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STRENGTHENING MUSLIM TOURISTS' TRUST THROUGH HALAL LABELING: EVIDENCE FROM THE LAKE TOBA TOURISM DESTINATION

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of halal labeling on Muslim tourists' trust in Lake Toba, one of Indonesia's super-priority tourism destinations with a predominantly non-Muslim local population. As the global Muslim tourism market expands, halal-certified products and services have become increasingly important for building tourists' confidence. A quantitative explanatory survey was conducted with 75 valid respondents selected through accidental sampling, using a seven-point Likert questionnaire. Data were analyzed using validity and reliability tests, descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and the coefficient of determination. The pilot test showed that the instrument was reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.732 for halal labeling and 0.842 for Muslim tourists' trust. The findings reveal that halal labeling has a positive and significant effect on Muslim tourists' trust, with a regression coefficient of 0.959. Halal labeling explains 47.2% of the variation in tourist trust, while the remaining 52.8% is influenced by other factors outside the model. These findings indicate that strengthening halal labeling can increase Muslim tourists' trust and support the development of Muslim-friendly tourism in the Lake Toba destination.

Keywords: Halal Labeling; Muslim Tourists' Trust; Muslim-Friendly Tourism; Lake Toba; Halal Certification; Tourism Destination.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh labelisasi halal terhadap kepercayaan wisatawan Muslim di kawasan Danau Toba, salah satu destinasi pariwisata super prioritas Indonesia yang mayoritas penduduk lokalnya non-Muslim. Pertumbuhan pasar wisata halal global meningkatkan pentingnya produk dan layanan bersertifikat halal dalam membangun kepercayaan wisatawan. Penelitian kuantitatif eksplanatori ini menggunakan survei terhadap 75 responden valid yang dipilih dengan teknik accidental sampling dan kuesioner skala Likert 7 poin. Analisis data meliputi uji validitas, uji reliabilitas, statistik deskriptif, regresi linear sederhana, dan koefisien determinasi. Uji coba instrumen menunjukkan nilai Cronbach's Alpha sebesar 0,732 untuk labelisasi halal dan 0,842 untuk kepercayaan wisatawan Muslim. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa labelisasi halal berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kepercayaan wisatawan Muslim dengan koefisien regresi sebesar 0,959. Labelisasi halal menjelaskan 47,2% variasi kepercayaan wisatawan, sedangkan 52,8% sisanya dipengaruhi faktor lain di luar model penelitian. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penguatan labelisasi halal dapat meningkatkan kepercayaan wisatawan Muslim dan mendukung pengembangan pariwisata ramah Muslim di kawasan Danau Toba.

Kata Kunci: Labelisasi Halal; Kepercayaan Wisatawan Muslim; Pariwisata Ramah Muslim; Danau Toba; Sertifikasi Halal; Destinasi Wisata.

INTRODUCTION

The development of halal tourism has become a significant global trend in recent decades, driven by the continuous growth of the Muslim population worldwide, which accounted for approximately 24% of the global population in 2015 and is projected to reach 31% by 2060.[1] This demographic expansion has contributed to the rapid increase in Muslim tourist expenditure, projected to reach approximately USD 220 billion in 2020.[2] Consequently, both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries have increasingly developed halal tourism as a strategic approach to enhance destination competitiveness in the global tourism market.[3] Within this context, halal labeling serves not only as evidence of compliance with Islamic principles but also as a source of assurance that provides Muslim tourists with confidence when selecting tourism destinations, accommodation, restaurants, and other tourism-related services.[4]

As one of Indonesia's Super-Priority Tourism Destinations, the Lake Toba area possesses considerable potential to attract Muslim tourists, particularly from neighboring

[1]Pew Research Center, 'The Changing Global Religious Landscape', 5 April 2017, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/.

[2]Mastercard, 'Mastercard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2019: Indonesia and Malaysia Take the Top Positions in the Fast Growing Muslim Travel Market', Mastercard Newsroom, 9 April 2019, https://newsroom.mastercard.com/news/ap/en/newsroom/press-releases/en/2019/april/mastercard-crescentrating-global-muslim-travel-index-gmti-2019-indonesia-and-malaysia-take-the-top-positions.

[3]Mohamed Battour and Mohd Nazari Ismail, 'Halal Tourism: Concepts, Practises, Challenges and Future', *Tourism Management Perspectives* 19 (2016): 150–54.

