

Local People's Perception of South Korea Halal Tourism

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Abstract

Halal tourism is a tough task for the tourism industry because there is a difference between the demands of non-Muslim and Muslim tourists. The supporting facilities that must be met are different. So that in its application, for a country with a majority of non-Muslim population, this industry must also be able to adapt to its local residents. This paper aims to explore local perceptions of halal tourism in South Korea. It is also investigating the extent to which local residents are willing to buy certain types of halal products and services. Qualitative data were collected by conducting 14 interviews with local residents in South Korea. Six main aspects were identified that illustrate local people's perceptions of halal tourism. This paper was created with the intention that the South Korean government can find the best way to raise awareness of its citizens in order to fully support the government's halal tourism policy which recently developed. This is new research in the field of halal tourism and destination marketing. It provides some original insights into the interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims. Insights must be of value to authorities, industry and academia in both the Muslim and non-Muslim world. The tough challenges faced by this halal tourist destination are mainly to equip local residents with a majority of non-Muslims for their understanding in fully supporting the government in running this industry.

Keywords: *Halal Tourism; Halal; South Korea; Local People Perception, Non Muslim Perception*

Introduction

Nowadays, tourism is increasingly being promoted by countries in the world because more and more countries are aware that this is important for increasing state income. And not only limited to that, but developing a new industry in the field of tourism, namely halal tourism. Both Muslim and non-Muslim countries are competing to make this industry their policy. One of them is a country in the East Asia region, South Korea. The South Korean government started developing the halal tourism industry recently. They build various kinds of facilities to support Muslim tourists who come to visit South Korea. Such as places

of worship / mosques / prayer rooms, halal restaurants, halal markets, sharia hotels, halal street food, halal food, halal cosmetics, and so on. In fact, South Korea is not an Islamic country, but a country where the Muslim population is only a minority there.

The South Korean government, which issued a policy on halal tourism, certainly does not want to get opposition or rejection from its citizens in applying this policy. For this reason, the author wants to know the perceptions or perspectives of South Korean residents on this halal tourism. It is hoped that in the future the government can get the best way in developing this industry so that it will achieve the desired results because it has the full support of all levels of society, even though the majority of the population is not Muslim.

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of the local South Korean community towards halal tourism as a policy developed recently by the government. Namely revealing the possible influence of attitudes and perceptions of local people on the possibility of South Korea becoming a halal tourist destination. For this reason, this study was held aimed at measuring local people's perceptions of halal tourism. An abstract literature review specifically for perceptions of halal tourism was carried out, after which the results of the field research were presented.

Research Study

Attributes to Attract Tourists

The factors that influence a visit to a destination are, atmosphere, experience, accommodation, infrastructure, perception, communication, security¹, influencing travel agencies and tour operators, encouraging investors, and developing certification standards², transportation and promotion³.

The main halal-friendly attributes that can be useful for destination marketers to formulate the image of a destination, get repeat visits, and change mouth-to-mouth behavior are residents and staff, facilities and services⁴, social environment⁵, halal food⁶, high levels of tourist interaction⁷, the value of quality, the physical attributes of Islam, the risk of

¹ M. El Fikri & D. N. Pane, "Study of Halal Medan City Tourism Destination In Tourism Marketing Perception", *1st International Halal Conference & Exhibition* (2019): 44–50.

² F. Fakir & E. Erraoui, "Moroccan Tourist's Perceptions Toward Halal Tourism", *2nd International Halal Tourism Congress/04/06 April 2019/Anatalya-Turkey* (November 2019): 1–13.

³ M. El Fikri, & D. N. Pane; F. Fakir & E. Erraoui, loc.cit.

⁴ H. Han, A. Al-Ansi, H. G. T. Olya, & W. Kim, "Exploring halal-friendly destination attributes in South Korea: Perceptions and behaviors of Muslim travelers toward a non-Muslim destination", *Tourism Management*, 71(October 2018): 151–164.

⁵ A. Rahman & S. Lenggogeni, "Persepsi Nilai Dan Persepsi Risiko Wisata Halal Sumatera Barat Dari Perspektif Industri Kuliner Dan Pengaruh Nya Terhadap Intention To Visit", *Ekonomi: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, 22(1) (2020); H. Han, A. Al-Ansi, H. G. T. Olya, & W. Kim, "Exploring halal-friendly destination attributes in South Korea: Perceptions and behaviors of Muslim travelers toward a non-Muslim destination", *Tourism Management*, 71(October 2018): 151–164.

