

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Local Cultural Transformations in the Development of Halal Tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia

Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha ^{1*}, Ferida Rahmawati ², Rizky Andrian ³

Abstract: The phenomenon of local cultural transformation in halal tourism is a strategic issue worthy of research because it involves tension between the preservation of tradition and the standardization of global halal services. This study aims to explore how local cultural values in Indonesia and Malaysia are integrated with Sharia principles to create an authentic and sustainable tourism experience. The research gap lies in the lack of comparative studies examining the interaction between local culture and halal tourism. In contrast, previous research has tended to focus on certification aspects or tourist behavior. This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review design, collecting data from scientific journals, research reports, and policy documents. These documents are then analyzed using content analysis techniques, which involve reduction, categorization, and thematic synthesis. The analysis results show that Indonesia emphasizes community participation and local cultural richness, while Malaysia excels in regulation, standardization, and global promotion through the “Muslim-Friendly Tourism” branding. These findings contribute theoretically to the role of selective acculturation and cultural hybridization in halal tourism, while offering a culture-based development model compatible with the demands of the Muslim tourist market.

Keywords: cultural transformation, halal tourism, Indonesia, Malaysia, acculturation.

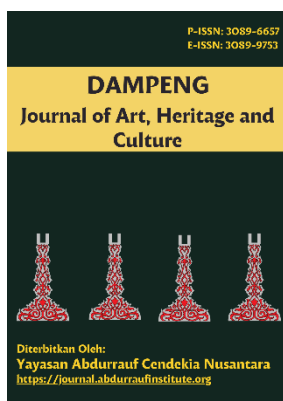
Abstrak: Fenomena transformasi budaya lokal dalam pariwisata halal menjadi isu strategis yang layak diteliti karena mengandung ketegangan antara pelestarian tradisi dengan standarisasi layanan halal global. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana nilai-nilai budaya lokal di Indonesia dan Malaysia diintegrasikan dengan prinsip syariah guna menciptakan pengalaman wisata yang autentik dan berkelanjutan. Gap penelitian ini terletak pada kurangnya studi komparatif yang mengkaji interaksi antara budaya lokal dan pariwisata halal, sementara riset sebelumnya cenderung berfokus pada aspek sertifikasi atau perilaku wisatawan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi pustaka, mengumpulkan data dari jurnal ilmiah, laporan riset, serta dokumen kebijakan, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis isi melalui reduksi, kategorisasi, dan sintesis tematik. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Indonesia menonjolkan partisipasi komunitas dan kekayaan budaya lokal, sedangkan Malaysia lebih unggul dalam regulasi, standarisasi, dan promosi global melalui branding “Muslim-Friendly Tourism.” Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoritis terkait peran akulturasi selektif dan cultural hybridization dalam pariwisata halal, sekaligus menawarkan model pengembangan berbasis budaya yang kompatibel dengan tuntutan pasar wisatawan muslim.

Kata kunci: transformasi budaya, pariwisata halal, Indonesia, Malaysia, akulturasi.

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Introduction

Halal tourism is a global phenomenon experiencing significant growth as Muslim communities become more aware of the need for tourism services that comply with Sharia principles. In the Southeast Asian context, Indonesia and Malaysia have emerged as two countries with significant potential to become leading global halal tourism destinations. This is due to their predominantly Muslim populations, rich local cultures, and government policies that support Muslim-friendly tourism (Fauzi & Battour, 2024). Halal tourism extends beyond the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, or prohibitions on activities prohibited by Sharia, but also involves integrating local culture with Islamic values to create an authentic and meaningful tourism experience (Adinugraha et al., 2025). This phenomenon of local cultural transformation is a crucial issue, especially when tourism practices are often perceived as a modernization process that can erode traditional values and cultural heritage.

The development of halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia exhibits interesting dynamics. Indonesia, with its diverse local cultures, from coastal traditions to agrarian traditions, presents unique challenges in adapting Islamic values into tourism practices that meet the expectations of global Muslim travelers. Meanwhile, Malaysia, with its strategic approach to promoting its “Muslim-Friendly Tourism” brand, demonstrates how integrating government policies with the strengths of Malay-Islamic culture can create a more established halal tourism ecosystem (Alam et al., 2024). This phenomenon creates an opportunity for in-depth research into how local cultures transform and negotiate with global norms of halal tourism, as well as how both local communities and tourists perceive and engage with these practices.

This topic is crucial to research because halal tourism is no longer a niche market segment but a potential global industry trend. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2024 report, the halal tourism sector is expected to grow rapidly as the number of Muslim tourists increases, reaching over 230 million by 2028. This growth requires a profound understanding of how Islamic values can be effectively implemented without compromising local cultural identities and values. There are demands for universal standardization of halal services, while the uniqueness of regional cultures is a major tourist attraction in both countries. This tension between standardization and cultural uniqueness raises academic questions about the extent to which local cultures can adapt and transform without losing the essence of their local wisdom (Ghozani et al., 2025).