[4]Amr Al-Ansi and Heesup Han, 'Role of Halal-Friendly Destination Performances, Value, Satisfaction, and Trust in Generating Destination Image and Loyalty', *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 13 (2019): 51–60, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2019.05.007.

countries such as Malaysia and Singapore.[5] However, unlike many other tourism destinations in Indonesia, Lake Toba is characterized by a predominantly non-Muslim population, creating unique challenges in implementing halal tourism attributes.[6] The limited availability of halal-certified restaurants and accommodation, the low visibility of halal labels, inadequate halal information, and limited halal literacy among tourism business actors make it difficult for Muslim tourists to verify the halal status of tourism products and services.[7] These conditions may increase uncertainty, reduce Muslim tourists' trust, influence their travel decisions, and ultimately weaken the competitiveness of Lake Toba in attracting the rapidly growing global Muslim tourism market. Therefore, strengthening halal labeling has become an urgent strategy to enhance Muslim tourists' trust in multicultural tourism destinations.

Previous studies have demonstrated that halal labeling and halal tourism attributes significantly influence Muslim tourists' travel experiences, destination preferences, satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention.[8] However, most previous studies have focused on tourist satisfaction, loyalty, or behavioral intention and were conducted in destinations with relatively well-developed halal tourism infrastructure. Empirical evidence examining halal labeling as the main determinant of Muslim tourists' trust in super-priority tourism destinations with predominantly non-Muslim communities, such as Lake Toba, remains very limited. This indicates an important research gap regarding the effectiveness of halal labeling in strengthening Muslim tourists' trust within multicultural tourism destinations.

The novelty of this study lies in its empirical examination of halal labeling as the primary factor influencing Muslim tourists' trust in Lake Toba, a super-priority tourism destination with unique socio-cultural characteristics that differ from those of previously studied halal tourism destinations. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized

[5]Riadi Darwis, Vyana Lohjiwa, Endah Trihayuningtyas, Tatang Sophian, and Renalmon Hutahahean, 'Gastronomy Tourism in Danau Toba, Samosir Regency', in *Proceedings of the 1st NHI Tourism Forum (NTF 2019)* (SCITEPRESS, 2019), 123–34, https://doi.org/10.5220/0009882701230134; Aan Jaelani, 'Halal Tourism Industry in Indonesia: Potential and Prospects', *International Review of Management and Marketing* 7, no. 3 (2017): 25–34, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2899864.

[6]Afwan Syahril Manurung and Purbatua Manurung, 'Tourism Communication Strategy in Developing Halal Tourism in the Lake Toba Tourism Area of North Sumatra', *Jurnal Nomosleca* 10, no. 1 (2024): 128–42, https://doi.org/10.26905/nomosleca.v10i1.12897.

[7]Andi Hakim, Rizka Ar Rahmah, and Ahmad Salman Farid, 'The Commodification of Islamic Symbols for the Development of Halal Tourism', *International Journal of Islamic Business Ethics* 10, no. 2 (2025): 125–43, https://doi.org/10.30659/ijibe.10.2.125-143; Takdir and Aswinda Hamida, 'Halal Food in Muslim Minority Tourism Destinations: Perspective of Toraja, Indonesia', *Shirkah: Journal of Economics and Business* 8, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.22515/shirkah.v8i2.593.

[8]Heesup Han, Amr Al-Ansi, Hossein G. T. Olya, and Wansoo Kim, 'Exploring Halal-Friendly Destination Attributes in South Korea: Perceptions and Behaviors of Muslim Travelers toward a Non-Muslim Destination', *Tourism Management* 71 (2019): 151–64, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.10.010; Fitry Primadona, Hartoyo Hartoyo, Lilik Noor Yuliati, and Laily Dwi Arsyianti, 'Perceived Value, Satisfaction, Trust, and Tourist Loyalty in Halal Tourism: An Islamic Legal Perspective from Lombok', *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 25, no. 1 (2025): 23–42, https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v25i1.16346; Yuttachai Jeaheng, Amr Al-Ansi, and Heesup Han, 'Halal-Friendly Hotels: Impact of Halal-Friendly Attributes on Guest Purchase Behaviors in the Thailand Hotel Industry', *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 36, no. 6 (2019): 729–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2019.1631940; Yuttachai Jeaheng, Amr Al-Ansi, and Heesup Han, 'Impacts of Halal-Friendly Services, Facilities, and Food and Beverages on Muslim Travelers' Perceptions of Service Quality Attributes, Perceived Price, Satisfaction, Trust, and Loyalty', *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* 29, no. 7 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2020.1715317; Hermawan M. Aji and Isnaini Muslichah, 'The Determinants of Muslim Travellers' Intention to Visit Non-Islamic Countries: A Halal Tourism Implication', *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 12, no. 8 (2021): 1553–76, https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-03-2020-0075; Norani Soonsan and Zubair Jumani, 'Perceptions of Halal-Friendly Attributes: A Quantitative Study of Tourists' Intention to Travel to Non-Islamic Destination', *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 15, no. 6 (2024): 1441–60, https://doi.org/10.1108/jima-07-2022-0204.

