

Positioning Sudirman Street, Bandung, as a Muslim-Friendly Cultural Tourism Destination: Trends, Strategies, and Challenges

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study aims to explore the global development of halal tourism by examining its underlying concepts and principles, identifying key opportunities and challenges, and assessing Indonesia's strategic positioning, particularly Bandung as an emerging halal tourism destination in response to growing Muslim tourist demand.

Design/methodology: The research employs a qualitative, desk-based review approach, synthesizing secondary data from academic literature, industry reports, and policy documents on halal tourism development across multiple countries. The analysis focuses on comparative case studies of Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority nations, with specific attention to Indonesia's national and local initiatives in promoting halal-friendly destinations.

Findings: Halal tourism has evolved into a significant segment of the global halal economy, driven by rising Muslim populations, increased disposable incomes in Islamic countries (notably in the Middle East), and shifting lifestyle preferences. Countries worldwide are increasingly adopting halal tourism frameworks to capture this market. Indonesia, leveraging its cultural diversity, natural attractions, and Muslim-majority identity, is actively developing multiple regions including Bandung as competitive halal tourism hubs. However, challenges remain in standardization, certification, infrastructure readiness, and balancing religious compliance with mass tourism appeal.

Research limitations/Implications: As a conceptual and descriptive study based on secondary sources, this research does not include empirical data from tourists or industry stakeholders. Future studies should incorporate primary data through surveys or interviews to validate findings and assess visitor satisfaction, destination competitiveness, and economic impact. The implications highlight the need for coordinated policy, private-sector investment, and community engagement to fully realize halal tourism potential.

Novelty/Originality of the study: This article provides a timely synthesis of global halal tourism trends with a focused lens on Indonesia's and Bandung's emerging role, offering a structured overview that bridges theoretical concepts with practical destination development strategies in a rapidly growing market segment.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Indonesia has exhibited consistent and rapid growth over the years, supported by the government's strategic promotion efforts, particularly through the Ministry of Tourism's Wonderful Indonesia (*Pesona Indonesia*) campaign (Fauzi & Sumirat, 2023). This momentum aligns with the legal mandate under Law No. 10 of 2009, which positions tourism as an integral component of national development implemented in a systematic, planned, integrated, sustainable, and responsible manner. The law further emphasizes the importance of safeguarding religious values, preserving local culture, ensuring environmental sustainability, and upholding national interests (Nurjaya & Budiarta, 2023). Against this backdrop, tourism development in Indonesia is not only an economic imperative but also a vehicle for equitable distribution of business opportunities, enabling communities to adapt to evolving local, national, and global dynamics (Nurjaya, 2023).

In a study by Jailani and Adinugraha, (2022) it was stated that there is enormous potential for halal tourism from an economic standpoint. The prospects are quite large for the halal tourism industry, not only related to halal products such as food or non-alcoholic drinks but also halal services, especially those related to interactions between male and female tourists. Until 2015, the growth of the halal tourism industry can be said to be the largest growth compared to other types of tourism.

As the global halal economy expands, so does the demand for tourism products that cater to this demographic. While traditional religious tourism focuses on sacred sites such as mosques, historical religious landmarks, and pilgrimage destinations a newer, more comprehensive concept has emerged which called halal tourism (Hall & Prayag, 2020). Unlike religious tourism, which centers on the location or historical significance of attractions, halal tourism prioritizes the needs and experiences of Muslim tourists as actors (Khairuldin et al., 2024). Halal tourism encompasses a broader scope, ensuring that public spaces, accommodations, dining, and services align with Islamic principles, thereby enabling Muslim travelers to maintain religious compliance throughout their journey (Said et al., 2022). In Islamic literatures, halal denotes all that is permissible under religious teachings and serves as a behavioral guide for Muslims (Din, 1989; Adinugraha, et al., 2021). From the consumer contexts, halal specifically refers to products and services compliant with the Qur'an and Hadith, halal tourism offers excellent service to Muslim travelers and other tourists (Kim & King, 2015). The basic needs of a Muslim traveler can be fulfilled properly and satisfactorily (Battour et al., 2012; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2020).

