

Halal Tourism and Conventional Tourism Contestation: An Analysis of the Dynamics of Muslim-Friendly Tourism in Lombok

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the interaction between halal and conventional tourism in Lombok, which has emerged as a leading halal tourism destination in Indonesia. Using a mixed methods approach and sequential explanatory design, the study maps levels of compliance with and perceptions of Muslim-friendly tourism and analyses the dynamics of the interaction between the two paradigms. Findings indicate that although the majority of the tourism industry in Lombok has adopted halal tourism principles, their implementation remains variable, particularly in the micro and small business sector. Furthermore, tensions exist between global market needs and Sharia principles that may impact Lombok's image as a Muslim-friendly destination. This study proposes an integration model that emphasises flexibility in service delivery and market segmentation to achieve a balance between halal and conventional tourism, which is expected to strengthen Lombok's competitiveness as an inclusive global destination. These findings provide an important contribution to the development of more adaptive and relevant halal tourism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

Lombok, known as the Island of a Thousand Mosques, has positioned itself as one of the main halal tourism destinations in Indonesia through strengthening facilities, service certification, and infrastructure that support the comfort of Muslim tourists (Pratama et al. 2024; Adzhani et al., 2023; Putu et al., 2024). This success has been driven by regional policies and stakeholder collaboration, making Lombok one of the most prominent halal destinations among more than 130 global destinations (Hedriyani, 2022). However, these achievements have occurred alongside the conventional tourism sector, which has long been the foundation of the island's economy. The interaction of the halal and conventional paradigms has given rise to tensions between values, practices, and interests, particularly when halal standards do not yet have a fully binding national regulatory umbrella (Ramadhani, 2021; and Ruhaeni, Yusdiansyah, and Aqimuddin, 2022).

This tension raises fundamental questions about how halal and conventional tourism are negotiated within a pluralistic destination space. Operationally, this study defines halal tourism as a service system based on Islamic values encompassing ethical dimensions, facilities, and operational practices (Battour & Ismail, 2016), while conventional tourism refers to general tourism practices that are not based on Sharia and serve a more diverse market segment. The interaction between the two is not only a matter of differences in service attributes but also a contestation of culture, business, and governance, as demonstrated in studies examining actor perceptions, conflicting interpretations, and shifting destination identities (Zitri et al., 2023; Santoso & Wahid, 2023; Kanaha & Kurniawan, 2025).

Despite significant developments in halal tourism research, most studies still focus on market potential, branding, and macro-governance (Misbah & Johari, 2024; Ratnasari et al., 2024). Research in Lombok generally focuses on the

opportunities and constraints of halal tourism implementation (Rojabi et al., 2023; Bustamam & Suryani, 2022; Muharis et al., 2024) and the dynamics of understanding between actors (Slamet et al., 2022). However, studies that simultaneously examine the dialectical relationship between halal and conventional practices within the destination ecosystem are still limited. Similarly, research that holistically integrates economic, socio-cultural, and regulatory perspectives is still rare. Furthermore, an operational model explaining the balance between halal compliance and global market logic, including managerial indicators that can be used by destination stakeholders, is lacking.

Based on these gaps, this study raises three main questions: first, how is the enforcement of halal tourism standards carried out in Lombok's tourism sector? Second, how does traditional tourism contribute to the development of Muslim-friendly tourism? Third, how can the enforcement of conventional and halal tourism be carried out simultaneously? These questions are aimed at identifying the interaction patterns, value negotiations, and institutional mechanisms that shape the integration of these two tourism paradigms in Lombok.

This research is significant for developing the theory and practice of halal tourism. Theoretically, it broadens the understanding of halal tourism as an arena for value negotiation, not simply the application of Sharia standards. Practically, this research is relevant for governments, industry players, and local communities who need to balance the demands of the Muslim market with the sustainability of conventional tourism. An overly strict approach could strengthen Lombok's position as a halal destination but reduce its appeal to non-Muslim tourists, while a lax approach could undermine the trust of the Muslim market and undermine Lombok's differentiation in the global market.