The emerging problem and research gap is the lack of studies examining local cultural transformation in the context of halal tourism, particularly a comparative analysis between Indonesia and Malaysia. Existing research generally focuses solely on marketing, halal certification, or Muslim tourist behavior (Azali et al., 2023), but rarely addresses the cultural dimension as a factor shaping the halal tourism experience. Yet, local culture is a fundamental element that differentiates one halal tourism destination from another. In other words, there is a lack of research on the interaction between local culture, religious practices, and the tourism industry within the broader context of socio-economic transformation (Sanina et al., 2023).

The theoretical framework used in this study stems from the perspectives of cultural anthropology and social transformation theory, combined with the concept of halal tourism. Sociocultural construction theory is relevant for understanding how the meaning of “halal” is constructed and negotiated within a local cultural context (Berger & Luckmann, 2017). Furthermore, the Cultural Hybridization approach offers an analytical framework for examining how local culture and Islamic values intersect to shape distinct halal tourism practices in each region (Tuncer, 2023). By adopting this perspective, this study can reveal how traditional values, local rituals, and cultural symbols are reinterpreted to support the development of halal tourism.

Previous research has shown that halal tourism development is often associated with the provision of prayer facilities, halal food certification, and the promotion of Muslim-friendly destinations (Muslim & Harun, 2022). In Malaysia, a study by Adinugraha et al. (2023) emphasized the significance of government support in establishing a comprehensive halal tourism ecosystem, encompassing branding and infrastructure policies. In Indonesia, research by Sholehuddin et al. (2021) highlighted that, despite Indonesia's extraordinary cultural potential and natural beauty, the lack of uniformity in halal service standards poses a significant challenge to the country's development. However, neither study has yet explored the in-depth aspects of local cultural transformation, such as how traditional rituals are integrated with Islamic values to support the halal tourism experience. Furthermore, several recent studies have begun to highlight the importance of cultural narratives in halal destination marketing. For example, research by Pham Hong et al. (2021) suggests that the strength of local culture can differentiate halal destinations from those in other countries, provided the culture is grounded in Sharia values. However, such studies are still limited to superficial analysis, such as branding strategies, without delving deeper into the social dynamics and cultural transformations at the local community level. Therefore, comparative research between Indonesia and Malaysia is relevant, as both countries have distinct cultural backgrounds but share a common foundation in Islamic values and a shared goal of advancing halal tourism globally.

The urgency of this research also lies in its contribution to broadening academic discourse on the relationship between Islam, culture, and tourism. Tourism is often viewed as a modern phenomenon that tends to erode traditional values and the spirituality of local communities. However, the concept of halal tourism offers an alternative: tourism can be a means of preserving religious and cultural values while simultaneously driving economic growth. In this context, local cultural transformation does not mean the loss of tradition, but rather a process of creative adaptation that combines local values with the demands of global halal tourism (Rachmattie et al., 2023). This research aims to fill the gap in understanding this process through an ethnographic approach and in-depth qualitative analysis.

This research is also crucial for providing practical recommendations for policymakers, industry players, and local communities in developing sustainable halal tourism. Malaysia's success in establishing itself as a global halal tourism destination can provide valuable lessons for Indonesia; however, Indonesia's highly diverse cultural context necessitates a distinct strategy. Local cultural transformation must be carried out while maintaining a balance between preserving traditions and innovating halal services. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to contribute to the formulation of a model for halal tourism development that is inclusive, culture-based, and compliant with Sharia principles (Simahatie et al., 2022).

The study of local cultural transformation in the development of halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia is a strategic issue that has not been thoroughly explored. By employing an Islamic studies approach in conjunction with cultural studies, this research aims to examine how Islamic values intersect with local traditions to shape halal tourism practices. This research will not only highlight the potential and challenges in halal tourism development but also offer a new perspective on how Islam can serve as a driving force for the revitalization of local culture in the tourism industry (Gato et al., 2022). This research aims to contribute to the study of halal tourism from a cultural perspective by combining theoretical analysis with empirical findings from previous studies. It is hoped that this study will foster broader discussions on how Islamic values can collaborate with local wisdom to create halal tourism destinations that are not only Muslim-friendly but also represent the unique cultural identity of their communities.

This research lies in its comparative analysis of local cultural transformation in the development of halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia, an aspect that has rarely been touched upon in previous studies. Rather than focusing solely on halal certification or tourist behaviour, this study emphasizes how selective acculturation and cultural hybridization play a role in integrating local wisdom with sharia principles. This new contribution not only enriches the academic discourse but also offers a model for developing authentic, sustainable, and culturally-based halal tourism that is in line with the needs of the global Muslim tourist market.

