



## From Legal Compliance to Spiritual Authenticity: The Role of Halal Certification in Shaping Muslim Tourists' Experiences

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**Abstract.** This study examines how halal regulations function as a moral and legal bridge between faith and consumer rights in religious tourism. Using a qualitative descriptive case study in Surabaya, Indonesia, this study explores how halal certification shapes Muslim tourists' perceptions of trust, authenticity, and spiritual experience. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight key informants, including local and international Muslim tourists, business owners, hotel managers, and government officials, supported by document analysis of halal policies and certification frameworks. The findings indicate that halal regulations significantly strengthen tourists' sense of spiritual security, ethical trust, and overall satisfaction. Halal certification is perceived not merely as legal compliance with Islamic principles, but also as a symbol of integrity, transparency, and respect for religious identity. Nevertheless, the study identifies key challenges, such as weak institutional coordination, limited halal literacy, and the risk of excessive commercialization of religious symbols. These issues highlight the importance of integrating legal, ethical, and spiritual dimensions within halal governance. The study concludes that sustainable halal tourism requires a careful balance between formal regulatory assurance and genuine spiritual authenticity. By integrating halal regulatory frameworks, perceived spiritual authenticity, and consumer trust, this study contributes to the halal tourism literature and offers strategic insights for policymakers and destination managers to strengthen institutional collaboration, enhance halal literacy, and promote ethical governance to support credible and sustainable halal tourism development.

**Keywords:** Halal Regulation, Religious Tourism, Consumer Trust, Spiritual Authenticity, Islamic Governance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, religious tourism has become one of the most important segments of the global tourism industry (Das et al., 2023). According to the Global Muslim Travel Index

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(GMTI) report, the number of Muslim tourists is projected to exceed 230 million by 2028, indicating a significant increase in demand for halal-compliant tourism services (GMTI, 2024). This trend not only confirms the economic potential of halal tourism but also shows a shift in the tourism paradigm from just recreation to the search for spiritual meaning and religious identity (Islam, 2024). In this context, halal guarantees are no longer understood as compliance with consumption rules, but rather as a symbol of faith and a form of protection for spiritual rights and the rights of Muslim consumers (Wiyono et al., 2022).

The concept of halal tourism is a tangible manifestation of the convergence between religious dimensions and consumer protection (Prayag, 2020). On the one hand, it represents an effort to maintain sharia values throughout the tourist experience, from accommodation to culinary and recreational activities; on the other hand, halal regulations assure trust, protecting consumers from non-transparent or misleading practices (Rasul, 2019). This approach is in line with the principles of consumer rights in Islam, which emphasize honesty (*sidq*), responsibility (*amanah*), and fairness in transactions (Hafid et al., 2024). Thus, the halal certification and regulatory system serves as a moral-economic mechanism that bridges the value of faith with modern consumer protection standards.

Amid the development of the global halal industry, serious challenges arise in maintaining the authenticity, transparency, and accountability of halal regulations across countries (Akbar et al., 2023). Differences in certification standards between institutions, diversity of religious authorities, and overlapping cross-border regulations often confuse industry players and tourists (Calder, 2020). As a result, the trust gap between halal labels and actual perceptions of halal in the field persists (Zuhrah et al., 2025). In the context of religious tourism, which is grounded in spiritual values and morality, this uncertainty can affect tourists' religious experience and their trust in tourism service providers that claim halal status (Hariyani et al., 2024). Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to examine how halal regulations serve as a bridge between faith and consumer rights in the context of religious tourism.

Although the discourse on halal tourism continues to grow, the role of halal regulations in shaping the experiences and perceptions of religious tourists has not been fully understood empirically. The fundamental question is: How do halal regulations affect the religious tourism experience, consumers' perceptions of spiritual values, and their trust in tourism service providers? This issue is important because the legitimacy of the halal tourism experience depends not only on formal certification but also on the religious and emotional meanings

tourists experience when halal guarantees are consistently implemented. Therefore, this study positions halal regulations as a meeting point between faith, belief, and consumer rights, as well as an instrument for understanding the dynamics of spirituality in the tourism economic space.