Taking all these dynamics into account, this research aims to develop an integrated model explaining how halal and conventional tourism can be implemented in a balanced manner within a single destination ecosystem. This model is expected to serve as a reference for other regions facing similar challenges, while also contributing to the development of more adaptive, inclusive, and regionally relevant halal tourism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

METHODS

This study uses a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, namely quantitative data collection and analysis, initially for mapping pattern general level compliance and perception to tourist Muslim-friendly, then to be continued with in-depth qualitative to explain findings quantitatively in a way contextual (Meissner et al. 2011 ; Creswell and Plano Clark 2018). The unit of analysis is the Lombok tourism destination ecosystem involving local government, industry players, and tourists as service users. Survey respondents included Muslim and non-Muslim tourists as well as business actors (hotels, restaurants, travel agents), while qualitative informants were selected purposively and expanded through snowball sampling until saturation was achieved, including NTB Tourism Office staff, BPPD/destination authority representatives, hotel/restaurant managers (including internationally oriented accommodations/villa), travel agents, and Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.

Data collection was conducted through four techniques: a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire survey to measure perceptions of Muslim-friendly service attributes (e.g., halal food, prayer facilities, alcohol policies), perceptions of destination inclusiveness, service experiences, and responses to halal branding; in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore policy rationales, actor interests, halal-conventional contestation dynamics, certification constraints, and balancing strategies; observations in hotels, restaurants, tourist facilities, and supporting facilities to verify service practices and capture micro-interactions in service spaces; and document analysis of regulations/policies, halal certification standards, and index reports (e.g., GMTI) to map the normative framework and compare them with field practices. The research instruments included a structured questionnaire, interview guide, observation checklist, and document review sheet, which were pilot tested before the main data collection. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis through coding and theme development (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means, percentages, distributions) to strengthen the meaning of the findings (Sugiyono, 2020). Next, both types of findings are integrated through triangulation of methods and sources (survey, interview, observation, documents) so that the conclusions represent empirical dynamics while being consistent with the theoretical and policy framework.

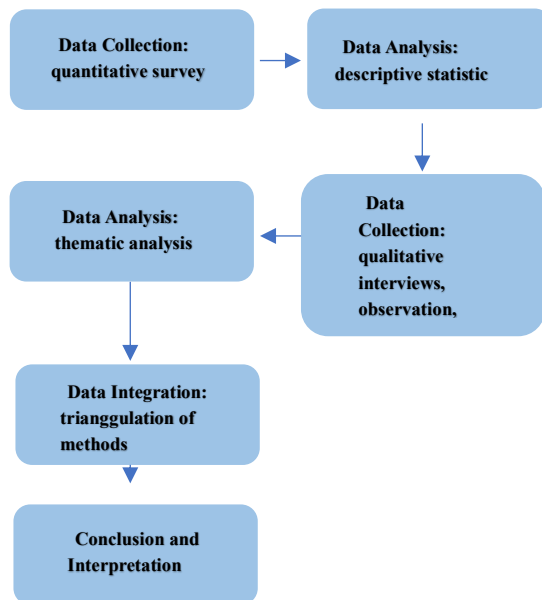


Chart 1: Research Flow

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Halal Tourism Standards in Lombok

Based on interviews and observations, most tourism industry players in Lombok have implemented the basic principles of halal tourism, such as providing places of worship, halal-certified food, and prayer facilities. Several hotels that have received halal certification from LPPOM MUI demonstrate a stronger commitment to implementing these standards, although the level of compliance varies depending on the target market segment.

The collected results indicate that star-rated hotels serving the domestic Muslim tourist segment are more likely to implement halal practices than hotels targeting the international market. This is in line with research conducted by Ahmed and Akbaba (2018), which emphasised that market segmentation plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of halal standards in tourism. Hudaefi and Jaswir (2019); Islam, Ab Talib, and Muhamad (2023); Fataron (2024) also emphasised the need for a more effective audit and monitoring system to ensure the equitable implementation of halal standards in the tourism industry.

Interviews revealed that while most industry players understand the basic principles of halal, many remain confused about the technical definition of halal, particularly regarding certification. This reflects a lack of knowledge about halal certification, particularly among MSMEs. Although the hotel staff is predominantly Muslim and adheres to basic practices, halal certification has not yet been implemented because the primary target market is international tourists. This reflects variations in the implementation of halal standards depending on the market served.