In response to shifting market demands and the diversification of traveler preferences, the Indonesian government has increasingly integrated religious dimensions into its tourism offerings. In Indonesia, there are lots of halal tourist destinations spread across all provinces, including in the province of West Java. Bandung is a city that is already famous for its various of halal tourist attractions that can be used as a reference when going to Bandung, for example Sudirman Street (Silaban, 2021). This study aims to explore the global development of halal tourism by examining its underlying concepts and principles, identifying key opportunities and challenges, and assessing Indonesia's strategic positioning, particularly Bandung as an emerging halal tourism destination in response to growing Muslim tourist demand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal Tourism

The definition of halal tourism according to the Ministry of Tourism (2015) is an activity that is supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, government and local governments that meet halal requirements. Halal tourism can be used by all groups, both Muslims and non-Muslims because the characteristics of its products and services are universal (Ratnasari, 2020). The concept of halal tourism is understood as the implementation of the values of Islamic teachings in carrying out a tour without discriminating against non-Muslim tourists which can be used as soft power to attract Muslim and non-Muslim tourists (Jia & Chaozhi, 2020). The main foundation of halal tourism is the Al-Qur'an letter Al-'Ankabut verse 20 (QS.29: 20): *"Say, walk on earth and pay attention to how Allah begins the creation (creature), then Allah makes the last incident. Verily Allah is Powerful over all things."* (Qutb, 1991). Moreover, the word halal comes from the Arabic language *halla*, *yahillu*, *hillan*, *wahalalan* which has the meaning justified or permissible by sharia law. It has the meaning as something that is allowed or allowed by Allah (Al-Qaradawi, 1989). Hala are the main sources that are not only related to food or food products, but also penetrate all aspects of life, such as banking and finance, cosmetics, jobs, tourism, and others (Shahabuddin et al., 2019).

From the literatures discussing halal tourism, various terminologies are found used such as halal tourism, Islamic tourism, or sharia travel (Din, 1989; Halbase, 2015; Battour & Ismail, 2016). Islamic tourism focuses on many different issues, such as participation and involvement by Muslims, tourist attractions and destinations, products (lodging, food, entertainment, beverages, and others), dimensions (social, economic, cultural, religious, and others), service management, marketing, cultural considerations, and religion (Duman, 2011; Khairuldin et al., 2024).

Halal tourism is one of the emerging concepts related to halal and has been defined in various ways by many experts, the basics of halal tourism include components such as halal food, halal transportation, halal hotels, halal logistics, Islamic finance, Islamic travel packages, and kosher spas (Battour, et al., 2010; Bhuiyan, et al., 2011; Hamdan et al., 2013). According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI, 2018) halal tourism is tourism that is carried out in accordance with Islamic principles in which there are Muslim-friendly facilities and services (Isnaeni et al., 2023). These facilities and services consist of the availability of clean and comfortable religious services and facilities such as ablution places and prayer rooms (separate for women and men), availability of guaranteed halal food and drinks, adequate public facilities (toilets and clean water), services and facilities during the month of Ramadan, and there is no gambling activity and alcoholic beverages (Abdrakhmanova & Moghavvemi, 2022).

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OKI) defines halal tourism as a tourist trip aimed at providing tourist services and facilities for Muslim tourists according to Islamic principles (Muslim & Harun, 2022). Meanwhile the Indonesian Ulama Council (DSN-MUI) states that sharia tourism is a travel activity carried out by a person or group to visit a place for recreational purposes, develop themselves, study the uniqueness of a place, see tourist attractions in a place in a certain period based on sharia principles (Syufa'at & Zayyadi, 2023). Sharia tourism activities must contain two important elements, namely free from things that smell of shirk and lies, and create and add value (benefits) both materially and spiritually (Umuri & Nurliana, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is qualitative method. The use of this method because it is considered more appropriate to be used in understanding the ways or patterns of people's life than quantitative research methods. According to Fossey et al., (2002), qualitative research committed to actively entering the world where individuals interact. It is also referred to as a qualitative method because the data collected and analyzed are more qualitative in nature by conducting qualitative investigations, researchers approach the participants under study and develop an understanding of what is happening in their environment.

Bandung City, West Java as a Special Tourism Area, Bandung's unique topological conditions have made Bandung a city visited by many tourists for a long time (Hermawan et al., 2018). This topology is also a cold highland area but also has a half city as its capital. This also makes tourists who are there not bored to continue visiting the city of Bandung. The development of Bandung City tourism is also supported by the availability and variety of tourism products from various elements such as knowledge, history, culture, heritage, culinary, and shopping (Aldianto et al., 2020). For example, culinary tourism is now very popular with the public and Bandung is one of the cities famous for culinary tourism.