Given these problems, this study aims to analyze the role of halal regulation as an instrument that bridges faith and consumer rights by examining how religious values are institutionalized in halal tourism policies and practices. In addition, this study seeks to identify the mechanism by which perceptions of religious tourism beliefs and experiences are formed through the halal certification system, focusing on symbolism, ethics, and the services provided by tourism industry players. Furthermore, this study will evaluate the contribution of halal policies to the sustainability of the religious tourism sector, highlighting the extent to which these regulations can increase public trust, strengthen tourism governance, and maintain spiritual integrity in religious value-based tourism experiences.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Halal Regulations and Consumer Protection Frameworks*

The concept of halal extends beyond its function as a religious marker to encompass a comprehensive system of social, economic, and ethical norms that guide Muslim consumption behavior. In the contemporary context, halal is increasingly understood as a form of consumer protection that guarantees product safety, cleanliness, and compliance with Sharia principles (Ab Halim & Mohd Salleh, 2020). Normatively, halal is grounded in the principle of *thayyib*, which refers to what is good, safe, and beneficial, and forms the moral foundation of justice in transactions and consumption. Consequently, halal regulation should not be viewed merely as an administrative or technical instrument, but as a manifestation of moral values and faith that structure the relationships between producers, consumers, and the state within the Islamic economic system.

From a policy perspective, halal regulatory frameworks vary significantly across countries. Indonesia has adopted a state-driven model through Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (JPH), positioning the state as the primary authority responsible for halal certification and public oversight (Minister of Law and Human Rights, 2014). Malaysia, in contrast, has developed an institutionalized halal governance system managed by semi-governmental bodies such as JAKIM, which has gained international recognition for its

efficiency and credibility (Nisa, 2023). In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, halal regulation emphasizes regional harmonization, Sharia compliance, and industry standardization, while in Europe, halal certification is primarily managed by independent Muslim community-based organizations, raising challenges related to accountability, transparency, and public trust (Syed Hamzah et al., 2024).

Thus, halal regulation performs a dual function: it serves as an ethical assurance mechanism and as a social trust infrastructure linking business actors and consumers. The robustness of the halal system depends not only on formal legal enforcement but also on moral legitimacy and institutional transparency in the certification process. This dimension is particularly crucial in the tourism sector, where halal compliance cannot be evaluated solely through tangible products but must also be experienced through social interactions and the embodiment of faith-based values in tourism services (Yakin, 2025).

#### *Faith-Based Tourism and Religious Experience*

Faith-based or religious tourism refers to travel motivated by spiritual aspirations, religious identity, and cultural-religious engagement (Shinde, 2020). Contemporary theories of tourist motivation suggest that religious journeys are not limited to ritual observance but also serve as transformative experiences that foster spiritual closeness, self-reflection, and social connectedness within faith communities (Hua et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2025). Within this framework, religious tourism is conceptualized as an experiential space that connects religious belief with existential meaning.

Authenticity emerges as a central dimension in religious tourism experiences. Tourists increasingly seek authentic encounters that satisfy their spiritual longing for sincerity and meaningful engagement (Christou et al., 2023). In the context of halal tourism, authenticity extends beyond cultural representation or destination image to include the moral integrity and halal compliance of tourism practices themselves (Moshin et al., 2020). This authenticity includes providing halal food, adequate worship facilities, and an environment conducive to spiritual reflection. Accordingly, halal regulation serves as a mechanism to safeguard spiritual authenticity, ensuring that religious tourism experiences are not reduced to commercial commodities but remain aligned with underlying faith values.

### *Integrating Faith and Consumer Rights in Halal Tourism*

From the perspective of Islamic economics, consumer rights are rooted in the principles of justice (al-‘adl) and balance (mizan). Islam emphasizes the moral responsibility of producers and service providers to ensure honesty, safety, and quality in their offerings (Rohmana, 2022). These principles align closely with the objectives of maqasid al-shariah, which prioritize the protection of religion (hifz al-din), life (hifz al-nafs), intellect (hifz al-‘aql), lineage (hifz al-nasl), and property (hifz al-mal) across all economic activities, including tourism (Idris et al., 2020).

In halal tourism, the application of maqasid al-shariah ensures that tourism development is not merely profit-oriented but also preserves the spiritual dignity, safety, and ethical rights of Muslim consumers. Halal regulation thus serves as a bridge connecting faith-based values with consumer protection principles, reinforcing both the material and spiritual dimensions of the tourism experience.