The Role of Government and Regulation

The West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Provincial Government, through the Tourism Office, has developed policies to support halal tourism in Lombok, including industry training, halal certification support, and global promotion. However, policy implementation still faces significant gaps, particularly regarding halal certification procedures, which are considered complicated by micro and small businesses (MSMEs). While adequate, worship centres in Lombok are largely community-run without the support of government development programs. Similarly, the accommodation sector, particularly villas, has yet to receive regulatory pressure to implement halal tourism principles. This situation demonstrates a more normative and persuasive role for the government, but has not yet been reflected in structured and comprehensive implementation.

This finding aligns with Ramadhani's (2021) statement, which asserts that halal tourism regulations in Indonesia are generally advisory and lack binding legal force. This situation has the potential to slow the acceleration of halal tourism development, especially if there is no stronger synchronisation between central and regional policies in Lombok.

Dynamics of Conventional Tourism

Conflict of Values and Practices

One of the key issues emerging from this research is the tension between tourism industry players oriented toward the international market and those committed to consistently implementing Sharia principles. Some industry players expressed concern that strict Sharia implementation could diminish Lombok's appeal as a global tourism destination, particularly for non-Muslim tourists.

“Rejection of halal tourism is more often caused by misinformation and a lack of understanding about how halal tourism can coexist with conventional tourism without hindering each other..... results of interviews with accommodation or hotel operators.”

“....., on the other hand, demonstrates a more flexible attitude by adapting services according to guest requests, both Muslim and non-Muslim, such as providing prayer mats or moving statues. This approach reflects an integration model that can strengthen the market by providing halal service zones without closing access to non-Muslim tourists..... results of interviews with accommodation or hotel operators.”

Opposition to halal tourism is often driven by misinformation and a lack of understanding regarding the possibility of coexisting between halal and conventional tourism without mutual barriers. Conversely, some industry players have demonstrated a more flexible approach by tailoring services to the needs of both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists, for example, by providing prayer mats or making certain spatial adjustments. This flexible approach represents an integration model that has the potential to strengthen market competitiveness, as it allows for the provision of halal service zones without restricting access for non-Muslim tourists.

These findings align with research, which emphasised the differing perceptions between pragmatic, economically oriented tourism industry players and normative actors, such as religious leaders and local communities, who desire consistent application of Sharia principles across all sectors. Therefore, a more inclusive and dialogue-based approach is needed so that tourism policy is not viewed solely as a top-down instruction from the government, but rather as the result of a consensus involving all stakeholders.

Impact on Image and Market Segmentation

Survey and interview results reveal a dual dynamic in shaping Lombok's image as a halal destination. For Muslim tourists, the availability of easily accessible halal facilities, such as mosques, halal-certified restaurants, and prayer-friendly accommodations, provides a sense of comfort and reinforces Lombok's image as the "Island of a Thousand Mosques."

Conversely, some non-Muslim tourists perceive some facilities as too exclusive to certain groups, thus failing to reflect universal principles of hospitality. This concern arises especially when halal branding is equated with restrictions on conventional activities, such as nightlife or non-halal events. Local stakeholders, such as the North Lombok Regency Tourism Promotion Board (BPPD), emphasise that halal tourism should be seen as a new market opportunity without closing access to conventional tourists. They believe that international promotion strategies to Muslim-majority countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Brunei Darussalam, and Malaysia), if supported by competent human resources and a clear certification system, can increase the tourism sector's contribution to regional income.

"Halal tourism is a new market opportunity without having to close off access to conventional tourists. International promotional strategies (Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Malaysia) are considered capable of increasing regional income if supported by human resources and halal certification..." (results of an interview with the BPPD of KLU Regency.)

Meanwhile, accommodation operators report that halal branding has not significantly reduced the number of foreign tourist visits. In fact, some non-Muslim tourists feel safer with halal standards. However, minor issues persist, such as complaints about the use of loudspeakers for the call to prayer or the length of religious ceremonies.

“..... Assessing halal branding does not reduce foreign tourist visits. In fact, non-Muslim tourists feel safe with halal standards, although minor issues such as complaints about the call to prayer loudspeakers or long religious ceremonies arise.... results of interviews with accommodation or hotel operators.”

These findings underscore the urgency of developing inclusive tourism. Consistent with the perspectives of Jaelani (2017) and Syaharani and Fahmi (2024), halal destinations should ideally remain open to all tourists by providing a variety of services without imposing specific norms on all parties. By adopting this approach, Lombok has the potential to strengthen its image as a leading halal destination while maintaining its appeal in the global market.