Method

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a library research design to explore the phenomenon of local cultural transformation in the development of halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia. This research emphasizes an in-depth exploration of concepts, theories, and empirical findings published in scholarly sources, including books, reputable journal articles, conference proceedings, research reports, and relevant government policy documents (Thomas, 2021). This approach was chosen because the issues studied are conceptual and require a critical analysis of existing literature to build a robust theoretical framework and present a synthesis of current knowledge on halal tourism and cultural transformation.

Data collection was conducted by searching various literature sources published between 2010 and 2024 through scientific databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar, using the keywords “halal tourism,” “cultural transformation,” “Indonesia,” and “Malaysia.” Data sources included primary literature, such as peer-reviewed research articles, and secondary literature, including reports from research institutions and official government publications. The types of data analyzed included conceptual data, descriptive narratives, and empirical study results relevant to the research topic.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques through a process of reduction, classification, and interpretation of key findings obtained from the literature (MacLure, 2024). Data were analyzed by identifying key patterns, themes, and concepts related to local cultural transformation in halal tourism, then comparing them between the Indonesian and Malaysian contexts. This technique enabled researchers to construct a comprehensive understanding and identify under-reported research gaps. The choice of qualitative literature review was influenced by the need to integrate cultural, religious, and policy perspectives in understanding the dynamics of halal tourism, as well as to generate conceptual recommendations that can be further tested in fieldwork.

Results and Discussion

Local Cultural Transformation in Halal Tourism Practices in Indonesia and Malaysia

The integration of local values into halal tourism occurs through cultural adaptation within the destination communities. Communities in both countries incorporate local cultural elements, such as traditional cuisine, welcoming rituals, and distinctive architectural styles, which are then adapted to Sharia principles. For example, in Lombok (Indonesia), Sasak cuisine such as Ayam Taliwang is served with halal certification and non alcoholic processing, and there are also prayer rooms and ablution rooms. This form of adaptation in Malaysia, for example, replaces brightly colored traditional clothing (baju kurung/kebaya) with more conservative attire, such as the jilbab or abaya, as well as the use of Arabic greetings in local cultural events.

Malaysia demonstrates stronger regulatory support. Institutionally, halal standards have been enforced in restaurants and hotels since 2010, thereby maintaining a consistent “Muslim-friendly” image (Jia & Chaozhi, 2020). Regulations in Indonesia are often more of a hereditary policy without a specific legal basis, resulting in varying implementations across regions (Khan & Callanan, 2017). Other findings suggest that local values are not eliminated, but rather curated and refined. Traditional rituals in Sri Kuala Lumpur or Sabah continue to be practiced. Still, they are adapted to ensure they do not violate Islamic principles, such as avoiding pagan symbols and replacing them with Islamic prayers. The value of cooperation, for example, remains intact: local festivals remain lively, with halal bazaars, public ablution rituals, and the elimination of gambling and alcohol consumption.

These findings indicate that local cultural transformation in halal tourism is not merely cosmetic modification, but rather a process of socio-cultural negotiation. Local values are maintained through a selective acculturation strategy: inclusive elements are retained, while elements that conflict with Sharia principles are eliminated. Communities demonstrate an adaptive capacity to maintain cultural identity while adhering to religious norms and enhancing the attractiveness of halal destinations.

The role of the state is crucial in implementing Halal regulations in Malaysia (Mokti et al., 2022). Since 2010, the government has established a consistent ecosystem, including certified hotels, restaurants, and human resource training, to ensure a consistent and reliable Islamic-compliant experience for tourists. In contrast, in Indonesia, support is more top-down, but regulatory weaknesses create varying commitments between destinations, allowing for significant differences in local cultural integration.

Integration of local values in macroeconomic terms. This combination of Sharia principles enhances the destination’s image, attracting both domestic and international Muslim tourists (Adinugraha & Sartika, 2022). Malaysia even led the Global Muslim Travel Index until 2022, while Indonesia remains in second place but is growing rapidly due to the strong potential of its local culture and large Muslim population.

This research can be explained through the theory of acculturation, which states that communities can integrate cultures by maintaining local identity while adopting new norms (Dey et al., 2020). In the context of halal tourism, elements of local values (culinary, clothing, rituals) are selected and adapted to comply with Sharia law while maintaining cultural characteristics. Theory of De Jong (2021) explains that regulatory, normative, and cognitive pressures shape organizational practices. Malaysia has successfully created intense regulatory pressures (national halal standardization). In Indonesia, normative pressures (community and tourism stakeholders’ expectations) are more dominant, but without binding formal regulations, practices vary between institutions/destinations. Destination branding theory is also relevant (Rather et al., 2020). By combining local and Sharia-compliant values, halal destinations build an authentic and unique image. Malaysia has employed culinary diplomacy and cultural festivals in its “Malaysia Kitchen Program” campaign since 2006, fostering the perception of an Islamic yet culturally rich destination.

