

## Muslim-Friendly Halal Tourism Development: A Case Study at Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta

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### KEYWORDS

halal tourism;  
Muslim-friendly;  
KHAS Tugu Hotel;  
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### ABSTRACT

The Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta, now known as KHAS Tugu Hotel Yogyakarta, has been dedicated to developing a halal tourism concept through a Muslim-friendly approach. This research aims to analyze the development of facilities and services supporting the halal tourism concept at this hotel, as well as to evaluate how these efforts meet the needs of Muslim tourists visiting Yogyakarta. Employing a qualitative approach and a case study method, the data were gathered through in-depth interviews with hotel management, staff, and guests, alongside observations of the services and facilities provided. Thematic analysis was performed to identify the main factors contributing to the implementation of the Muslim-friendly concept. The analysis technique used in this study followed Milles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results indicate that KHAS Tugu Hotel has offered various facilities aligned with halal tourism principles, such as certified halal food, comfortable prayer areas, and information on prayer times. Key factors supporting the successful implementation of this concept include management commitment, staff training, and accessible information provision. However, challenges remain in promotion, enhancement of additional facilities, and service adjustments to meet the needs of Muslim tourists. This study concludes that the development of the Muslim-friendly concept at KHAS Tugu Hotel has positively affected Muslim tourist satisfaction and the hotel branding as the pioneer of halal tourism in Yogyakarta. These findings can serve as a strategic model for other tourist destinations in promoting sustainable halal tourism.

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### INTRODUCTION

Halal tourism has become one of the fastest growing segments in the global tourism industry, driven by the increasing number of Muslim tourists seeking destinations and services that are in line with Islamic values (Battour and Ismail, 2016). Previous research by El-Gohary (2016) emphasized that this growth was caused by increasing awareness of the need for halal tourism in the global market. The concept of halal tourism includes not only the provision of halal food, but also facilities and services that support a comfortable tourism experience for Muslim tourists, such as places of worship, privacy policies, and friendliness to spiritual needs (Fathoni, 2020). In this context, the Muslim-friendly tourism approach is a strategy adopted by many industry players to attract the halal tourism market (Darmawan et al., 2023). Thus, halal tourism is not only an economic opportunity, but also a social responsibility in providing services that suit the needs of Muslim tourists.

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has a great potential to develop halal tourism (Nurohman and Qurniawati, 2021). Subarkah and Rachman (2020) show that Indonesia has a strong attraction for Muslim tourists through its rich culture that is rooted in Islamic values. Yogyakarta, as one of the leading destinations in Indonesia, has demonstrated a commitment to supporting halal tourism

through developing Muslim-friendly based services (Irwansyah and Zainuri, 2021). One of the prominent industry players is Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta, which is known as the pioneer of Muslim-friendly service provider that offers facilities and services specifically designed to meet the needs of Muslim tourists, such as halal certified food, comfortable prayer rooms, and operational policies that support the privacy and comfort of Muslim guests (Pratomo and Subakti, 2017). This shows that Yogyakarta has a great potential to become a center for halal tourism development in Indonesia through collaboration between government, industry, and local communities.

However, even though Pesonna Hotel has attempted to adopt a Muslim-friendly concept, challenges in its implementation remain, including tourists' understanding and perception of halal services, integration of halal services with the general market, and resource management to support the sustainability of hotel operations (Maryati, 2019). This is supported by Muis (2020), who finds that tourists' perceptions of halal services are still the main obstacle in several tourist destinations. Therefore, it is important to explore how the Muslim-friendly concept is implemented at Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta and its impact on the development of halal tourism in this region (Nursalam and Syahputra, 2023). By overcoming these challenges, halal tourism destinations such as Pesonna Hotel can become a model of success in expanding the halal tourism market in Indonesia.

This research aims to analyze the strategy to develop Muslim-friendly halal tourism at Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta. A case study approach was used to explore deeply the practices, challenges, and opportunities faced by hotels in supporting halal tourism (Subarkah, 2018). A previous research by Wulandari and Indahsari (2021) shows that the case study approach is effective to understand the complexity of the halal tourism concept implementation at the organizational level. This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically in understanding the implementation of the Muslim-friendly concept, as well as being a guide for other tourism industry players in developing sustainable halal services (Fathoni, 2020). This argument emphasizes that this case study is important to provide a deeper understanding of strategies that can increase the competitiveness of halal tourism at the local and national levels.