#### *Previous Studies*

A growing body of empirical research has examined the role of halal certification and halal attributes in shaping tourist perceptions, trust, and behavioral outcomes. Jeaheng et al. (2020) found that clear halal labeling significantly enhances Muslim tourists’ perceptions of spiritual safety and emotional comfort during travel. Similarly, Garanti et al. (2024) demonstrated that the credibility and legitimacy of halal certification bodies positively influence brand trust and destination choice decisions among Muslim travelers.

Other studies have highlighted the importance of transparency and governance in halal tourism. Suhartanto et al. (2021) revealed that transparency in halal certification processes increases consumer loyalty to halal tourism destinations. Taheri et al. (2020) further noted that tourists’ perceptions of service providers’ integrity are positively associated with satisfaction levels and deeper spiritual engagement during travel experiences. In addition, Gaffar et al. (2024) emphasized the strategic role of integrating halal regulations with digital promotion to strengthen public trust and support the long-term sustainability of religious tourism destinations.

Collectively, these studies underscore the significance of halal certification and halal destination attributes in shaping trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and spiritual experience. However, much of the existing literature tends to focus on behavioral outcomes or marketing

perspectives, with limited attention to the broader regulatory and governance dimensions that link halal certification to consumer rights and faith-based ethics.

### *Synthesis and Research Contribution*

Building upon prior research, this study seeks to address an important gap by examining halal regulation as a moral and institutional bridge between faith and consumer rights within the context of halal tourism. Unlike previous studies that predominantly emphasize trust, satisfaction, or destination attributes, this research highlights the role of halal regulation in ensuring spiritual security, maintaining authenticity, and strengthening governance legitimacy. By integrating regulatory analysis with Islamic ethical principles and religious tourism experiences, this study contributes a more holistic understanding of halal tourism as a system that simultaneously protects consumer rights and upholds faith-based values, an area that remains underexplored in existing scholarship.

## **METHOD**

### *Research Design*

This study uses a descriptive, qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how halal regulations shape religious tourism experiences and consumer perceptions of trust. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena contextually and interpretively, in line with the social and cultural realities inherent in tourism practices grounded in religious values (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted in Surabaya, East Java, a city known as one of Indonesia's leading religious tourism destinations with an active halal certification system. Surabaya demonstrates the integration of spiritual values, commercial practices, and public policy in the implementation of halal tourism, as evidenced by the local government's initiative through the Surabaya Religious Tourism program and its collaboration with LPPOM MUI East Java. With these characteristics, Surabaya is seen as a representative empirical context for examining how halal regulations operate as an instrument of consumer protection and as a medium for internalizing the value of faith in religious tourism practices.

### *Data Collection Techniques*

Data collection in this study was conducted using two main techniques: in-depth interviews and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight key informants,

purposively selected for their involvement and knowledge of halal tourism practices in Surabaya. The informants were five Muslim tourists, one hotel manager, one culinary businessperson, and one local government official. To maintain identity confidentiality, all informants are given an anonymous code as shown in Table 1 below. Meanwhile, document analysis was conducted on various relevant secondary sources, including Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (JPH), the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism on Halal Tourism Guidelines, as well as annual reports and operational guidelines of halal certification bodies. This analysis explores the normative, procedural, and policy frameworks underlying the implementation of halal principles in the tourism sector. It strengthens the empirical understanding of the interview results by grounding them in regulatory and institutional foundations.