Survey data shows strong support for halal tourism in Lombok, with 91.58% of respondents stating that adequate prayer facilities are available and 71.58% assessing that restaurants clearly display halal labels. A total of 76.84% of respondents felt that information about halal services was easily accessible. However, 69.47% of respondents believed that nightlife impacts Lombok's image as a Muslim-friendly destination. Nevertheless, 80% of respondents felt that the combination of halal and conventional services increased their travel satisfaction, indicating that the diversity of services enriches the travel experience.

Structural and Social Challenges

Lombok's tourism industry still faces significant challenges. Halal certification costs are considered burdensome for MSMEs, while a shortage of trained personnel hinders consistent halal services. Promotion of halal destinations is also not effectively coordinated. Meanwhile, some locals worry that the concept of "sharia" tourism could alter Lombok's cultural identity, known for its openness and pluralism, especially in tourist areas like Gili Trawangan.

"The challenge lies more in outreach and understanding. Many hotel workers don't fully understand the concept of halal tourism, making it difficult to ensure consistent standards in the field..." Interview with BPPD KLU Regency.

“Facing challenges in terms of infrastructure and villa design (privacy is less in accordance with halal standards), as well as the clash of values between the flexibility of foreign guests' requests and the sharia principles of staff..... results of interviews with accommodation or hotel operators.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that the primary obstacle is hotel workers' lack of understanding of halal standards. Accommodation operators also face infrastructure challenges, including villa designs that lack the privacy of Muslim travellers, as well as a conflict between the flexibility of foreign tourists and staff adherence to Sharia principles.

Overall, this situation illustrates the tension between Lombok's image as a global destination and its Muslim-majority region. Consistent with the findings of Rojabi et al. (2023), cultural adaptation and dialogue between stakeholders are key to reducing resistance and creating more harmonious halal tourism management.

Integrated Model Opportunities

Based on a comparative analysis, there is potential for integration between halal and conventional tourism through appropriate service models and appropriate market segmentation. One implementation is to provide halal service zones in hotels, such as halal food, prayer facilities, and trained staff, while maintaining access to general services for all travellers. This way, Muslim travellers receive services tailored to their religious needs, while non-Muslim travellers are welcomed and provided with an inclusive experience.

“Practising integration through flexible service adjustments, such as moving statues, providing prayer mats, or allowing staff to perform prayers, without compromising the experience of foreign tourists..... results of interviews with accommodation or hotel operators.”

Interviews with the BPPD (Regional Development Planning Agency) of North Lombok Regency demonstrated that halal and conventional tourism should not be positioned dichotomously. Through effective communication and strategic branding, both can coexist harmoniously and contribute to market share expansion. A similar perspective emerged from accommodation operators, who emphasised the importance of integration through flexible service adjustments, such as removing statues, providing prayer mats, or allowing staff to perform religious duties, without compromising the quality of the experience for non-Muslim tourists.

"Halal and conventional should not be positioned as opposites. With proper communication and branding, both can work harmoniously and expand the market... results of an interview with the BPPD of KLU Regency."

This approach represents a values-based, inclusive tourism model, where halal principles are adhered to without excluding others. This model has the potential to be replicated in destinations with dual market characteristics, such as Aceh, Makassar, and coastal Malaysia. Thus, halal tourism is positioned not merely as a niche segment but as an integral part of global destination sustainability strategies that emphasise inclusivity and service diversity.

Variables	Average	Median	Min	Max	Stdev	Skewnes	Observation
HT	3.95395	4	1	5	0.91593	-0.9562	19
CT	3.77444	4	1	5	1.07038	-0.7033	19

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Based on descriptive statistics, the HT variable shows a stronger assessment than CT, as seen from the average HT of 3.95, which is higher than the average CT of 3.77, while the median of both = 4, confirming that the majority of responses are in the high category. Both have a full range (min 1, max 5), but HT is more varied because the standard deviation of 1.07 is greater than that of HT 0.92, so that responses on CT tend to be less consistent. Negative skewness values in both (PL -0.96; CT -0.70) indicate a distribution skewed towards high scores (4–5) with few low responses, and a greater skewness in HT indicates a stronger concentration of high scores in HT. Furthermore, the presentation results based on the answers from the 19 respondents can be seen in the following figure,

