by non-Muslim tourists.

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Halal Industry