⁶ S. Bhoola, "Halal Food Tourism : Perceptions of Relevance and Viability for South African Destinations", *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 9(3) (2020): 288–301; H. Han, A. Al-Ansi, H. G. T. Olya, & W. Kim, "Exploring halal-friendly destination attributes in South Korea: Perceptions and behaviors of Muslim travelers toward a non-Muslim destination", *Tourism Management*, 71(October 2018): 151–164; M. Iskandar, A. Wahid, K. Supian, & B. Ishak, "Tourist Perception Towards Halal Food Purchasing Intention", 3(2) (2018): 25–35.

⁷ Y. Jeaheng, A. Al-Ansi, & H. 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 and Management*, 29(7) (2020): 787–811.

perception, the value of money and the religion of Islam which significantly influence the intention to visit⁸.

Perceptions of Non-Muslim Tourists

Aspects that describe the perceptions of non-Muslim tourists towards halal tourism, namely halal tourism general practices, halal food (quality, knowledge of halal, acculturation and animal welfare)⁹, gender segregation, Islamic dresscode, Islamic ethics, and overall perception¹⁰, brand awareness, associations, items related to emotions¹¹, loyalty¹², sustainable creative tourism¹³. Non-Muslim tourists, without any particular attributes or restrictions placed, may not be interested in adventure in a particular destination. This contribution is considered significant due to the tough challenges faced by halal tourism destinations, especially to provide facilities desired by non-Muslim tourists that satisfy them without contradicting Islamic philosophy¹⁴.

Muslim Tourists' Perceptions

The aspects identified as Muslim tourists' perceptions of halal tourism are access, environment, services¹⁵, communication¹⁶, transportation, accommodation, food, places of worship¹⁷, awareness, identity, religiosity, ethnocentrism, subjective norms, brand trust and product assessment¹⁸. Within the Muslim tourists are again divided into Sunni and Shia consumers. Sunnis show greater confidence in judgment and willingness to buy halal

⁸ A. Rahman & S. Lenggogeni, "Persepsi Nilai Dan Persepsi Risiko Wisata Halal Sumatera Barat Dari Perspektif Industri Kuliner Dan Pengaruh Nya Terhadap Intention To Visit", *Ekonis: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, 22(1) (2020).

⁹ M. Battour, F. Hakimian, M. Ismail, & E. Boğan, "The perception of non-Muslim tourists towards halal tourism: Evidence from Turkey and Malaysia", *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 9(4) (2018): 823-840; R. M. Ayyub, "Exploring perceptions of non-Muslims towards Halal foods in UK", *British Food Journal*, 117(9) (2015): 2328-2343.

¹⁰ M. Battour, F. Hakimian, M. Ismail, & E. Boğan, "The perception of non-Muslim tourists towards halal tourism: Evidence from Turkey and Malaysia", *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 9(4) (2018): 823-840.

¹¹ S. Kim (Sam), H. H. Im, & B. E. M. King, "Muslim travelers in Asia: The destination preferences and brand perceptions of Malaysian tourists", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 21(1) (2015): 3-21.

¹² M. Rahman, S. Moghavvemi, T. Thirumoorthi, & M. K. Rahman, "The Impact of Tourists' Perceptions on Halal Tourism Destination: A Structural Model Analysis", *Tourism Review*, 75(3) (2020): 575-594; S. Kim (Sam), H. H. Im, & B. E. M. King, "Muslim travelers in Asia: The destination preferences and brand perceptions of Malaysian tourists", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 21(1) (2015): 3-21.

¹³ S. S. A. P, & S. V, "Sustainable Creative Tourism for Fulfilling the Gap between Tourists' Expectation and Perception towards Tourism Routes in the Upper Greater Mekong Subregion", *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 5(2) (2019): 43-53.

¹⁴ S. Sultana Assistant Professor, M. Khalilur Rahman, M. Sohel Rana Candidate, & I. Shafique Assistant Professor, "Non-Muslims' Perception of Halal Tourism: A Conceptual Paper", *Journal of Halal Studies*, 1(1) (2020): 1-12.

¹⁵ S. Supaijo, & D. Fermansyah, "The Perception of Muslim Millennial Traveler's Towards Halal Tourism", *Journal of Islamic Business ...*, 2(1) (2019).

¹⁶ S. Supaijo, & D. Fermansyah, "The Perception of Muslim Millennial Traveler's Towards Halal Tourism", *Journal of Islamic Business ...*, 2(1) (2019); K. N. Septiana, & N. A. B. Mohamad, "The Perception of Muslim Travellers of The Supporting Facilities of Halal Tourism in Kota Kuala Lumpur Malaysia", *Sumatra Journal of Disaster, Geography and Geography Education*, 2(2) (2018): 80-85; M. F. Farah, "Consumer perception of Halal products", *Journal of Islamic Marketing, ahead-of-p*(ahead-of-print) (2020).