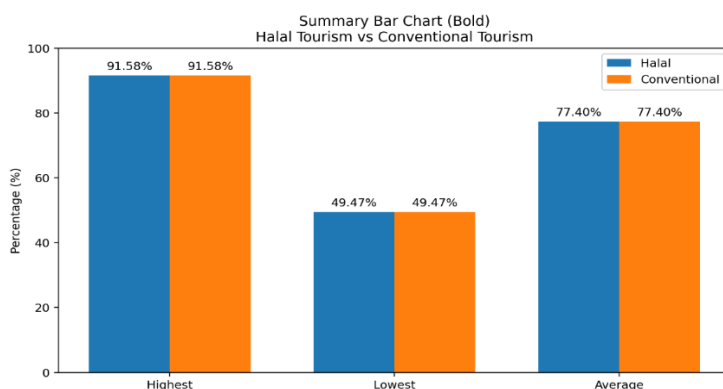


Chart 2: Halal Tourism vs Conventional Tourism

This bar chart shows that Halal Tourism and Conventional Tourism have exactly the same summary pattern: a highest score of 91.58%, a lowest score of 49.47%, and an overall average of 77.40%. This means that, in aggregate, respondents' performance/perceptions of both variables are at a “fairly high/good” level (average of 77%), but there is still one clear weak point (49.47%) that lowers performance and needs to be prioritized for improvement, while the 91.58% achievement can be treated as a benchmark for best practice. The similarity of the figures on these three measures also indicates that the differences between Halal and Conventional are not visible in the overall summary, so to differentiate the two more sharply, analysis needs to go down to the indicator level per item (not just the highest-lowest-average summary).

Points Analysis	Findings Interview & Observation (core)	Academic Literature (core)	IMTI 2023 (core)	GMTI 2024 (core)
Compliance industry	Hotel/restaurant: basic halal adoption; variations in accordance with the segment; foreign villas /hotels are more loose	Segmentation influence implementation (Ahmed & Akbaba, 2018); audit/ monitoring weak (Muharis et al, 2023)	NTB ranked 1st nationally (score 67); halal literacy gap in MSMEs	Indonesia ranks 2nd globally; strong access & services, weak sustainability & awareness of MSMEs
Role of government & regulation	Training/certification/promotion there is; certification felt complicated & heavy for MSMEs; more worship facilities, lots of initiatives, public.	Regulation Not yet binding; more in the form of recommendations (Ramadhani, 2021)	NTB's strong service, regulation & communication need to be strengthened	Promotion improving; governance & standardisation cross-sector weak
Contestation values & practices	Perpetrator business worried about foreign markets down if the Sharia is strict; religious figures ask consistency; villa flexible serving Muslims & non-Muslims	Difference perception actor field vs normative; top-down (Slamet et al ., 2022)	Emphasise communication; Aceh excels in public communication, NTB is relatively left behind	Campaign Muslim friendly based universal values to prevent non-Muslim alienation
Impact on branding & segmentation	Muslim tourists are comfortable; some non-Muslims see "halal" as having potential exclusivity .	The ideal halal destination is still inclusive (Battour & Ismail, 2016)	NTB excels: environment, Muslim-friendly & relatively inclusive	Friendliness strong; need promotion inclusive so as not to impressed exclusive
Obstacle structural & social	Cost certification, limited human resources, promotion less; worry about changing the local culture	Need adaptation culture & multi-stakeholder dialogue (Rojabi et al, 2023)	Many provinces have weak services/environment; NTB is relatively superior, but HR & MSMEs are problematic	Weaknesses in the indicator sustainability (environmental & social)
Integrated model opportunities	zoning in accommodation without close service to the public; coexistence assessed, strengthening the market	Tourist inclusive-based mark	NTB example integration accessibility – communication – services	Push halal- based innovation, an inclusive & friendly environment (tourism green)
Balance model recommendations	3 pillars: (1) segmentation & value zones, (2) policy adaptive – inclusive, (3) education & promotion collaborative	Destination strategy-based value (Fahmi et al, 2023)	NTB can be an example of halal-conventional integration	-based branding universal values (comfort – security – friendliness) as a power of global competitiveness

Table 2: Analysis of Muslim-Friendly Tourism in Lombok - Balance Model of Halal and Conventional Tourism Framework

This study proposes a Halal-Conventional Tourism Balance Model in Lombok with three pillars. First, value-based market segmentation and tourism zones allow tourists to choose between halal and open zones, and provide flexibility for MSMEs in implementing halal certification. Second, adaptive and inclusive policies through dialogue between government, industry, and the community to harmonise regulations and service standards. Third, joint education and promotion through digital campaigns and cross-stakeholder training strengthen the understanding and practice of inclusive halal tourism.