A literature review shows similar results. Zulkifli & Rajandran (2024) found, through bibliometric analysis, that themes of local identity, social symbols, and Islamic branding frequently appear in research on halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia. Yustianingsih et al.’s (2024) study confirms that formal national regulations in Indonesia remain weak compared to those in Malaysia, which has experienced faster growth in the halal industry. Santoso & Rachman (2023) emphasize three essential aspects for halal implementation in Indonesia: terminology, facilities, and actual conditions, which are reflected in cultural adaptations in Lombok and Dufan. Aziza et al. (2020) also emphasize the influence of Islamic identity and the politicization of Islam in explaining the differences in success between the

two countries. Adaptations of local clothing and greetings have been displaced by the influence of Arabization, as said by Pabbajah et al. (2022).

Table 1. Comparison of Local Cultural Transformation in Indonesia and Malaysia

Aspect	Indonesia	Malaysia
Regulation and Institutional Support	Based on local government and tour operator policies, as well as weak federal regulation.	Since 2010, national regulations have required halal certification in hotels/restaurants.
Local Cultural Adaptation	Local cuisine, rituals, and architecture are adapted to accommodate halal certification, including the provision of prayer rooms and ablution rooms in public places.	The hijab/abaya replaces traditional clothing, and Arabic greetings are commonly used.
The Role of Local Communities	Actively maintaining local wisdom and identity within a halal framework; community collaboration in festivals and services.	Society accepts mild Arabization in cultural expressions to comply with religious norms.
Destination Image and Branding	Image is developing; Indonesia ranks second (GMTI), but quality standards vary.	Consistently being a GMTI champion, promoting the image of a “halal hub” with a global campaign.
Main Similarities	Both maintain selective local cultural values, using halal certification and prayer facilities to attract the Muslim market.	Both prioritize the acculturation approach, maintaining local cultural identity through Sharia channels.

Source: literature result (2025)

The findings of this study suggest that the transformation of local culture into halal tourism practices in Indonesia and Malaysia occurs within a framework of selective acculturation, which involves maintaining cultural values while integrating them with Sharia principles. The main difference lies in institutional support: Malaysia is stronger through national regulations, while Indonesia relies on local policies. Berry’s acculturation theory and institutional theory help explain the social and structural mechanisms involved. Previous research consistently supports these findings, both regarding Islamic identity, regulations, and cultural integration. These results are expected to enrich academic understanding and inform policy recommendations for the development of halal tourism that synergizes local wisdom and Islamic values.

The Role of Local Communities and Stakeholders in Promoting Halal Tourism

The involvement of local communities, government, and tourism industry players is a key factor in promoting halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia. Field findings indicate that in Indonesia, local communities play a crucial role in providing Sharia-compliant tourism services, including managing Muslim-friendly homestays, offering halal-certified culinary delights, and organizing cultural festivals rooted in local wisdom and traditions. For example, in Lombok and Aceh, local communities have actively formed tourism awareness groups that provide prayer facilities, female tour guides, and educate tourists about local Islamic values (Preko et al., 2022).

The government’s role in Malaysia appears more dominant through centralized policies that ensure halal standards for hotels, restaurants, and tourist destinations. The Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) actively engages with industry players to obtain halal certification and develop a tourism ecosystem that aligns with Islamic values (Abdul Rahim et al., 2022). Local communities are also involved in cultural promotion, such as

through village tourism homestay programs that offer halal cuisine and Sharia-compliant traditional activities, all while preserving their local identity (Hussin et al., 2022).

Collaborative strategies between communities, governments, and industry in both countries are evident in halal destination development programs. In Indonesia, for example, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy is partnering with local communities and small and medium-sized businesses to establish halal destinations in Mandalika and Padang. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, collaboration is carried out through the Malaysia Halal Tourism Strategy, which involves hotel associations, travel agencies, and local governments to maintain the quality of Muslim-friendly services (Ainin et al., 2020).

Table 2. Stakeholder Collaboration in Halal Tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia

Aspect	Indonesia	Malaysia
Strategic Approach	More dominantly <i>bottom-up</i> , pioneered by local communities and MSMEs with limited support from the government.	<i>Top-down</i> with transparent and centralized regulations from the government through JAKIM and the Ministry of Tourism.
Role of Government	Regional and central governments support this through promotions, training, and capacity-building programs; however, halal regulations are not yet uniform across all areas.	The government regulates national halal certification and establishes a Halal Hub, providing strict regulations for hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies.
The Role of Local Communities	The community manages homestays, halal culinary delights, and local culture-based festivals, serving as the direct face of halal destinations.	Communities are involved in <i>homestay</i> and cultural promotion programs, overseen by the government, to ensure consistency with halal standards.
Industry Players	Hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies are gradually adapting to halal standards, but are not always nationally certified.	Hotels and restaurants are required to have halal certification; travel agencies are encouraged to offer Muslim-friendly tour packages.
Multi-Party Collaboration	Programs of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy often facilitate collaboration between communities, MSMEs, and local governments.	Enhanced structured collaboration through the Malaysia Halal Tourism Strategy, with cross-sectoral support from the government, industry, and tourism associations.
Destination Image	Relying on cultural richness and local wisdom to create a unique halal tourism attraction.	Building a global image as a world halal tourism center through international promotion and high standardization.