¹⁷ K. N. Septiana, & N. A. B. Mohamad, "The Perception of Muslim Travellers of The Supporting Facilities of Halal Tourism in Kota Kuala Lumpur Malaysia", *Sumatra Journal of Disaster, Geography and Geography Education*, 2(2) (2018): 80-85

¹⁸ M. F. Farah, "Consumer perception of Halal products", *Journal of Islamic Marketing, ahead-of-p*(ahead-of-print) (2020).

products abroad compared to Shia. Meanwhile, Shia consumers show greater confidence in their judgment and willingness to buy Muslim products¹⁹.

Local Community Perceptions

The perception of local people who see their area running the halal tourism industry is divided into two perceptions, namely negative and positive. One example of negative public perceptions occurred in Sapanca, Turkey. Although it was initially said that the Sapanca people were satisfied with the presence of Arab tourists, that the interest of Arab tourists greatly increased the prices of real estate and services in the district. However, a new housing project aimed at Arab tourists is causing a reduction in green areas in the district. Apart from that, agricultural land is also negatively affected by this problem. Although the Sapanca people do not culturally feel distant from Arab tourists, they also think that the modern image of the district is negatively affected by these guests. The fact that Arab tourists cause noise and visual pollution in the district and crowds at many hangouts during the period of their intense visit irritates the locals²⁰. Positive perceptions as shown in a study conducted in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The people of West Nusa Tenggara have a good perception of the plan to implement halal tourism in this area, a positive attitude towards the plan to implement halal tourism in this area. It is known that the results of the plan to implement halal tourism are highly perceived and responded to by the people of NTB²¹.

Perceptions of Tourism Actors

Aspects that are considered to describe the perceptions of halal tourism actors are the procurement of halal certification²², business profits, organizational readiness²³. The effect of halal certification is measured on restaurant performance²⁴.

There are tourism actors who have both good and negative perceptions of the application of the concept of halal tourism. For example, millennial group business actors in the tourism sector have good perceptions and attitudes towards implementing the concept of halal tourism on the island of Lombok, Indonesia. Limited knowledge and understanding of halal indicators and standards is not a major obstacle in implementing halal principles because it is the culture of the people of Lombok²⁵. Meanwhile, hotel managers

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ O. Batman, "Local People's Perception of Halal Tourism and Arab Tourists: The Case of Sapanca", (2020): 849-874.

²¹ L. A. Permadi, S. Darwini, W. Retnowati, I. K. Negara, & E. Septiani, "Persepsi Dan Sikap Masyarakat Terhadap Rencana Dikembangkannya Wisata Syariah (Halal Tourism) Di Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat", *Amwaluna: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Keuangan Syariah*, 2(1) (2018): 39-57.

²² S. Inam, S. Y. Janjua, & S. A. Malik, "Managerial Perception Toward Halal Certification: Study of International Food Chains in Pakistan", *Pakistan Business Review* (April 2016): 179-195; H. Hasan, R. S. Sulong, & G. H. Tanakinjal, "Halal Certification Among the SMEs in Kinabalu, Sabah", *Journal of Consumer Sciences*, 5(1) (2020): 16-28; F. R. Azmi, A. Abdullah, H. Musa, & W. H. Wan Mahmood, "Perception of food manufacturers towards adoption of halal food supply chain in Malaysia: Exploratory factor analysis", *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 11(3) (2019): 571-589.

²³ F. R. Azmi, A. Abdullah, H. Musa, & W. H. Wan Mahmood, "Perception of food manufacturers towards adoption of halal food supply chain in Malaysia: Exploratory factor analysis", *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 11(3) (2019): 571-589.

²⁴ S. Inam, S. Y. Janjua, & S. A. Malik, "Managerial Perception Toward Halal Certification: Study of International Food Chains in Pakistan", *Pakistan Business Review* (April 2016): 179-195

²⁵ L. Suparman, A. A. Pratama, B. Mustika, B. N. Ulya, L. Mat, & U. Nafi, "Persepsi Pelaku Usaha Kelompok Milenial dalam Implementasi Pariwisata Halal di Pulau Lombok", *Jurnal Magister Manajemen Unram*, 9(3) (2020): 230-242.

in Çanakkale, Turkey have negative perceptions about the concept of halal tourism. The main reason for the emergence of negative perceptions of hotel managers on the concept of halal tourism in Çanakkale is about perceiving the concept as a religious foundation. In this context, this tourism concept is accepted as a 'conservative' approach. Second, the lack of demand for the concept of halal tourism in Çanakkale tourist destinations could be another cause²⁶.