Table 1. List of Research Informant Codes

Informant Code	Category	Short Description	Origin / Context	Additional Details
W1	Local Muslim Tourists	Tourists from Surabaya who regularly visit religious tourist destinations.	Local (Surabaya)	Provides insight into religious customs and a sense of security from halal labels.
W2	Local Muslim Tourists	Visitors from East Java on a family tour.	East Java	Focus on the comfort of halal facilities and spiritual experiences.
W3	Foreign Muslim Tourists	Malaysian tourists pay attention to official halal certification.	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Highlighting the importance of transparency and the legitimacy of certification bodies.
W4	Muslim Female Tourists	Female tourists who emphasize the comfort of worship and halal consumption during the trip.	Central Java	Emphasizing the spiritual dimension and authenticity of the experience.
W5	Local Muslim Tourists	Young tourists who are critical of formalistic practices in halal services.	Surabaya	Criticize the difference between formal certification and service behavior.
H1	Halal Hotel Manager	Hotel manager in the Al-Akbar Mosque area, certified halal.	South Surabaya	Explain the implementation of halal certification in the accommodation sector.
B1	Culinary Business Actors	The owner of a food stall in the Sunan Ampel religious tourism area.	North Surabaya	Facing cost constraints and halal certification procedures.
P1	Local Government Officials	Officials of the Surabaya City Tourism Office are involved in coordinating halal policies.	Surabaya City Government	Highlighting the challenges of inter-agency coordination in the implementation of halal regulations.

### *Ethical Notes*

All ethical considerations were carefully observed in this study. The identities of informants, business locations, and related agencies were fully anonymized to protect confidentiality and personal privacy in accordance with established qualitative research ethics. To ensure transparency and analytical traceability without compromising anonymity, consistent informant codes were used throughout the Results and Discussion sections. In addition, all participants provided voluntary informed consent before data collection.

### *Data Analysis*

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic and interpretive analysis in accordance with the qualitative analysis procedure presented by Sugiyono (2019). The analysis process includes transcription and organization of data into a structured narrative format, followed by open and thematic coding to identify key patterns, categories, and themes related to halal regulation, consumer belief, and travelers' spiritual experiences. The next stage is thematic interpretation to draw the conceptual meaning of the coding results and understand the relationship between halal regulations, faith values, and consumer protection. The analysis results are synthesized into an analytical narrative that answers the research questions. To maintain data validity, triangulation of sources and methods was carried out by comparing interview results across various categories of informants and by matching them with document data and field observations to strengthen the validity of the findings and minimize interpretive biases (Patton, 2015).

### *Ethical Considerations*

The ethical aspect is strictly maintained throughout the research process. All informants are provided with informed consent regarding the purpose of the research, the use of their data, and their right to withdraw at any Time without consequences. The identity of the informant is disguised through the use of codes to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of personal data.

The researcher also pays attention to cultural and religious sensitivities, particularly in discussions of worship practices, spiritual perceptions, and theological views. Each interaction is carried out with respect for local norms and Islamic values that prevail in the research community. This ethical approach is important so that the research not only meets academic standards but also reflects moral integrity in accordance with the halal principles under study.

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the study's key empirical findings, derived from in-depth interviews and field observations conducted in religious tourism destinations in Surabaya. Overall, the results indicate that halal regulation plays a central role in shaping tourists' perceptions, experiences, and trust by functioning as a bridge between faith-based values and consumer rights. The findings highlight four interrelated dimensions: spiritual security, consumer trust, spiritual authenticity, and governance coordination. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that halal

assurance is not merely a technical or administrative requirement, but a moral and institutional mechanism that enhances the quality and legitimacy of religious tourism experiences. The results are organized thematically to reflect how halal regulations are perceived by tourists, implemented by stakeholders, and experienced in practice.

### *Tourists' Perception of Halal Assurance*

The interview findings with five Muslim tourists indicate that halal assurance constitutes a primary determinant of comfort, trust, and spiritual security in religious tourism destinations in Surabaya. Most informants emphasized that the presence of halal labels on culinary products, accommodation, and public facilities provides a sense of inner calm by ensuring compliance with Sharia principles. As one local tourist stated, “I feel calmer when all the food and hotels are clearly halal-labeled. It feels more blessed and less worrying” (W1, 2025).

For several informants, halal assurance is not merely an administrative requirement but a moral guarantee closely tied to religious identity and ethical consumption. Tourists' perceptions of halal can vary according to cultural background and levels of halal literacy. Local tourists tend to perceive halal as part of their everyday religious habitus (spiritual habitus), while foreign tourists, particularly those from Malaysia and the Middle East, place stronger emphasis on formal legal compliance through official certification. An informant from Kuala Lumpur remarked, “We are used to seeing JAKIM certificates everywhere. If not all places here show official certificates, I feel hesitant, even if the food seems halal” (W3, 2025).