Source: literature result (2025)

The table shows that halal tourism in both countries cannot thrive without synergy among stakeholders. In Indonesia, the bottom-up approach of local communities is a key strength because they interact directly with tourists. Communities serve as “guardians” of halal cultural identity, ensuring that halal tourism remains integrated with local wisdom. For example, a women’s group in Sembalun Village, Lombok, manages halal culinary delights based on traditional recipes, with support from the local government and industry players (Rahmawati Sushanti et al., 2018).

Malaysia stands out for its top-down approach, as evident in government policies. Clear standardization from JAKIM ensures the tourism industry operates under uniform guidelines. This creates a strong image of Malaysia as a leading global halal tourism destination, as

evidenced by its consistent top position in the GMTI since 2015 (CrescentRating, 2025). However, Malaysia also provides opportunities for community participation, for example, through community-based tourism that integrates halal principles.

These differing approaches demonstrate that Indonesia still faces challenges in standardizing halal services. Many halal destinations have developed sporadically and rely on community initiatives, resulting in uneven branding and service consistency (Lestari et al., 2022). However, this flexibility allows Indonesia to highlight its rich local culture as a halal tourism attraction, for example, through Islamic festivals that combine music, art, and culinary arts.

The findings of this study can be explained using Stakeholder Theory (Ozdemir et al., 2023), which emphasizes that the success of a system depends on the collaboration of key actors. In the context of halal tourism, the primary stakeholders include local communities, the government, industry players (such as hotels, restaurants, and travel agents), and tourists. Each has different interests, but the success of halal tourism depends on the integration of these interests.

Local communities act as “value creators” by providing authentic Islamic experiences. The government acts as a regulator and facilitator, providing support in the form of infrastructure, halal certification regulations, and destination promotion. Meanwhile, the tourism industry acts as an “implementer,” ensuring that all halal standards are adhered to, such as the provision of halal food, prayer facilities, and non-alcoholic policies at tourist destinations. Malaysia has demonstrated success in synergizing the three parties through an integrated regulatory approach and global promotion. Indonesia, while not yet at Malaysia’s standards, indicates that active community participation can create unique differentiation by strengthening a more contextual halal cultural identity with local wisdom (Musthofa et al., 2023).

Previous research supports these findings. Ulfy et al. (2021) asserted that Malaysia has successfully built a global halal tourism image through collaboration between the government, industry, and communities. Research by Kunjuran & Hussin (2017) found that community-based homestay programs in Malaysia can attract international Muslim tourists due to the combination of local culture and halal assurance. Research by Aulia Ramadhani et al. (2020) revealed that the development of halal destinations in Lombok was successful due to the community’s active involvement in providing halal services. A study by Mufflihin et al. (2023) noted that Indonesia’s weakness lies in its lack of halal standardization. Still, its strength lies in its rich culture, which can be effectively integrated into the halal tourism experience. Another study by Huda et al. (2022) also stated that halal tourism development requires an integrated marketing strategy involving all stakeholders to not only fulfill religious aspects but also create economic value for local communities. Qoir (2024) emphasized that Malaysia’s advantage lies in its proactive government policies, while Indonesia only began developing its halal tourism roadmap in 2019. This demonstrates the importance of cross-sector synergy to strengthen the halal cultural identity of each country.

The roles of local communities and stakeholders in promoting halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia demonstrate different collaborative dynamics. Indonesia relies on grassroots strength and cultural richness, while Malaysia relies on regulations and global promotion. Both indicate that the success of halal tourism is determined not only by the halal label but also by the ability of all parties to collaborate in creating Islamic, authentic, and Sustainable tourism experiences.

Comparison of Halal Tourism Development Strategies in Indonesia and Malaysia

The halal tourism development strategies in Indonesia and Malaysia differ, but both are oriented toward increasing the appeal to global Muslim tourists. In Indonesia, the development of halal destinations showcases the richness of local culture, which is integrated with Sharia principles. Destinations such as Lombok, Aceh, Padang, and West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) have been promoted as pioneers by providing prayer facilities, halal-certified culinary delights, and Muslim-friendly accommodations. Indonesia relies on the strength of local communities and community-based tourism, where the community plays a key role. The government serves only as a facilitator, issuing policies such as the 2019 Halal Tourism Strategy Masterplan (Muttaqin et al., 2023).