Research Method

The research was conducted with local South Korean residents in September 2020 using qualitative methods, namely conducting field observations, interviews and literature studies. Interviews were conducted with 14 people who were local South Korean citizens. The questions raised are about matters related to halal and halal tourism. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the author cannot do the research optimally. So that interviews are carried out either directly or indirectly. Interviews conducted directly are face to face. Meanwhile, interviews are conducted indirectly, namely through communication tools such as cellphones or laptops or computers by chat / telephone / email.

What is Halal? What is Halal Economy? I Know and I don't Know

In the first part, the results of interviews with local South Koreans resulted in the finding that some residents knew the concept of halal, and others did not really know. Based on the results of interviews, some people when asked about the concept of halal answered that they had heard:

"Have listen".

Several others answered:

"Yeah, I know".

"Well know".

An informant said that he did not really know about halal food or halal tourism with the answer:

"Unfamiliar".

"I don't have any idea".

There are informants who do not know anything about halal economics:

"I don't know at all".

Another replied that it was the first time he had heard about the halal economy:

"I'm not sure about the halal economy because it's my first time hearing".

Halal Related with Southeast Asia

One of the informants said that halal is related to Southeast Asia:

"Yes, I know. I first heard it in a university related to Southeast Asia. I didn't know anything before that".

Then another added:

²⁶ O. Diker, "Determining the Halal Tourism Concept Perceptions of Hotel Managers in Çanakkale", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 13(26) (2018): 493-509.

“When I was undergraduate, I first heard the concept of halal while researching culture related to Malaysia (related to Southeast Asian understanding classes)”.

“However, I heard in class that a non-strong Islamic country like Indonesia will definitely emerge as a developing country for halal food in the future. I think it's a sufficiently feasible story. I heard that Korean local governments have formed sisterhood relationships with Southeast Asian countries and Muslim countries a lot, but they only held a few brief events as a show, and it was not consistent ”.

In fact, an informant wanted to travel to Southeast Asia for halal tourism:

“Halal tourism is difficult to encounter in Korea, but I think it is a unique experience that I want to try once if I can go on a trip to Southeast Asia and do Halal tourism”.

Halal Certification

An informant answered what he knew about halal certification quite clearly:

“I don't know exactly, but I think I heard that there is a halal food certification system. It is understood only to the extent that it certifies that it can be eaten or used to the extent, not contrary to the practice of the law shared in Muslim culture. At first, I thought that the halal certification system was conducted in relation to food consumption, but I think it is a unique culture because it is practicing the Halal certification system extensively in relation to daily necessities.

Another informant argues that it takes a lot of effort to get halal certification in Korea:

“I think I saw on TV that a Korean individual opened a specialty restaurant after receiving a Halal certification locally after decades of effort. At that time, I learned that the regulations on halal food certification are strict and complicated”.

Furthermore, one informant looked at the “halalness” of restaurants in South Korea pessimistically:

“In my opinion, almost all the labels that say ‘halal’ in restaurants are fake, except for the Korean or the owner or the boss who is Muslim or Pakistani. For others, what is halal? The question used to be, was it only dogs, pigs, snakes, crocodiles, and so on. Koreans don't really know. Even if you know, it's not humans who cut it, but machines that do it. When cutting too. Every time you do that, you have to pray. In Korea, many animals are slaughtered. Is there a need to pray for every animal to be slaughtered? Halal is difficult to exist in Korea, unless the Korean is Muslim”.

Subsequent informants spoke of the need to increase promotion of the process of obtaining halal certification rather than emphasizing the religious part:

“I tried to establish a food complex in Iksan, a connection with the Muslim culture, but on the contrary, I remember the fact that it was broken, but it is still a strange and difficult concept in Korea, and it will take some time to settle down. Rather than emphasizing the religious part, I think that promoting the process of obtaining the halal certification system could increase interest in halal food or halal tourism. Emphasizing only negative religious images of Muslims, they seem to be criticizing and not familiar with halal, or to oppose the construction of related facilities ”.

Halal Food

The answer from an informant who rated it negatively:

“It has a negative image of slaughter during the production process of halal food”.

Contradiction with some informants who saw halal food as a negative thing, they actually saw it positively:

“I think it is positive about halal food. There is an image that it is cleaner than conventional foods in the slaughter process or manufacturing process. That is why companies and people in Korea are increasingly looking for food with the Halal certification mark.