These differences demonstrate that halal experiences are multidimensional, encompassing spiritual, social, cultural, and regulatory dimensions. Trust in certification bodies also plays a critical role in shaping perceptions. Most informants considered LPPOM MUI East Java highly credible, whereas self-declared halal labels issued by business operators were often regarded as less convincing.

### *Implementation of Halal Regulations in Religious Tourism Destinations*

Field observations reveal that halal regulations in Surabaya's religious tourism destinations have progressed but remain uneven across sectors. In the accommodation sector, several hotels in the Al-Akbar Mosque and Sunan Ampel areas have obtained official halal certification and provide facilities to support worship, such as Qibla directions, prayer mats, and prayer time information. As a hotel manager explained, “We have been halal certified since 2022. Every

room is equipped with worship facilities because many guests come for religious tourism” (H1, 2025).

In the culinary sector, compliance with halal standards is more stringent, with most restaurants in tourist areas displaying recognized halal labels. However, small and micro businesses continue to face challenges, particularly regarding certification costs and administrative complexity. One food stall owner noted, “We want halal certification, but the process is complicated, and the cost is heavy for a small business like ours” (B1, 2025).

Regarding worship facilities, the local government demonstrates its commitment by providing clean, accessible prayer rooms in public spaces. Despite these efforts, coordination challenges persist among key stakeholders, including the Tourism Office, LPPOM MUI, and destination managers. A district official admitted, “Data synchronization between institutions is still not optimal. Sometimes one agency has not yet received updates from another” (P1, 2025). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of halal regulation depends not only on formal policy instruments but also on governance efficiency and inter-institutional coordination.

#### *Impact on the Quality of Religious Tourism Experience*

The findings indicate that implementing halal regulations significantly enhances the quality of religious tourism experiences by strengthening feelings of security, comfort, and spiritual authenticity. Tourists reported that halal assurance enables them to focus on worship and spiritual reflection without concern over the permissibility of food or services. As one female tourist stated, “When everything is halal, I can enjoy the spiritual atmosphere without fear of consuming something inappropriate” (W4, 2025).

Beyond spiritual reassurance, halal regulations also contribute to the destination’s image as an ethical and professional tourism environment. In this sense, tourism experiences extend beyond recreation to become a medium for reinforcing faith and religious identity (Almuhrzy, 2020). However, the sustainability of these positive impacts depends on continuous supervision and consistent implementation. When halal certification becomes merely symbolic without genuine practice, the authenticity of the religious tourism experience risks being undermined (Ankiel et al., 2025). Therefore, halal regulation functions not only as a legal instrument but also as a moral foundation and social trust mechanism shaping the legitimacy and quality of faith-based tourism experiences in Surabaya.

The following table summarizes the main empirical findings of this study by mapping the core thematic dimensions that emerged from interviews and field observations. Rather than presenting isolated results, the table integrates key aspects of halal regulation, spiritual security, consumer trust, spiritual authenticity, and governance coordination. It demonstrates how these dimensions collectively shape Muslim tourists' experiences in religious tourism destinations.

Table 2. Summary of Key Findings on the Role of Halal Regulations in Religious Tourism Experiences

Theme Aspect	Description of Key Findings	Illustrative Indicators Key Quotations	Implications for Faith–Consumer Rights Relationship
Spiritual Security	Halal labels and certified facilities create a sense of inner calm and religious safety among tourists.	“I feel calmer when all the food and hotels are clear with halal labels” (W1, 2025).	Halal regulation protects consumers' spiritual rights by ensuring compliance with Sharia in tourism services.
Consumer Trust	Trust is strongly influenced by the credibility of certification bodies rather than self-declared halal claims.	Preference for LPPOM MUI certification over internal labels (W3, 2025).	Institutional legitimacy strengthens consumer confidence and ethical consumption.
Spiritual Authenticity	Halal assurance enables tourists to focus on worship and spiritual reflection without anxiety.	“I can focus on enjoying the spiritual atmosphere” (W4, 2025).	Halal regulation preserves authenticity by aligning service practices with faith values.
Governance and Coordination	Implementation is progressing but hindered by coordination gaps and administrative barriers for SMEs.	“Data synchronization is still not optimal” (P1, 2025); certification cost concerns (B1, 2025).	Effective governance is essential to balance regulatory enforcement with equitable consumer protection.