Malaysia demonstrates a more structured approach with strict regulations. Since 2010, the Malaysian government, through the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), has established halal certification as a mandatory standard for hotels, restaurants, and airlines. Malaysia also has a Malaysia Halal Tourism Master Plan that guides all stakeholders in providing standardized halal services. This is supported by global promotion with consistent branding, such as “Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Travel,” which has made Malaysia the best halal destination according to the GMTI (Hassan et al., 2018). Significant differences are also evident in promotional strategies. Indonesia emphasizes halal cultural festivals, local cuisine, and culture-based tour packages. Malaysia promotes itself through international campaigns, global tourism exhibitions, and strategic partnerships with airlines and online travel agents (OTAs). This has given Malaysia a more established reputation in international halal tourism (Suhartanto et al., 2022).

Both countries demonstrate similarities in integrating Islamic values without diminishing local cultural identities. However, Malaysia has been more successful in delivering a consistent *value proposition* between the halal concept, global promotion, and on-the-ground tourism experiences. Indonesia still faces challenges in the form of fragmented policies at the regional level, resulting in uneven halal service standards.

Table 3. Halal Tourism Development Strategy in Indonesia and Malaysia

Strategy Form	Indonesia	Malaysia
Policy Approach	<i>The master plan</i> is facilitative and varies between regions.	National regulations through JAKIM and <i>the Halal Tourism Master Plan</i> since 2010.
Destination Promotion	Cultural festivals, halal culinary, and local promotions with community support.	Global “Muslim-Friendly Tourism” campaign with international support.
Tourism Practices	Homestays, MSMEs, and local wisdom-based attractions.	Standardization of halal hotels, restaurants, airlines, and tour packages.
Community Engagement	Very high, the community is the primary driver of destination development.	Yes, but it is facilitated more by the government’s regulatory framework.
Global Image	Ranked second in GMTI, the halal image is still developing.	GMTI’s first ranking since 2015, with a strong global image.
Economic Factors	Focus on strengthening MSMEs and the local economy through community-based tourism.	Focus on developing the national-scale tourism industry and exporting halal services.
Social Factors	Strengthening local cultural identity and public awareness of Halal tourism.	Prioritizing the modernization of halal services with the integration of Malay-Islamic culture.

Source: literature result (2025)

The differences in strategic approaches to halal tourism development in Indonesia and Malaysia are evident in the policy frameworks, government roles, and cross-sectoral collaborations. Indonesia prioritizes a *bottom-up approach*, with local communities as the primary driving force. This approach reflects a participatory spirit, as seen in Lombok, which successfully achieved recognition as a leading global halal destination thanks to the support of tourism awareness groups, MSMEs, and minimal support from the local government (Taqwiem et al., 2020).

This model in Malaysia emphasizes a top-down approach, with the central government leading the halal standardization process and ensuring the involvement of all stakeholders. This model enables Malaysia to implement a consistent global promotional strategy, expand the international Muslim tourist market, and establish a reputation as a global halal hub (Nik Muhammad et al., 2009).

Economic factors are a key driver of Malaysia's success. Data from GMTI (2024) indicate that the halal tourism sector makes a significant contribution to Malaysia's tourism GDP. The government is leveraging halal tourism as part of its national economic strategy, including the export of halal services through airlines, hotels, and tour packages that emphasize Islamic services and values. In Indonesia, the financial impact of halal tourism is seen in increased income for local MSMEs and job creation in the community-based tourism sector. Still, its contribution to national GDP is not as significant as in Malaysia (Qi et al., 2024).

Social factors also influence the strategies of both countries. In Indonesia, the development of halal tourism is used as a means to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving Islamic cultural identity. Cultural festivals such as the Tabuik Festival in West Sumatra or the Pesona Khazanah Ramadan Festival in Lombok serve as unique educational and promotional tools for halal tourism. In Malaysia, halal tourism emphasizes a modernized image of Malay-Islamic culture, focusing on Muslim-friendly services, digital technology, and global promotion. The interpretation of this comparison is that Malaysia's success is heavily influenced by policy synergy and international branding. Indonesia has the advantage of local cultural diversity, but it lacks regulatory consistency and effective global promotion. Therefore, Indonesia needs to adopt some of Malaysia's strategies, such as strengthening halal standards and international campaigns, while maintaining local cultural characteristics as its primary attraction.

The findings of this study can be analyzed using the Halal Tourism Development theoretical framework (Busaini et al., 2023), which encompasses three essential elements: policy, service, and marketing. Malaysia demonstrates strong implementation of these three elements, with clear policies, standardized services, and consistent international marketing. Indonesia excels in community-based services but remains weak in national policies and global marketing.

The Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability theory emphasizes that strategic policies, unique attractions, and the overall tourist experience influence destination competitiveness. Malaysia has a competitive advantage through internationally recognized halal certification, while Indonesia emphasizes authentic local cultural differentiation. The Community-Based Tourism (CBT) approach implemented in Indonesia aligns with sustainability principles, but it requires regulatory support to compete effectively in the global market (Saldarriaga Isaza & Salas, 2024).