tourist satisfaction or loyalty, this study positions Muslim tourists' trust as the primary outcome of halal labeling implementation, thereby extending the understanding of halal labeling as not only a certification mechanism but also a strategic instrument for building tourist confidence.

Based on these conditions, this study addresses the following research question: does halal labeling significantly influence Muslim tourists' trust in the Lake Toba destination? Accordingly, the proposed hypothesis is that halal labeling has a positive and significant effect on Muslim tourists' trust. Conceptually, this study positions halal labeling as the independent variable influencing Muslim tourists' trust as the dependent variable. The findings are expected to enrich the theoretical development of halal tourism literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of halal labeling in strengthening Muslim tourists' trust in multicultural tourism destinations, while also offering practical recommendations for policymakers and tourism stakeholders in developing more Muslim-friendly tourism services. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of halal labeling on Muslim tourists' trust in the Lake Toba destination.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the effect of halal labeling on Muslim tourists' trust in the Lake Toba tourism destination.[9] The explanatory approach was selected because the study aimed to test the hypothesized relationship between halal labeling as the independent variable (X) and Muslim tourists' trust as the dependent variable (Y). The proposed hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression analysis.

The study was conducted at several major tourism destinations in the Lake Toba area. The research population consisted of Muslim tourists visiting the Lake Toba destination during the research period. Respondents were selected using an accidental sampling technique, in which every Muslim tourist encountered at the research locations who met the research criteria had the opportunity to participate in the survey.[10] A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, of which 75 questionnaires were returned and 75 questionnaires were considered valid for analysis, resulting in a response rate of 50%. The final sample of 75 valid responses exceeds the minimum of 58 respondents (50 + 8k, where k = 1 predictor) recommended for testing an overall regression model.[11]

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).[12] The research instrument consisted of two constructs, namely halal labeling as the independent variable and Muslim tourists' trust as the dependent variable. The research instrument was developed based on indicators adapted from previous studies, as presented in Table 1.[13] Following the instrument validation process, only the indicators that met the validity criteria were retained for further statistical analysis. Consequently, the Halal Labeling

[9]John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018).

[10]Ilker Etikan, Sulaiman Abubakar Musa, and Rukayya Sunusi Alkassim, 'Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling', *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11.

[11]Samuel B. Green, 'How Many Subjects Does It Take to Do a Regression Analysis?', *Multivariate Behavioral Research* 26, no. 3 (1991): 499–510, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327906mbr2603_7.

[12]Rensis Likert, 'A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes', *Archives of Psychology* 22, no. 140 (1932): 1–55.

[13]Mohamed Battour and Mohd Nazari Ismail, 'Halal Tourism: Concepts, Practises, Challenges and Future'; Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, and Kim, 'Exploring Halal-Friendly Destination Attributes in South Korea: Perceptions and Behaviors of Muslim Travelers toward a Non-Muslim Destination'.

construct was represented by three valid indicators (Q15, Q17, and Q29), while the Muslim Tourists' Trust construct was represented by three valid indicators (Q24, Q27, and Q28).

Table 1 summarizes the triangulation of interview, observation, and documentation data across the four analytical foci of this study.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Research Variables.

Variable	Item Code	Indicators	Measurement Scale	Source
Halal Labeling (X)	Q15, Q17, and Q29	Clarity of halal certification information; compliance of food serving process with halal standards; ease of finding halal food	7-point Likert scale	Adapted from Battour and Ismail (2016); Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, and Kim (2019)
Muslim Tourists' Trust (Y)	Q24, Q27, and Q28	Trust in halal services; trust in the integrity of tourism business operators; trust in official halal certification	7-point Likert scale	Adapted from Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, and Kim (2019)

Prior to the main survey, a pilot study involving 20 respondents outside the research sample was conducted to evaluate the research instrument. Instrument validity was assessed using the Corrected Item–Total Correlation method.[14] All questionnaire items with correlation coefficients exceeding the critical r-value were considered valid and retained for further analysis. Instrument reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70.[15] The reliability test results showed that the halal labeling variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.732, while Muslim tourists' trust obtained a value of 0.842, indicating that both constructs were reliable.