As summarized in Table 2, these findings demonstrate that halal regulation functions as a crucial bridge between faith and consumer rights in religious tourism. The table illustrates how four interrelated dimensions, spiritual security, consumer trust, spiritual authenticity, and governance coordination, collectively shape Muslim tourists' experiences. By providing spiritual security, fostering trust through credible certification, preserving authenticity in service practices, and requiring accountable governance, halal regulations translate religious values into concrete consumer protections. This integrated pattern of findings directly supports the study's objective of analyzing halal regulation not merely as a technical policy instrument,

but as a moral, institutional, and experiential framework shaping the quality and legitimacy of religious tourism in Surabaya.

## **DISCUSSION**

This discussion section interprets the empirical findings by positioning them within the broader scholarly discourse on halal regulation, halal certification, and religious tourism. Rather than reiterating descriptive results, the discussion highlights how the main empirical themes, spiritual security, consumer trust, spiritual authenticity, and governance extend, confirm, or nuance existing theoretical and empirical debates. Through this approach, the discussion emphasizes that halal regulation operates not only as a legal framework but also as a moral and institutional mechanism that bridges faith-based values and consumer rights in religious tourism.

### *Halal Regulation and Spiritual Security*

One of the central findings of this study is that halal regulation plays a critical role in fostering spiritual security among Muslim tourists. Empirical data indicate that tourists experience a heightened sense of calm, safety, and religious reassurance when tourism services are clearly aligned with halal principles. This finding supports earlier research suggesting that halal assurance functions as an emotional and spiritual safeguard rather than merely a technical compliance marker (Attwood et al., 2023; Kasdi et al., 2021).

Within the context of religious tourism, spiritual security becomes a prerequisite for meaningful engagement with sacred spaces. This spiritual security aligns with Wang et al. (2024), who argue that religious tourism is fundamentally oriented toward existential meaning-making, where tourists seek environments that resonate with their spiritual worldview. In this sense, halal regulation acts as a symbolic interface between belief and practice, translating abstract religious values into tangible service guarantees.

The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that spiritual security is not an incidental outcome of halal compliance, but a core experiential dimension that shapes how destinations are perceived and evaluated. This study reinforces the argument that halal regulation should be conceptualized as a form of spiritual consumer protection embedded within the ethics of Islamic tourism (Tiwari & Bhalla, 2023).

### *Consumer Trust and the Legitimacy of Halal Certification*

Another significant finding concerns the role of halal regulation in building consumer trust. The data reveal that trust is closely linked to the perceived legitimacy, transparency, and institutional authority of certification bodies. This finding resonates with previous studies emphasizing that credible certification enhances confidence in halal products and destinations (Garanti et al., 2024; Jeaheng et al., 2020).

Importantly, this study highlights variations in trust formation based on tourists' sociocultural backgrounds and levels of halal literacy. While local tourists often rely on informal religious familiarity, international tourists tend to emphasize formal legal certification and state-backed oversight. This observation confirms that halal certification operates within a plural landscape of expectations, where trust is constructed through both cultural habitus and institutional credibility (Fisher, 2022).

By situating trust within a regulatory and governance framework, this study advances existing scholarship that often treats trust as a marketing or branding outcome. Instead, the findings suggest that consumer trust in halal tourism is deeply embedded in perceptions of state responsibility, ethical governance, and religious accountability, thereby reinforcing the link between halal regulation and Muslim consumer rights (Nasution et al., 2023).

#### *Spiritual Authenticity and the Risk of Formalistic Compliance*

The findings also reveal a critical tension between halal certification and spiritual authenticity. While halal labels are widely perceived as necessary for religious reassurance, the data indicate that certification alone does not automatically guarantee authentic Islamic service practices. This observation aligns with the study by Marcotte (2020), which critiques ritualized compliance, in which internalized ethical values do not accompany formal adherence to religious standards.

This study contributes to the authenticity debate in religious tourism by showing that tourists are increasingly sensitive to discrepancies between symbolic halal claims and actual service conduct. Such discrepancies risk undermining the moral credibility of halal tourism and generating what may be described as a “trust deficit” among critically aware Muslim consumers. Similar concerns have been raised by Ankiel et al. (2025), who argue that the commodification of religious symbols can erode the spiritual meaning of tourism experiences. Therefore, the findings underscore that spiritual authenticity in halal tourism requires more than mere visible certification; it depends on service providers' ethical consciousness and the

alignment between institutional standards and lived religious values. This insight deepens the understanding of authenticity as a moral-practical construct rather than a purely symbolic or aesthetic attribute (Adham et al., 2024).