The results of this study are consistent with previous studies. Battour et al. (2024) stated that Malaysia succeeded in becoming a market leader in halal tourism due to its systematic regulatory approach and aggressive branding. Research by Ismail & Yaakob (2024) noted that homestay programs in Malaysia are professionally developed, involve the community, and ensure compliance with halal standards. Rukmi Dewi et al. (2024) demonstrated that active local community participation is a key factor in the success of halal destinations in

Lombok. However, national policies do not yet fully support integrated development. Sofiana et al. (2021) emphasized that Indonesia's main challenges are minimal global promotion and a lack of coordination between institutions in implementing halal certification.

Rostiani et al.'s (2024) research also emphasized that the success of a halal destination is determined not only by the availability of halal facilities but also by effective marketing strategies, innovative services, and policy synergy. Malaysia remains a top destination due to its success in all three aspects, while Indonesia ranks second with significant growth potential.

A comparison of halal tourism development strategies in Indonesia and Malaysia shows that both countries have their strengths and weaknesses. Malaysia excels through its top-down approach, clear regulations, global promotion, and significant contribution to the national economy. Indonesia relies on its rich local culture, community participation, and authentic tourism experiences; however, it still needs to strengthen its national policies and global branding. In the future, Indonesia can learn from Malaysia's model in terms of standardization and international promotion. At the same time, Malaysia can draw inspiration from Indonesia in highlighting local cultural richness in halal tourism development. Synergy between government, industry, and communities is key for both countries to maintain competitiveness in the global halal tourism market.

Implications of Cultural Transformation on the Sustainability of Halal Tourism

The transformation of local culture within halal tourism has had a positive impact on tourist attractions, preserving traditions, and creating opportunities for the sustainability of the tourism industry in Indonesia and Malaysia. In Indonesia, particularly in Lombok, Padang, and Aceh, the integration of local wisdom with Sharia principles has created unique tourism experiences for Muslim tourists. Local culinary delights, such as Ayam Taliwang (a type of chicken dish), Rendang (a kind of beef dish), Padang Satay (a type of satay), and regional cakes, have been certified as halal. In contrast, cultural festivals such as Pesona Khazanah Ramadan (the Charm of Ramadan) in Lombok are packaged with an Islamic concept through halal bazaars, religious music performances, and social activities (Rahmiati et al., 2019).

Cultural transformation in Malaysia is evident in the modern adaptations of Malay traditions, which adhere to strict halal standards. Homestay programs in tourist villages offer halal-certified Malay cuisine and complete prayer facilities. The Malaysian government, through the Malaysia Halal Tourism Master Plan, has successfully combined cultural values with Sharia principles, for example, by showcasing Malay art performances, traditional clothing, and Ramadan bazaars as key attractions for halal destinations (Hadyan Yunhas Purba et al., 2024). Cultural transformation also contributes to the preservation of traditions. People in Indonesia now recognize that local values such as cooperation, Islamic music, and traditional ceremonies can become tourist attractions if packaged according to halal principles. A concrete example is the revitalization of Gendang Beleg art in Lombok, which is presented at a halal festival to promote Islamic culture. The Ramadan Bazaar festival in Malaysia combines traditional cuisine, calligraphy, and religious music to strengthen cultural identity and attract tourists (Nisa, 2023).

Research identified challenges. Some believe that cultural adaptations that overemphasize halal principles can diminish the authenticity of traditions. Traditional rituals rooted in local beliefs are sometimes removed or modified to conform to Sharia, sparking debate about cultural authenticity (Aji et al., 2020). The opportunities for halal tourism development are increasingly open, particularly with the growing demand from global Muslim travelers for destinations that offer a combination of natural beauty, local culture, and integrated halal services.

Table 4. Opportunities and Challenges of Cultural Transformation for the Sustainability of Halal Tourism

Aspect	Opportunity	Challenge
Tourist Attractions	Cultural transformation creates unique experiences by combining local wisdom and Sharia principles, attracting global Muslim tourists.	There is a risk of losing cultural authenticity if adaptation focuses too much on halal commercialization.
Preservation of Tradition	The Halal Cultural Festival promotes the preservation of halal-certified local arts, Islamic music, and culinary delights.	Non-Islamic local traditions are potentially marginalized due to excessive adjustment to Sharia norms.
Local Economy	Increasing the income of MSMEs, promoting halal culinary practices, and community-based homestays support community welfare.	The profit gap between large industrial players and MSMEs exists if regulations and promotions are not equal.
Cultural Identity	Strengthening the Islamic identity of local communities and increasing community pride in their traditions.	Potential for cultural homogenization due to the uniform application of the halal concept without regard for local variations.
Sustainability	The halal principle aligns with the concept of sustainable tourism, as exemplified by aspects such as cleanliness, safety, and tourist comfort (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).	A lack of national policy coordination can hinder the long-term sustainability of halal destinations.