Descriptive statistics were employed to describe respondents' perceptions regarding halal labeling implementation in the Lake Toba tourism destination. Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of halal labeling on Muslim tourists' trust. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the contribution of halal labeling in explaining variations in Muslim tourists' trust. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics.[16]

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Reliability Test

The results of the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha, conducted in the pilot test (n = 20), indicate that the halal labeling variable obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.732, which falls into the reliable category. The Muslim tourists' trust variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.842, which is categorized as highly reliable. Both values exceed

[14]Joseph F. Hair Jr., William C. Black, Barry J. Babin, and Rolph E. Anderson, *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 7th ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2014).

[15]Lee J. Cronbach, 'Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests', *Psychometrika* 16, no. 3 (1951): 297–334, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555; Mohsen Tavakol and Reg Dennick, 'Making Sense of Cronbach's Alpha', *International Journal of Medical Education* 2 (2011): 53–55, https://doi.org/10.5116/ijme.4dfb.8dfd.

[16]Andy Field, *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*, 5th ed. (London: SAGE, 2018).

the minimum threshold of 0.70, which indicates acceptable internal consistency for further statistical analysis.[17]

Table 2. Reliability Test Results of Research Instruments.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Criteria	Description
Halal Labeling (X)	0.732	> 0.70	Reliable
Muslim Tourists' Trust (Y)	0.842	> 0.70	Highly Reliable

These results show that the instruments used to measure halal labeling and Muslim tourists' trust have adequate stability and consistency and are therefore suitable for hypothesis testing using regression analysis.

2. Muslim Tourists' Perceptions of Halal Labeling in the Lake Toba Area

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis indicate that Muslim tourists' perceptions of halal labeling implementation in the Lake Toba tourism area are generally categorized as very low to low. The lowest mean value was found in the availability of halal tourism signage (1.55), followed by the visibility of halal logos (2.13), the clarity of halal certification information (2.14), and the ease of finding halal food (2.22). The highest mean value was found in the availability and accessibility of prayer facilities (3.01), although this value also remains in the low category. The complete results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Priority Indicators of Halal Labeling Based on Muslim Tourists' Perceptions in the Lake Toba Tourism Area.

No	Halal Labeling Indicator	Mean	Category	Destination Development Implications
1	Availability of halal tourism signage	1.55	Very Low	Development of digital halal tourism maps and destination signage
2	Visibility of halal logos	2.13	Very Low	Standardization of halal label visualization in culinary centers and tourism services
3	Clarity of halal certification information	2.14	Very Low	Integration of BPJPH/MUI halal certification databases into tourism destination systems
4	Ease of finding halal food	2.22	Low	Development of halal culinary zones in priority tourism areas
5	Cross-contamination management practices	2.41	Low	Implementation of halal kitchen Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) among culinary businesses
6	Availability of halal information through media/internet	2.44	Low	Optimization of halal tourism promotion through digital tourism marketing
7	Compliance of food serving processes with halal standards	2.61	Low	Facilitation of halal certification programs for destination-based MSME culinary businesses

[17]Joseph F. Hair Jr., William C. Black, Barry J. Babin, and Rolph E. Anderson, *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 7th ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2014).

8	Visibility of halal logos during visits	2.65	Low	Increased installation of halal signage at strategic tourism locations
9	Verifiability of halal certification sources	2.71	Low	Development of QR-code–based digital halal verification systems
10	Availability of halal status information prior to visits	2.86	Low	Strengthening pre-visit halal information through official destination websites
11	Ability to ask halal status directly from service providers	3.00	Low	Training on halal service literacy for tourism business actors
12	Availability and accessibility of prayer facilities (mosques/prayer rooms)	3.01	Low	Maintenance of worship facilities as the foundation of Muslim-friendly destination development

Note: Categories follow an equal-interval classification of the 1–7 scale (interval width = 1.2): 1.00–2.20 = Very Low; 2.21–3.40 = Low; 3.41–4.60 = Moderate; 4.61–5.80 = High; 5.81–7.00 = Very High.