#### *Governance, Coordination, and Ethical Implementation*

At the governance level, this study identifies institutional coordination as a key challenge in the effective implementation of halal regulations. Fragmentation among regulatory bodies, tourism authorities, and destination managers creates gaps between normative policy frameworks and empirical practice. This finding echoes concerns raised in prior studies regarding the governance complexity of halal systems, particularly in multi-stakeholder environments (Yousaf, 2023).

From the perspective of *maqasid al-shariah*, effective governance is essential for achieving the objectives of protecting religion (*hifz al-din*) and safeguarding human well-being (*hifz al-nafs*) (Kepplinger, 2025). The present findings suggest that governance failures are not merely administrative shortcomings, but ethical risks that threaten the moral legitimacy of halal regulation itself.

By framing governance as an ethical responsibility rather than a technical function, this study adds a normative dimension to the literature on halal tourism governance. It emphasizes that coordination, transparency, and institutional integrity are prerequisites for ensuring that halal regulation genuinely serves both faith-based values and consumer protection goals (Bahrudin, 2022).

#### *Halal Regulation, Commercialization, and Sustainable Religious Tourism*

The findings further indicate a tension between halal regulation and market-driven commercialization. While halal certification contributes positively to professionalization, competitiveness, and destination branding, there is also evidence of a risk that halal symbols may be reduced to marketing tools devoid of substantive Sharia compliance. This concern is consistent with Azam & Abdullah (2020), who caution against the instrumentalization of religious values for economic gain.

However, this study also demonstrates that when properly governed, halal regulation can function as a catalyst for inclusive and ethical economic development. By encouraging service quality improvement and fostering trust-based market relations, halal tourism contributes to broader social and economic transformation. This finding aligns with Fitria & Sukardi (2025),

who highlight how Islamic values can be institutionalized productively without compromising spiritual authenticity.

In terms of *maqasid al-shariah*, these outcomes reflect the realization of *maslahah*, where spiritual, social, and economic benefits are harmonized. Thus, halal regulation emerges as a mechanism capable of balancing religious authenticity with sustainable tourism development (Soehardi et al., 2025).

### *Theoretical and Practical Implications*

Conceptually, this study enriches the understanding of halal regulation as a multidimensional construct encompassing legal, ethical, spiritual, and governance dimensions. It demonstrates that halal regulation is not merely a compliance framework, but a moral institution articulating the values of justice (*'adl*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and social responsibility (*mas'uliyah*) (Arifin et al., 2025).

Practically, the findings suggest that effective halal tourism development requires collaboration among government agencies, certification bodies, and tourism stakeholders. Regulatory strength must be accompanied by ethical education, institutional coordination, and continuous supervision to prevent pseudo-compliance and preserve spiritual meaning (Zarkasyi et al., 2022).

Ultimately, this study argues that the success of halal tourism lies in maintaining a dynamic balance between legal-formal regulation and ethical-spiritual authenticity. When this balance is achieved, religious tourism becomes not merely a consumption activity but a lived expression of Islamic values within the public sphere (Irawati et al., 2024).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the role of halal regulation as a bridge between faith and consumer rights in religious tourism in Surabaya. The findings show that halal regulation functions not merely as a legal requirement but as a moral and institutional mechanism that enhances spiritual security, strengthens consumer trust, and preserves spiritual authenticity in Muslim tourists' experiences. Halal assurance enables tourists to feel religiously secure, trust service providers, and engage in worship without ethical concern. However, the study also identifies governance challenges, including weak institutional coordination, uneven implementation, and risks of symbolic or commercialized compliance. These challenges highlight the need for stronger

governance integration and ethical awareness. In practice, the study underscores the importance of improving inter-agency collaboration, enhancing halal literacy, and ensuring the substantive implementation of halal standards. Overall, halal regulation plays a crucial role in supporting the development of authentic, trustworthy, and sustainable religious tourism.

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