Other informants with positive answers:

“Currently, Korean society is still not aware of Islam, but I think the perception of halal food is positive. However, it seems very difficult to maintain it under various conditions because the demand for Koreans is not so great”.

Strengthened by other informants:

“It’s amazing how diversified dishes have been made so that halal food tours are possible. Is it marketable? Westerners actually avoid halal food. So I have a question”.

Likewise with informants who do not know well about halal food and halal tourism, but see this positively:

“I have never thought deeply about halal food or tourism because I rarely meet Muslims in Korea, especially in rural areas. However, the introduction of a halal slaughterhouse in Iksan Food Industrial Complex (?) Once became an issue for the citizens of Jeollabuk-do”.

The next informant answered that halal food is healthy food:

“I don’t know well, but I heard that halal food also has an image of health food”.

There was also an informant who was interested in halal food because of their curiosity about it because they live in an environment where it is easy to find halal restaurants:

“Because of the halal restaurant in front of the school, I have a curiosity that I want to visit once, so I think that linking that curiosity with tourism seems to mean halal tourism”.

Halal Economy = Muslim Population

Several informants answered that they knew or had heard of the halal economy:

“I know, recognized”.

“I heard yes”.

But there are those who are not aware of the halal economy in Korea:

“I don’t think I was aware of this”.

Another informant said that the halal economy continues to grow in South Korea:

“Yeah. I’ve heard it’s a constantly growing economy”.

Added by the opinions of other informants:

“Interest in the halal market is rising in Korea, and it is growing internationally”.

Then, several informants realized that the growth of Muslims in the world was growing:

“As the proportion of Muslims around the world is so high, they only understand that the size of the consumer market is large”.

"I did not know. It's amazing. However, I think it is possible due to the proportion of the Muslim population".

"I thought it would be a good thing for the economic development of Jeollabuk-do, as the Muslim population will increase as the number of days goes by, but the people around me said that terrorists occupied Korea. However, I was amazed that my friends in their twenties, who were not conservative Christian middle-aged, but who were non-religious, said that. Still, I felt a lot back then that the misunderstanding of Muslims and Halal food was serious".

"Muslims make up quite a percentage of the world's population, and frankly, Korea doesn't seem to be aware of the Muslim economy at all. Local governments in Korea realized that corporate attraction and local decentralization policies for public institutions were not effective, and now they are trying to raise local finances solely from tourism revenue. I think that the way Korean local governments survive is the solution to shared growth with the Halal economy. However, the official view of halal = strong (conservative) Islam in terms of political and religious views is too strong. I think overcoming this is the biggest challenge".

Halal is a Culture or Religious?

Most of the informants saw that halal is a culture:

"I think it's a natural cultural difference".

"It's a Muslim culture, so I just want to understand it as their food culture".

"Like the vegetarian culture, it is an individual choice and feels free, and there is no big rejection".

"I have come to recognize that their lifestyle is like that, but I cannot say that it is good or bad".

"Korean people are not interested in halal tourism. Yes, sorry, but usually Korean people are like that, because the Islamic culture is very little there, most of which are foreigners.

In contrast to other informants who said that there are differences between religion and culture:

"I think it is the difference between culture and religion".

"I think it is the natural practice of Muslims".

"Considered as a religious practice by Muslims".

"I don't think I like it because I think it is religious freedom".

"They consider it to be their life and religious beliefs, but it is considered a strange and exotic landscape in Korean sentiment".

"I think it is natural because it is their religious belief".

"I think that this is an unavoidable part because it is to keep my religious beliefs".

"I think it's food and tourism enjoyed by people of certain religions".

"I think you should acknowledge it".

"I know halal is something or behavior that is taboo to Muslims".

Conclusion

Actually, in Korea is not familiar about halal. Most of the local Koreans know little about halal, such as from print or electronic media. In fact, most know from the education field.

From the interviews that have been conducted, the findings show that there are six views of South Korean local residents in seeing halal tourism, namely halal means related to Southeast Asia, halal certification, halal food, halal economy related to the development of the Muslim population, halal is a culture, and halal is a religion. The weakness of this research is that the number of informants studied is not large due to time constraints and the pandemic situation. The contribution of the current research is to provide an overview of the views of local South Koreans on halal tourism. This can inform the government so it can find the best way to raise awareness of its citizens to support government policies. Recommendations for further research are increasing the number of informants, conducting research with quantitative methods, or researching in Muslim countries.

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