3. Effect of Halal Labeling on Muslim Tourists' Trust

The regression analysis results indicate a positive relationship between halal labeling as the independent variable and Muslim tourists' trust as the dependent variable in the Lake Toba tourism area. The scatter plot and regression line in Figure 1 move upward from left to right, indicating a positive and linear relationship between the two variables. Improvements in perceived halal labeling are therefore followed by increases in Muslim tourists' trust toward the available tourism services.

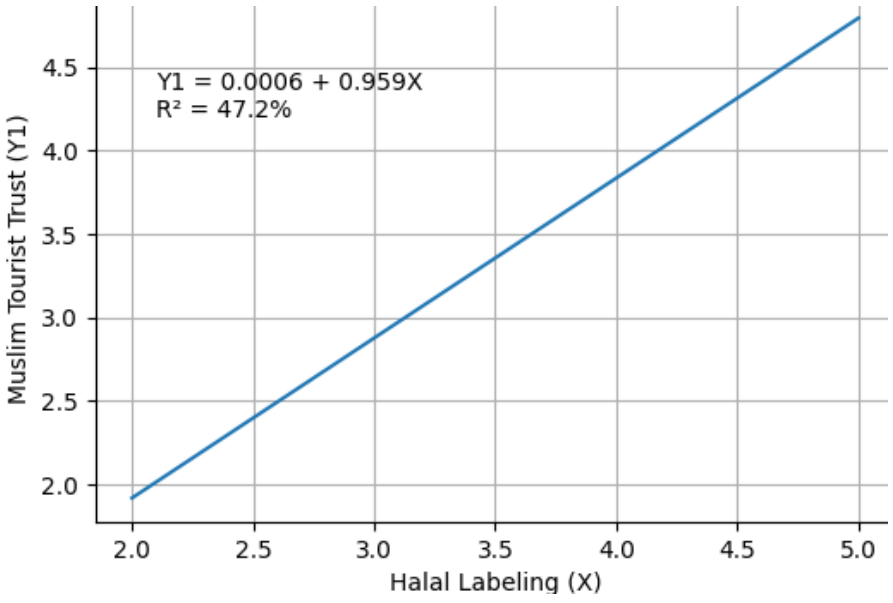


Figure 1. Regression Relationship between Halal Labeling and Muslim Tourists' Trust in the Lake Toba Area.

The regression coefficient is 0.959, which means that every one-unit increase in tourists' perceptions of halal labeling is associated with an increase of 0.959 units in Muslim tourists' trust on the seven-point scale. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 47.2%, indicating that halal labeling explains 47.2% of the variation in Muslim tourists' trust, while the remaining 52.8% is explained by factors outside the research model.

Discussion

1. Perceived Halal Labeling Conditions in the Lake Toba Area

The generally very low to low perceptions of halal labeling suggest that the development of halal tourism infrastructure in the Lake Toba area still faces challenges, particularly in providing integrated halal information systems and transparent certification visibility for tourism-related business actors. The lowest mean value for halal tourism signage indicates that Muslim tourists still experience difficulties in identifying the locations of halal restaurants, souvenir centers, and prayer facilities during their visits. Previous studies show that halal-friendly attributes shape Muslim travelers' perceptions, behaviors, and intentions to visit destinations in non-Muslim contexts, so limited halal navigation may reduce tourists' comfort and confidence during their travel experience.[18]

The very low to low scores for halal logo visibility and certification clarity indicate that halal identification systems among tourism service providers are not yet optimally implemented. Hakim, Rahmah, and Farid likewise note that the absence of visible halal certification and of official online listings of halal restaurants and accommodation restricts tourists' ability to make informed choices at Lake Toba.[19] The low accessibility of halal food also reflects the uneven distribution of halal culinary facilities across tourism destinations. Battour and Ismail explain that the availability of halal food is one of the most fundamental attributes for Muslim tourists, so without sufficient halal culinary infrastructure, destinations may be perceived as less supportive of their religious needs.[20] The low score for digital access to halal information shows that online halal tourism promotion has not yet been optimally utilized, and Hakim, Rahmah, and Farid recommend an easily accessible online platform listing halal restaurants, accommodation, and worship facilities.[21]

Despite these limitations, prayer facilities show the highest mean value among the indicators, which suggests that religious infrastructure already provides a foundation for Muslim-friendly tourism services in the Lake Toba area. Henderson identifies the availability of worship facilities as one of the key attributes for Muslim tourists in non-Muslim-majority destinations.[22]