One example of culinary tourism in Bandung, namely the Sudirman Street Day and Night Market, can be a culinary tour of choice to visit while on vacation in this flower city. Judging from the name alone, it is certain that the location is on Jalan Sudirman. An area located not far from the city center. Unlike tourism in general, Sudirman street only focuses on selling food. Especially those with the theme of Chinese food. Actors who are the subject of this study include human resources in the tourism sector. It includes elements of the Regional Government, tourism business actors, community leaders, as well as tourists and other related stakeholders. Given the number and breadth of these elements, in this study the technique of determining the subject sample using purposive sampling technique was used. The use of this technique is related to the competency of the subject in disclosing the necessary data/information related to the research problem being carried out. The subject activities studied are tourism activities, especially halal tourism which involves all of the above elements. This activity includes the formulation of regulations, the implementation of halal tourism in each destination, as well as assessments from stakeholders regarding the development of halal tourism in City of Bandung.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Culinary Diversity and Spatial Configuration of Sudirman Street

Sudirman Street in Cibadak, Bandung, emerges as a vibrant culinary hub that exemplifies the dynamic interplay between urban commerce, cultural diversity, and tourism appeal. Functioning as an all-in-one hawker center or called *pujasera*, the street offers an extensive array of food options spanning Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Malaysian, and European cuisines. Iconic dishes such as sweet potato balls, cheese bananas, martabak, takoyaki, soto kaki, porridge, mixed rice, and nasi lemak illustrate not only the gastronomic richness of the location but also its strategic positioning as a multicultural food destination. This diversity aligns with broader trends in urban tourism, where culinary experiences serve as a primary motivator for visitation, particularly among domestic and regional tourists seeking authentic yet varied foodscapes.

The spatial organization of Sudirman Street further enhances its attractiveness. Food tenants are interspersed with non-culinary businesses such as clothing stores, printing shops, and electrical equipment outlets, creating a mixed-use environment that sustains foot traffic throughout the day. Seating arrangements are systematically provided, with tables and chairs lining the street, allowing diners to comfortably enjoy their meals while observing the bustling activity. A notable visual feature is the mural at the entrance from Jalan Cibadak, which has become a popular photo spot for visitors. This artistic element not only contributes to the aesthetic appeal of the area but also serves as a form of place branding, reinforcing Sudirman Street's identity as a creative and welcoming public space. Such visual cues are increasingly recognized in tourism literature as critical components of destination image formation, influencing both first-time and repeat visitation.

Operational Dynamics and Temporal Patterns of Visitor Flow

The operational rhythm of Sudirman Street reveals distinct temporal patterns that reflect both consumer behavior and vendor strategy. The culinary center opens daily at 11:00, with a full complement of food vendors active during daylight hours. However, visitor density remains relatively low in the afternoon, with only a fraction of available seating occupied. This lull can be attributed to several factors, including work schedules, climate conditions, and the competing presence of formal retail establishments that dominate the streetscape during business hours.

A significant transformation occurs around 18:00, when many non-culinary shops close and additional food vendors commence operations. From this point until midnight, Sudirman Street undergoes a metamorphosis into a lively night market characterized by colorful lighting, neon signage, and an intensified sensory atmosphere. Visitor numbers surge during this period, with seating areas becoming densely populated. This diurnal shift

underscores the importance of temporal framing in urban tourism management. The evening activation not only maximizes the utility of public space but also caters to leisure-oriented consumption patterns, particularly among younger demographics and families seeking nighttime recreational activities. The vibrancy of the night scene, amplified by illuminated food displays and ambient lighting, creates an immersive experience that extends beyond mere dining, positioning Sudirman Street as a destination for social gathering and cultural consumption.

Halal and Non-Halal Food Coexistence: Transparency and Religious Sensitivity

One of the most salient findings of this study is the explicit coexistence of halal and non-halal food offerings within Sudirman Street, managed through a system of transparent labeling and vendor disclosure. The culinary center manager has installed a prominent display above the entrance clearly stating that both halal and non-halal foods are sold within the premises. Individual vendors further reinforce this transparency by openly indicating the presence of non-halal ingredients particularly pork on their shopfront displays. This practice is especially critical for Muslim visitors, who must exercise caution in selecting food that complies with Islamic dietary laws.

From a halal tourism perspective, this level of transparency represents a significant strength. While the presence of non-halal food might initially appear contradictory to the principles of halal tourism, the key distinction lies in the clarity of information provided. Halal tourism does not necessitate the exclusive availability of halal products; rather, it emphasizes the ability of Muslim tourists to navigate a destination with confidence, ensuring that their religious obligations can be fulfilled without undue difficulty or risk. Sudirman Street's approach where vendors proactively disclose ingredient composition empowers Muslim consumers to make informed choices, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing perceived safety. This aligns with the broader conceptualization of halal tourism as actor-centered, focusing on the needs and experiences of Muslim tourists rather than the theological status of the location itself.

