



Navigating Halal Tourism: Perceptions and Behaviors of Non-Muslims in the Muslim-Minority Context of Manado City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the perceptions and behaviors of the non-Muslim community in Manado towards halal tourism, particularly in the context of a Muslim-minority region. As halal tourism gains momentum, driven by Muslim travelers seeking destinations that align with Islamic principles, it becomes crucial to understand how this tourism concept is perceived in areas with predominantly non-Muslim populations. Using a qualitative approach with a descriptive methodology, data were gathered through in-depth interviews and observations, followed by analysis based on Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The findings reveal diverse perceptions of halal tourism among non-Muslim residents of Manado. While most participants associate halal tourism with halal food and an environment adhering to Islamic principles, others interpret it more broadly, relating it to cleanliness, orderliness, and respect for social and cultural diversity norms. Despite these varying perspectives, most participants favor developing Manado as a halal tourism destination. These findings provide valuable insights into the integration of halal tourism in non-Muslim-majority contexts, offering implications for policy development and the future of halal tourism in Indonesia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of Indonesia's most significant sources of foreign exchange revenue, contributing over USD 20 billion or approximately 17.36% of total national income (Yasin et al., 2025). According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the number of domestic tourist trips in Indonesia reached 825.80 million in 2023, marking a 12.37% increase from the previous year and representing the highest record since 2019, indicating a notable recovery in the tourism sector post-pandemic (Ritzi, 2024). North Sulawesi's tourism sector has grown substantially, driven by its unique geographic appeal and increasing international tourist arrivals (Barus, 2018). In February 2024, the province recorded 3,384 international tourist arrivals, reflecting a 41.50% increase compared to the same period in 2023. Most visitors originated from China, Singapore, the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands, comprising 66.92% of Chinese tourists (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024).

In recent years, halal tourism has emerged as a key focus area for tourism development in Indonesia (Effendi et al., 2021). As the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, with 87.2% of its 270.20 million people identifying as Muslim (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Samarinda, 2024), Indonesia represents a vast and growing market for halal travel experiences (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). The rising awareness among Muslim travelers regarding the importance of religiously compliant travel has contributed to the expansion of this sector (Adel et al., 2021; Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2021; Henderson, 2016). Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs, Tourism, and Creative Economy launched the "Wajib Halal Oktober (WHO) 2024" initiative to accelerate halal tourism development (Astiwaru, 2024). This program targets the halal certification of food and beverage businesses in 3,000 tourist villages, including 90 villages in North Sulawesi. One example is Lakban Beach in Ratatotok Timur Village, North Sulawesi, which has been designated as part of this initiative (Tigauw, 2024).

Despite being a Muslim-minority province—where 62.87% of the population adheres to Christianity—North Sulawesi has demonstrated notable support for halal tourism development (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). A study by Arif (2023) revealed that 76.4% of residents favor the province's transformation into a Muslim-friendly tourism destination. Furthermore, 83.85% of respondents from outside North Sulawesi expressed a willingness to visit should the province be officially promoted as such. This underscores the potential for halal tourism expansion beyond traditional Muslim-majority regions.

Manado, the provincial capital, plays a pivotal role in the tourism ecosystem of eastern Indonesia. Renowned for its natural beauty, cultural diversity, and strong interfaith harmony, the city is a gateway for domestic and international travelers. Its pristine beaches, vibrant marine biodiversity, and mountainous landscapes present enormous tourism potential. While Manado's tourism infrastructure has expanded rapidly, the integration of halal tourism remains underutilized. Nevertheless, the city's well-established culture of tolerance offers a unique opportunity to explore the compatibility of halal tourism in non-Muslim-majority settings (Barus, 2018).

It is therefore essential to examine how non-Muslim communities in Manado perceive halal tourism within their socio-cultural and economic contexts. Various factors shape public perceptions, including familiarity with the halal concept, previous engagement in the tourism industry, and personal interactions with Muslim tourists. Manado is celebrated for inter-religious coexistence (Larson, 2022; Nelwan, 2022). It offers an ideal setting to investigate whether the local

non-Muslim populace views halal tourism as an economic opportunity, a social challenge, or a coexisting complement to existing tourism models.

Prior research supports the relevance of this inquiry. Fitra & Hidayat (2023) found that halal services and food offerings significantly enhance travel experiences, positively affecting tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Meanwhile, Nasution & Lestari (2024) discovered that non-Muslim residents in Muslim-minority areas show varying degrees of acceptance depending on their professional background. Business professionals, for instance, were more receptive to halal tourism, while academics called for deeper discourse, and others expressed outright rejection of the term "halal tourism."