Source: literature result (2025)

The table above illustrates that cultural transformation in halal tourism is a creative adaptation process designed to strike a balance between traditional values and Sharia principles. Indonesia leverages the uniqueness of local culture to differentiate halal destinations. Lombok, for example, emphasizes its identity as the “Island of a Thousand Mosques” by showcasing Gendang Beleg art, Sasak traditions, and local cuisine certified as halal (Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024). This strategy increases tourist appeal, strengthens the image of local culture, and simultaneously promotes Islamic tourism.

Malaysia Packaging Malay-Islamic culture in a modern and global format. The government integrates halal certification with international promotion through events such as the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS). This approach enhances Malaysia’s reputation as a leading global halal destination, as evidenced by its position at the top of the GMTI (Ngah et al., 2022). Cultural transformation also strengthens social aspects in both countries. In Indonesia, halal tourism activities raise public awareness to preserve Islamic culture, enhance the values of cooperation, and foster pride in local identity. In Aceh, the implementation of Islamic law in tourism has even helped reinforce the region’s character as a unique halal destination (Adhiatma et al., 2023). Meanwhile, in Malaysia, cultural transformation focuses on modernizing halal tourism services while still emphasizing the aesthetics of Malay-Islamic culture, thus creating harmony between tradition and innovation. Challenges related to cultural authenticity require attention. When elements of local traditions are replaced with those that comply with halal standards, there is a risk of cultural homogenization, which can diminish the uniqueness of a destination. Therefore, halal tourism development strategies need to strike a balance between Sharia compliance and the preservation of inclusive local values.

The results of this study can be analyzed using the theory of cultural transformation, which posits that traditions are dynamic and can adapt to social and economic developments (Ji & Heath, 2023). In the context of halal tourism, local cultural traditions adapt to meet the needs of the Muslim tourist market without losing their fundamental identity. The theory of Sustainable Tourism Development is relevant to explaining the implications of cultural transformation on sustainability (Park et al., 2022). Halal tourism supports sustainability through three dimensions: economy, by creating business opportunities such as halal homestays, certified culinary services, and MSMEs. Social, by preserving traditions and strengthening community identity. Environmentally, the halal principles that emphasize cleanliness and comfort also support ecologically friendly tourism practices. The Halal Tourism Framework theory, as proposed by Battour et al. (2023), stresses that the success of a halal destination depends not only on halal certification but also on the ability to integrate cultural values, tourism experiences, and consistent branding. Malaysia is a clear example of the implementation of this theory through the synergy between government policies, global promotion, and community participation.

This finding aligns with Ekka's (2024) study, which stated that the success of halal tourism depends on a balance between cultural preservation and the implementation of Sharia principles. Ardiansyah & Masrokhin (2023) demonstrated that Malaysia excels in combining Malay-Islamic traditions with a standardized halal service system. Yusup et al. (2022) emphasized that the development of halal destinations in Lombok was successful thanks to the active participation of local communities that emphasize Islamic culture. Solehudin & Ahyani (2024) noted that halal tourism in Indonesia has great potential but still requires improvements in terms of regulation and global promotion. Bramwell and Lane (2011) also emphasized that sustainable tourism can only be achieved with a commitment to preserving local cultural heritage while adapting to market needs.

Local cultural transformation has significant implications for the sustainability of halal tourism. Its positive impacts include increased tourist appeal, strengthened cultural identity, and the creation of economic opportunities for the community. However, challenges related to cultural authenticity and regulatory gaps need to be addressed through inclusive policies that preserve local uniqueness. Indonesia and Malaysia both demonstrate that the success of halal tourism depends not only on the halal label but also on the ability to integrate cultural values with Sharia principles within a sustainable framework. Malaysia excels in regulation and global promotion, while Indonesia is strong in cultural richness and community participation. This combination of two approaches could serve as an ideal model for the future development of global halal tourism.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of this study, it can be concluded that the integration of local cultural values with Sharia principles has created a unique, authentic, and competitive halal tourism model in both countries. This study highlights Indonesia's emphasis on the strength of its rich local wisdom, including traditional cuisine, festivals, and distinctive art and architecture that are adapted to Islamic values. This approach strengthens the image of community-based halal destinations and encourages active involvement of local communities. Meanwhile, Malaysia emphasizes a structured halal tourism development model, incorporating national regulations through JAKIM, global branding of Muslim-friendly tourism, and integration between government policies, industry players, and international promotion.

This research's scientific contribution lies in emphasizing the dimension of cultural transformation as a strategic pillar in the development of halal tourism. This study fills a gap in the literature by demonstrating that the success of halal tourism depends not only on halal standards but also on the ability to maintain a balance between preserving local culture and

the global demands of halal tourism. The results provide new insights into the importance of selective acculturation, where cultural elements are adapted to Sharia principles without losing the local identity that is the destination's primary attraction.

This study has limitations due to its reliance on desk research rather than in-depth field data. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine direct field practices through ethnographic approaches or tourist surveys to understand the perceptions, preferences, and socio-economic impacts of cultural transformation in halal tourism. These findings can serve as a basis for developing inclusive and sustainable halal tourism policies at both regional and global levels.

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