This model bridges the value gap between halal and conventional tourism while strengthening Lombok's global competitiveness. This idea aligns with Fahmi, Kasmin, and Wijayanti (2023). which emphasises the importance of values-based strategies to develop Muslim-friendly destinations that remain attractive to various tourist segments.

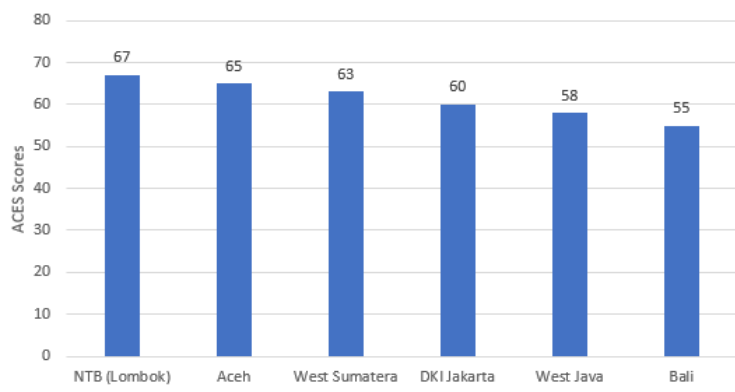


Chart 3: Comparison of IMTI 2023 ACES Scores (Selected Provinces)
Indonesian Muslim Travel Index 2023 [source]

The graph shows that NTB (Lombok) has the highest score (67) compared to Aceh (63) and West Sumatra (62), indicating that the implementation of halal standards in Lombok is better in terms of service quality and accessibility. However, interviews revealed that implementation is uneven: hotels for domestic Muslim tourists are more compliant, while accommodations for foreign tourists are more lax. Thus, the implementation of halal standards in Lombok is strong at the macro level, but weak at the micro level (Aziz, Ghofur, and Hidayati 2021; Prawiro and Fathudin 2023; Putro et al. 2024; Hidayati et al. 2024; and Ritonga, Ilhami Nasution, and Tambunan 2025).

Aceh excels in the Environment and Communications (IMTI) dimension, but West Nusa Tenggara remains the national champion. Lombok's halal image remains linked to conventional tourism, and concerns exist that strict halal enforcement could reduce its appeal to international tourists. West Nusa Tenggara's high score reflects its success in maintaining its global appeal through a combination of halal and conventional tourism. IMTI ACES considers West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) a national benchmark in balancing halal and conventional tourism. NTB excels in accessibility, is flexible to the needs of Muslim guests, and remains welcoming to non-Muslim tourists. This demonstrates that the halal-conventional balance is a real strategy, not just talk. The next challenge is to avoid the impression of exclusivity in halal branding (Battour et al. 2018; Priyatmoko and Maulana 2022; Ulfa et al. 2023; and Abdullah et al. 2025).

The IMTI ACES 2023 graph shows that Lombok leads in the development of halal tourism at the national level. However, this achievement is based on the dynamic contestation between halal orientation and conventional tourism practices, reflecting Lombok's efforts to find a balance between the needs of Muslim tourists and the conventional market. The IMTI graph not only demonstrates performance but also the process of value negotiation and integrative strategies, which are the focus of this research.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Lombok has successfully developed halal tourism with the support of government policies and stakeholder collaboration, despite inconsistencies in the implementation of halal standards at the MSME level. The main weakness of this study is the limited scope and variables measured, so the results may be limited to Lombok. Future research should broaden the scope and delve deeper into the economic and socio-cultural aspects.

The practical implication of these findings is the need for increased coordination between relevant parties to create inclusive and flexible halal tourism policies. Integrating halal and conventional tourism, with appropriate service adjustments, will enhance Lombok's competitiveness as a global destination welcoming to all travellers. These findings contribute to the development of more adaptive and relevant halal tourism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

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