Given these dynamics, this study explores how non-Muslim residents in Manado perceive halal tourism, focusing on culinary preferences, accommodation standards, and social norms related to religious compliance. Understanding these perceptions is critical to identifying both the opportunities and barriers associated with implementing halal tourism in Manado. Moreover, the study addresses a gap in current academic literature, highlighting perspectives from a religious minority context. This research contributes to a more inclusive and comprehensive framework for halal tourism development. Thus, this study seeks to provide empirical insights into how non-Muslims in Manado understand and engage with the concept of halal tourism. The findings will inform policy and practice by identifying key enablers and constraints for developing sustainable and inclusive halal tourism strategies in Muslim-minority regions.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to understand non-Muslim communities' perceptions of halal tourism in Manado City (M. B. Miles et al., 2018). This approach was chosen because it allows for exploring the complexity of respondents' views, attitudes, and understandings within the specific and dynamic social context. The data collected will be analyzed interpretatively, enabling the researcher to capture the more profound meaning related to non-Muslim perceptions of halal tourism development in the city.

The research subjects consist of non-Muslim residents of Manado City, selected from various social groups, including hospitality workers, tourism academics, office employees, and the general public. This diversity is intended to cover multiple relevant perspectives in understanding the phenomenon of halal tourism. The research object is their perceptions, understanding, and behaviors toward the concept and implementation of halal tourism in Manado, particularly in the context of the city's religious and cultural diversity.

This study includes primary and secondary data (Creswell, 2014). Primary data will be collected through in-depth interviews with five informants selected based on specific criteria representing different social groups in Manado. The informants are: Informant A (male, representing the general public from the private sector), Informant B (female, representing tourism practitioners, such as hotel marketing), Informant C (female, representing the general public, civil servants), Informant D (female, representing academics in tourism, a lecturer), and Informant E (female, representing tourism experts, a professor). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to allow informants to express their views freely in line with the research focus.

In addition to interviews, field observations, and documentation will be used to enrich the data (Creswell, 1999). Observations will be made to provide insights into the social dynamics at halal tourism destinations in Manado. At the same time, documentation will include relevant literature such as journals, books, government reports, and legal documents related to the topic. The collected data will then be analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model developed by M. Miles et al. (2014), which consists of three main stages: (1) Data Reduction, which involves filtering and selecting data relevant to the research focus; (2) Data Presentation, which involves organizing the data into narratives, tables, and diagrams to facilitate understanding; and (3) Conclusion Drawing, which involves interpreting the data to derive valid and significant findings about the research objectives. Thematic analysis will be used to identify patterns and themes emerging from the interviews and secondary data sources, which will then be critically analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of non-Muslim perceptions of halal tourism in Manado City.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Perspectives on Tourism

In Arabic, "tourism" is called *Siyahah*, which means travel or exploration. Moreover, the Quran mentions other terms related to travel, such as *Sair* (journey), which appears in Surah 29:20, Surah 30:9, Surah 67:15, and Surah 71:19-20, and *Intisyar* (scattering), found in Surah Al-Jumu'ah, verse 10. These verses encourage humanity to embark on journeys to seek knowledge, reflect upon past events, learn from history, and ultimately recognize the greatness of Allah (Amir Abdullah et al., 2020; Timothy & Iverson, 2006).

Additionally, a hadith narrated by Ahmad, Al-Baihaqi, and Abdu al-Razzaq states that travel benefits health and economic opportunities (Flaherty et al., 2025). Several scholars have also discussed the act of traveling (Islam, 1996; Touati, 2010). Al-Qasimi (1997) in 'Mahasin al-Ta'wil', asserts that those encouraged to travel visit different places to learn from historical relics and derive lessons and benefits.' in 'Radd al-Muhtar', further clarifies that the default ruling on travel is *mubah* (permissible), except in cases where the travel has specific religious purposes such as Hajj or Jihad, making it an act of worship, or when the travel aims at criminal activities such as robbery, which would render it sinful. According to fiqh principles, the general rule is that all forms of *muamalat* (transactions or actions) are permissible unless clear evidence prohibits them (Rahmat et al., 2023). Preventing harm takes precedence over seeking benefit, which also applies to travel (Washil & Azzam, 2023).

These Islamic teachings indicate that tourism in Islam is inherently *mubah* (permissible), and indeed, the Quran encourages travel for personal growth and reflection. However, this does not mean that tourism is left without regulations. Instead, it must adhere to Islamic principles, ensuring that all tourism activities align with Islamic norms and values, thus preventing violations or conflicts with religious teachings. Based on this, Kuncoro (2022) concludes that Islam permits and encourages tourism, provided it does not violate the principles of the faith.

In support of halal tourism development in Indonesia, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a fatwa outlining guidelines for tourism based on sharia principles (Adinugraha et al., 2021; Wardhani, 2023). This fatwa includes essential principles for organizing halal tourism, as well as regulations regarding the roles of stakeholders, contracts, management of sharia hotels, handling of tourists, development of tourist destinations, and services such as spas, saunas, massages, travel agencies, and tour guides. According to these guidelines, tourism is defined as the activity of

individuals or groups traveling to specific destinations for recreation, personal development, or to observe the uniqueness and attractions of a place within a limited period. Meanwhile, Sharia tourism refers to tourism conducted by Sharia principles (Mulyati, 2019).