2. Halal Labeling as a Trust-Building Signal

The positive effect of halal labeling on Muslim tourists' trust is consistent with Muslim consumer behavior theory, which holds that halal assurance is one of the primary determinants of travel decision-making, particularly in destinations where Muslim-friendly services are still developing. Studies of halal-friendly destination attributes show that halal-certified food and transparent tourism services influence Muslim tourists' destination preferences, satisfaction, trust, and loyalty.[23] Halal certification also provides formal assurance regarding product compliance with Islamic principles, thereby strengthening consumer trust toward tourism-related products and services.[24]

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[18]Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, and Kim, 'Exploring Halal-Friendly Destination Attributes in South Korea'; Aji and Muslichah, 'The Determinants of Muslim Travellers' Intention to Visit Non-Islamic Countries'.

[19]Hakim, Rahmah, and Farid, 'The Commodification of Islamic Symbols for the Development of Halal Tourism'.

[20]Battour and Ismail, 'Halal Tourism: Concepts, Practises, Challenges and Future'.

[21]Hakim, Rahmah, and Farid, 'The Commodification of Islamic Symbols for the Development of Halal Tourism'.

[22]Joan C. Henderson, 'Sharia-Compliant Hotels', *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 10, no. 3 (2010): 246–54.

[23]Al-Ansi and Han, 'Role of Halal-Friendly Destination Performances, Value, Satisfaction, and Trust in Generating Destination Image and Loyalty'; Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, and Kim, 'Exploring Halal-Friendly Destination Attributes in South Korea'.

[24]Jeaheng, Al-Ansi, and Han, 'Impacts of Halal-Friendly Services, Facilities, and Food and Beverages on Muslim Travelers' Perceptions of Service Quality Attributes, Perceived Price, Satisfaction, Trust, and

The regression coefficient of 0.959 shows that trust rises almost proportionally with perceived halal labeling. Conceptually, this result confirms that halal labeling does not merely function as an administrative certification but also serves as a psychological assurance mechanism that strengthens Muslim tourists' confidence when consuming tourism services.

The R^2 of 47.2% indicates that nearly half of the variation in Muslim tourists' trust can be explained by halal labeling. Because tourist trust is a complex psychological construct influenced by personal, social, cultural, and environmental factors, this is a substantial explanatory effect for a model with a single independent variable. It corresponds to an effect size ($f^2 = R^2/(1 - R^2)$) of approximately 0.89, which exceeds Cohen's benchmark of 0.35 for a large effect.[25]

The relatively high contribution of halal labeling can also be explained by the socio-cultural characteristics of Lake Toba, where the majority of the local population is non-Muslim. In multicultural tourism destinations, Muslim tourists generally experience greater uncertainty regarding the halal status of local food and tourism services. Under such circumstances, halal labeling functions as a safety signal that reduces perceived risk and psychological uncertainty, strengthening tourists' confidence even before they directly experience the service. This is supported by signaling theory, which explains that consumers rely on credible external signals when information asymmetry exists between service providers and consumers.[26] Halal certification and labeling therefore act as trustworthy signals that reduce uncertainty, strengthen perceptions of product credibility, and increase trust toward tourism destinations. Accordingly, halal labeling should be viewed not only as an administrative requirement but also as a strategic communication instrument in multicultural tourism destinations.

3. Other Determinants of Muslim Tourists' Trust

The remaining 52.8% of the variation in Muslim tourists' trust is explained by factors beyond the research model. These factors may include previous travel experience, level of religiosity, halal consumption preferences, perceived risk toward non-halal products, tourism service quality, accessibility of worship facilities, availability of halal restaurants, destination reputation, and digital halal tourism information systems. Previous studies indicate that the fulfillment of halal destination attributes contributes to strengthening Muslim tourists' trust and loyalty.[27] These findings imply that while halal labeling is a dominant determinant of tourist trust, it should be complemented by improvements in other destination attributes to maximize the development of Muslim-friendly tourism.

4. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study provide several managerial implications. First, halal certification among tourism-related MSMEs in the Lake Toba area should be accelerated through simplified certification procedures and continuous technical assistance by Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal (BPJPH). Second, the North Sumatra Provincial

Loyalty'; Hakim, Rahmah, and Farid, 'The Commodification of Islamic Symbols for the Development of Halal Tourism'.