Moreover, this model fosters an environment of interreligious respect and inclusivity. By accommodating both halal and non-halal preferences within the same physical space, Sudirman Street demonstrates a form of culinary pluralism that resonates with Indonesia's diverse demographic composition. Non-Muslim visitors are equally served, with no compromise on the authenticity or variety of their preferred cuisines. This dual accommodation not only broadens the market appeal of the destination but also reinforces social cohesion by normalizing the side-by-side existence of different dietary practices. In a national context where religious sensitivity is paramount, such practices serve as a microcosm of harmonious coexistence, offering a practical blueprint for other urban culinary districts.

Implications for Halal Tourism Development in Bandung and Beyond

The case of Sudirman Street offers valuable insights for the development of halal tourism in Bandung and other Indonesian cities aspiring to capture the growing Muslim travel market. First, it highlights the importance of information transparency as a foundational element of halal-friendly destination management. Clear labeling, vendor training, and centralized communication such as entrance signage can significantly enhance the accessibility of a destination for Muslim tourists, even in mixed-use environments where non-halal options are present. This is particularly relevant in urban settings where complete segregation of halal and non-halal zones may be logistically or economically unfeasible.

Second, the temporal activation of Sudirman Street illustrates the potential of night-time economies in tourism development. By extending operating hours and creating an engaging nocturnal atmosphere, destinations can attract a wider range of visitors, increase revenue per square meter, and reduce the underutilization of public space during evening hours. For halal tourism, this also presents an opportunity to develop night-time offerings that cater specifically to Muslim families, such as shaded seating areas, prayer space availability, and halal-certified street food clusters.

Third, the inclusive model observed in Sudirman Street suggests that halal tourism need not be exclusionary. Rather than positioning halal tourism as a niche segment isolated from mainstream tourism, destinations can integrate halal considerations into broader urban tourism strategies. This approach not only maximizes economic returns but also promotes social integration by ensuring that tourism development benefits all community members, regardless of religious affiliation.

CONCLUSION

Halal tourism is an emerging field of study that has gained momentum in recent years, yet it remains characterized by terminological inconsistencies and ongoing scholarly debate. There is still no universally agreed-upon set of principles or core requirements defining what constitutes halal tourism. Nevertheless, the steady year-on-year increase in Muslim tourist arrivals presents both a significant opportunity and a strategic challenge for the global tourism sector to systematically develop halal-compliant offerings. In response, numerous countries both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority are actively pursuing halal tourism initiatives. However, an analysis of existing

concepts and practices suggests that many of these efforts are primarily aimed at creating a “Muslim-friendly” ambiance rather than fully aligning with the deeper theological and operational tenets of halal tourism.

To advance the field, sustained academic inquiry is essential. To date, research on halal tourism remains limited, particularly within the Indonesian context. One promising avenue for future investigation is the examination of non-Muslim tourists’ perceptions of halal tourism, which could shed light on issues of inclusivity, market segmentation, and cross-cultural acceptance. Meanwhile, Bandung has witnessed rapid tourism growth, accompanied by a proliferation of attractions that support halal tourism. The city now offers a diverse portfolio of halal-friendly destinations that can serve as benchmarks for visitors and policymakers alike.

Although Sudirman Street illustrates a successful model of culinary tourism with halal-sensitive features, several limitations must be acknowledged. The present study is based solely on observational and descriptive data. Future research should incorporate primary data collection through surveys, in-depth interviews, or focus groups with key stakeholders such as tourists, vendors, and local authorities to evaluate perceptions of safety, satisfaction, and economic impact. Moreover, the lack of formal halal certification among individual vendors raises concerns regarding long-term credibility and scalability. Collaborating with halal certification agencies to design a tiered or partial certification framework for mixed-use food streets could strengthen consumer trust while maintaining culinary pluralism.

Comparative studies across other Indonesian cities such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, or Lombok would also be valuable to uncover contextual variations in halal tourism implementation and to distil transferable best practices for policy development. Longitudinal research could further track shifts in visitor demographics, vendor adaptation strategies, and regulatory responses in light of evolving market dynamics and global halal tourism trends.

In conclusion, Sudirman Street represents a pragmatic and inclusive approach to halal tourism development that effectively balances religious sensitivity with commercial feasibility. Its success highlights the potential of urban culinary districts to function as innovation hubs for halal tourism, yielding insights with relevance far beyond Bandung’s municipal boundaries.

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