By exploring this case study, this research will reveal the role of Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta as a model to develop Muslim-friendly halal tourism and will provide strategic recommendations to strengthen halal tourism services in Indonesia (Nurohman and Qurniawati, 2021). Sutekno et al. (2023) state that destinations that successfully implement the Muslim-friendly concept not only increase tourist attraction, but also create satisfaction and loyalty for Muslim tourists. Therefore, the findings of this research are expected to be the basis for strategic policy making to expand the halal tourism network and services continuously.

### **Perception towards Halal Tourism**

Maryati (2019) analyzes public perceptions towards halal tourism in Padang and finds that the understanding of halal tourism still varied. People associate halal tourism with the provision of halal food and worship facilities, and the implementation is often limited to these aspects. This research shows the importance of socialization to increase the understanding of halal tourism as a holistic concept that includes Muslim-friendly tourism services and experiences. This finding is relevant with El-Gohary (2016), who questions the extent to which halal tourism truly reflects halal values, especially in its global practice.

### **Opportunities and Challenges of Halal Tourism**

Muis (2020) identifies opportunities and challenges in developing halal tourism in Aceh, including Aceh's suitability as a sharia-based tourist destination due to the implementation of Islamic law in the region. However, the main challenge is the lack of synergy between industry players and the government in marketing Aceh as a halal destination. This is in line with Fathoni (2020), who states that Indonesia has great potentials in the halal industry but faces challenges in limited infrastructure and global promotion.

### **Strategies of Halal Tourism Development**

Wulandari and Indahsari (2021) highlight the importance of halal tourism development strategies through collaboration between government, industry players, and the community. This research proposes strategic steps such as providing halal certification, HR training, and destination branding. This strategy is in line with Subarkah and Rachman (2020), who emphasize that destination branding as halal tourism is the key to increase Indonesia's competitiveness in the global market.

### **Potentials of Muslim-Friendly Tourism**

Darmawan et al. (2023) explore the potentials of Muslim-friendly tourism in Bali, even though the area is predominantly non-Muslim. This research shows that the presence of Muslim-friendly facilities such as halal restaurants and prayer rooms can attract Muslim tourists without changing the main character of the destination. This finding strengthens the study conducted by Irwansyah and Zaenuri (2021), which emphasizes that the implementation of halal tourism does not have to change local cultural identity, but rather complements it to create inclusivity.

### **Influence of Muslim-Friendly Destinations**

Sutikno et al. (2023) find that Muslim-friendly destinations in Asia Pacific region, including Indonesia, have a significant influence to increase the number of visits of Muslim tourists. Destinations that provide complete facilities, such as halal-certified hotels, Muslim-friendly transportation, and other supporting services, are more likely to attract Muslim tourists. This is in line with research conducted by Pratomo and Subakti (2017) on the sharia hotel concept at Hotel Sofyan Jakarta, showing that family-friendly and sharia-based services are the main attraction for Muslim tourists.

### **Economic Potentials of Halal Tourism**

Subarkah (2018) highlights that the development of halal tourism in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) not only increases tourist visits, but also has a significant impact on the regional economy. A similar concept is outlined by Nurohman and Qurniawati (2021), who examine the strategy for developing the Menggoro Tourism Village as a halal destination. This research shows that halal tourism can encourage local economic empowerment through a community management that is based on Islamic values.

### **Integration of Halal Tourism with Global Concepts**

El-Gohary (2016) emphasizes the importance of integrating the concept of halal tourism with global standards to ensure that the services and facilities provided not only meet Islamic values, but are also able to compete in the international market. This study provides an important basis for understanding how halal tourism can develop in various cultural and geographical contexts.

Based on the literature review explained above, it can be seen that halal tourism offers great opportunities for Indonesia. However, its implementation requires a holistic approach. A collaboration between government, industry players, and society is the key to overcoming challenges, such as lack of synergy and limited infrastructure. The previous studies also emphasize the importance of destination branding, strengthening Muslim-friendly services, and empowering the local economy to create sustainable halal tourist destinations.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with the analytical framework of Miles and Huberman (1994), which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. This research was conducted at Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta. The research population included all hotel management, Muslim tourists staying at the hotel, and stakeholders related to halal tourism development. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria being subjects who had direct involvement in implementing the Muslim-friendly concept, such as operational managers, service staff, and Muslim tourists with experience of more than one visit. The data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were used to explore experiences and strategies in developing halal tourism, while observation and documentation complemented the data with information about the facilities and policies implemented. The analysis was carried out iteratively, starting from reducing the data to find main themes, followed by presenting the data in the form of descriptive narratives and matrix. The conclusion was drawn and verified through source triangulation, member checking, and audit trail to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. This method is expected to provide in-depth insight into the strategies of developing Muslim-friendly halal tourism.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### 1. Implementation of the Muslim-Friendly Concept

Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta has adopted various Muslim-friendly elements in its services, such as providing halal-certified food, adequate prayer rooms, and operational rules that support the privacy of Muslim guests. Interviews with management reveal that this concept is the main strategy to attract Muslim tourists, especially from within and outside the country. However, observations show that supporting facilities such as prayer equipment in rooms still needs to be improved

#### 2. Challenges in Halal Tourism Development

The hotel management faces several challenges in implementing the Muslim-friendly concept, for example the staff's lack of understanding on sharia-based services and the lack of specific promotions of halal tourism. Muslim travelers also said that although basic services are available, further adjustments such as flexibility improvement in prayer times are still needed to increase comfort.

#### 3. Responses of Muslim Tourists

The results of interviews with Muslim tourists showed that most were satisfied with hotel services, especially regarding halal food and the friendliness of the staff. However, some tourists noted the lack of halal menu variety and the need for more guidance regarding sharia-based tourist attractions around hotels.

#### 4. Impacts on Economy and Branding

The implementation of the Muslim-friendly concept not only attracts Muslim tourists but also provides a positive economic impact. The hotel management notes an increase in occupancy rates during religious holiday seasons such as Ramadan. In addition, branding as a Muslim-friendly hotel helps improve Pesonna Hotel's image as a pioneer of halal tourism in Yogyakarta.

## Discussion

### 1. Conformity with the halal tourism concept

The result of this research shows that Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta has implemented the key elements of the Muslim-friendly tourism concept as described by El-Gohary (2016). However, there is a gap between the ideal standards of halal tourism and the practices implemented, especially in the provision of additional facilities such as sharia tourism information.

### 2. Challenges and opportunities

The challenges faced by hotels, such as lack of promotion and limited staff knowledge, are in line with the finding of Muis (2020) which states that synergy between stakeholders is a key factor in the success of developing halal tourism. On the other hand, the opportunity to expand the halal tourism market remains large, especially with the increasing number of global Muslim tourists (Sutikno et al., 2023).

### 3. Responses of tourists as satisfaction indicators

The positive responses from Muslim tourists show that the services provided are in line with their basic needs. However, inputs regarding flexibility improvement in prayer times and variations in halal menus show the need for ongoing evaluation. This finding supports the research by Irwansyah and Zaenuri (2021) which emphasizes the importance of service innovation to maintain tourists' loyalty.

### 4. Impacts on Economy and Branding

The increase in occupancy during a certain period shows that a Muslim-friendly strategy can have a significant economic impact. This is in line with Subarkah (2018), who claims that halal tourism has a great potential in supporting the regional economy. Branding as a Muslim-friendly hotel also contributes to improving the appeal of Yogyakarta's halal tourist destination.

Based on the analysis, Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta has succeeded in implementing the Muslim-friendly concept. However, there is still room for improvement, especially in terms of providing additional facilities and promotions. Challenges such as limited staff training and specific promotions can be overcome through collaboration with other stakeholders. Overall, the results of this research show that not only is the Muslim-friendly concept relevant to the needs of Muslim tourists but it also has a positive impact on the hotel's branding and economy.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta has succeeded in implementing the Muslim-friendly tourism concept by providing services and facilities that support the needs of Muslim tourists, such as halal-certified food, comfortable prayer rooms, and operational policies based on sharia values. This implementation becomes the major attraction for both domestic and international Muslim tourists, and contributes positively in branding the hotel as a halal tourist destination. However, there are several challenges that need to be overcome, such as limited staff understanding of sharia-based services, a lack of halal menu variations, and a lack of specific promotions for Muslim tourists. In addition, evaluation of supporting facilities, such as prayer equipment in rooms and guides to sharia-based tourist attractions, is important to increase the satisfaction and experience of Muslim tourists. The halal tourism development strategy at Pesonna Hotel Tugu Yogyakarta also has a positive impact on the hotel's economy, as can be seen from the increase in occupancy rates during religious holiday periods. These findings are in line with the great

potential of halal tourism in supporting local economic growth. By strengthening collaboration between government, industry, and society, Pesonna Hotel can be more effective in promoting itself as a Muslim-friendly halal tourism model. This research concludes that the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism not only provides economic benefits but also fulfills the spiritual needs of Muslim tourists, making Yogyakarta a competitive halal tourism destination at the global level.

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