[25]Jacob Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988).

[26]Michael Spence, 'Job Market Signaling', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 87, no. 3 (1973): 355–74, https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010; Brian L. Connelly, S. Trevis Certo, R. Duane Ireland, and Christopher R. Reutzel, 'Signaling Theory: A Review and Assessment', *Journal of Management* 37, no. 1 (2011): 39–67, https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310388419.

[27]Primadona, Hartoyo, Yuliati, and Arsyianti, 'Perceived Value, Satisfaction, Trust, and Tourist Loyalty in Halal Tourism'.

Tourism Office should strengthen the branding of Lake Toba as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination by integrating halal information into official tourism websites, developing digital halal tourism maps, and increasing the visibility of halal-certified tourism services. Third, tourism business operators should improve the transparency of halal certification, display halal labels more prominently, and maintain halal service standards without diminishing the authenticity of Batak local culture. These strategies are expected to strengthen Muslim tourists' trust while improving the competitiveness of Lake Toba as one of Indonesia's super-priority tourism destinations.[28]

5. Comparison with Previous Research

These findings are supported by previous research, which emphasizes that the development of halal destinations should not only focus on providing halal-certified products and services but also on strengthening consumer behavior, perception, trust, and destination loyalty through the fulfillment of halal destination attributes.[29] Therefore, halal labeling should be positioned as an integral component of destination management rather than merely a certification requirement. Previous research found that halal tourism explained 81% of tourists' intention to visit in Medan, whereas the present study shows that halal labeling alone explains 47.2% of Muslim tourists' trust in the multicultural context of Lake Toba. This indicates that halal labeling itself already provides substantial psychological assurance, even before other halal tourism attributes are considered.[30]

Overall, the findings confirm that halal labeling represents a strategic factor in strengthening Muslim tourists' trust in multicultural tourism destinations such as Lake Toba. Beyond functioning as a certification mechanism, halal labeling serves as a credible signal that reduces uncertainty and builds psychological confidence among Muslim tourists.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of halal labeling on Muslim tourists' trust in the Lake Toba tourism destination through a quantitative explanatory survey of 75 valid respondents. The results show that halal labeling has a positive and significant effect on Muslim tourists' trust, with a regression coefficient of 0.959. Halal labeling explains 47.2% of the variation in trust, while the remaining 52.8% is influenced by factors outside the model. At the same time, Muslim tourists' perceptions of halal labeling implementation in the destination remain very low to low, particularly regarding halal tourism signage, the visibility of halal logos, and the clarity of halal certification information.

These findings show that halal labeling functions not only as a certification mechanism but also as a credible signal that reduces uncertainty and strengthens Muslim tourists' confidence in a multicultural, predominantly non-Muslim destination. Theoretically, this study extends the halal tourism literature by positioning Muslim tourists' trust as the primary outcome of halal labeling in a super-priority destination with distinctive socio-cultural characteristics. Practically, strengthening halal labeling through accelerated halal certification of tourism-related MSMEs, more visible halal labels and signage, and

[28]Hakim, Rahmah, and Farid, 'The Commodification of Islamic Symbols for the Development of Halal Tourism'; Manurung and Manurung, 'Tourism Communication Strategy in Developing Halal Tourism in the Lake Toba Tourism Area of North Sumatra'.

[29]Al-Ansi and Han, 'Role of Halal-Friendly Destination Performances, Value, Satisfaction, and Trust in Generating Destination Image and Loyalty'; Primadona, Hartoyo, Yuliati, and Arsyianti, 'Perceived Value, Satisfaction, Trust, and Tourist Loyalty in Halal Tourism'.

[30]Dewi Andriany and Mutia Arda, 'Effect of Halal Tourism on Interest for Visit of Tourists in Medan City', *Proceeding International Seminar on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.3059/insis.v1i1.4182.

integrated digital halal information is essential to support the development of Muslim-friendly tourism in the Lake Toba area.

These conclusions should be read in light of several limitations. The study was conducted in a single destination with a relatively small sample of 75 respondents selected through accidental sampling, used a cross-sectional design, and tested a model with a single independent variable. The findings therefore cannot be generalized to other destinations and should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of causality. Future studies are recommended to use larger and more representative samples across multiple destinations, and to examine other factors, such as religiosity, destination image, service quality, perceived risk, and halal tourism information systems, as potential mediating or moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Muslim tourists' trust.

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