Effendi et al. (2021) define halal tourism as a form of tourism that offers services and facilities in line with Sharia principles, such as halal food, Muslim-friendly accommodations, and easily accessible places of worship. This definition underscores the importance of halal tourism as a market segment and a holistic experience that caters to Muslim tourists' religious and cultural needs. Therefore, halal tourism allows businesses to tap into a growing global market of Muslim travelers, fostering inclusivity while respecting Islamic principles.

Implementation of Halal Tourism in Manado City

Community and Tourism Profile

Manado, the capital of North Sulawesi Province, comprises 11 sub-districts and 87 villages, located on the northern tip of Sulawesi Island. This city is recognized as a hub for trade, education, and tourism in Eastern Indonesia. Its breathtaking natural landscapes and diverse cultural and religious practices have helped Manado become a prime destination for domestic and international tourists. Known as the "City of Tolerance," Manado boasts a harmonious blend of various religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, with residents living peacefully. The openness and hospitality of the people of Manado have been key attractions for tourists visiting the city (Astuti et al., 2022).

The population primarily comprises the Minahasa ethnic group, renowned for their community-oriented culture. Other ethnic groups residing in Manado include Gorontalo, Sangir, Tionghoa, and Bugis, each contributing to the city's rich cultural tapestry (Ismail et al., 2020). According to 2023 statistics, Manado's population stands at 458,582, with 62.87% of the population adhering to Christianity, while Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities also thrive peacefully. A substantial social value, "*Torang Samua Basudara*" (We are all brothers), reflects the inclusive and tolerant nature of the city's social life (Winoto et al., 2024).

Various Muslim communities within Manado, such as Kampung Banjar, Kampung Islam, and Kampung Pondol, symbolize the city's multicultural harmony. These neighborhoods illustrate the coexistence of Islam and Christianity, and with Muslims accounting for approximately 30% of the population, Manado represents a microcosm of Indonesia's religious diversity and unity (Taufani, 2020). Additionally, Manado residents are known for their welcoming attitude toward tourists, further enhancing the city's appeal to visitors (Durian et al., 2021). This openness and friendliness are essential to the city's tourism strategy, helping visitors feel comfortable and enjoy their time there.

Manado is a renowned tourism destination, offering various attractions, including marine, religious, and eco-tourism experiences. The city's stunning natural beauty, combined with rich social values, makes it one of the leading tourism destinations in Indonesia. Some notable attractions in Manado include Bunaken National Park, which is celebrated for its underwater biodiversity. Bunaken is a haven for divers and snorkeling enthusiasts due to its incredible coral

reefs and diverse species of tropical fish. Other nearby islands, such as Siladen and Naen, offer spectacular underwater vistas (Astuti et al., 2022; Durian et al., 2021).

In addition to marine tourism, Manado is home to other enticing destinations like Malalayang Beach, famous for its breathtaking sunsets and local culinary delights such as grilled fish with rica-rica sauce and fried bananas with sambal roa. The Boulevard 2 area is a culinary hotspot for seafood, while the Wakeke area serves traditional Manado dishes like Tinutuan and Mie Cakalang. Mount Tumpa offers panoramic views of the city for mountain tourism. Religious pilgrimage sites such as the Tomb of National Hero Tuanku Imam Bonjol in Pineleng and the Tomb of Kyai Modjo in Kampung Jawa Tondano are also notable. The Manado State Museum also houses collections depicting local culture, including traditional houses, costumes, and tools (Pomantow et al., 2022; Tangian et al., 2019).

Halal Tourism Regulations and Implementation in Manado

The Fatwa of the National Sharia Council (DSN MUI) Number 108/DSN-MUI/X/2016 on the Guidelines for the Organization of Sharia-Based Tourism was issued in response to the Islamic principles related to travel, as outlined in the Quranic verses and Hadiths. The provision of halal goods and services in tourism must be accompanied by halal certification issued by the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia (Kemenag RI). This fatwa provides solutions to contemporary social phenomena (Fariana, 2017). Through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the government has taken concrete steps to promote halal tourism, including expediting halal certification for food and beverage producers near tourist destinations. North Sulawesi is home to around 90 halal-certified tourism villages, including the Lakban Beach in Ratatotok Timur Village, Minahasa Tenggara District (Tigauw, 2024). This is a testament to the commitment to developing an inclusive tourism ecosystem that ensures Muslim tourists enjoy culinary and service offerings that adhere to Sharia principles.

While Manado has not yet been officially designated as a halal tourism destination, it holds significant potential for developing this sector. The city's main advantage lies in its welcoming community and strong values of tolerance, creating a conducive environment for Muslim tourists (Pomantow et al., 2022; Tangian et al., 2019). Several tourist sites in Manado and the surrounding areas already provide Muslim-friendly facilities, such as accessible places of worship within tourist areas. Hotels and resorts have adapted by offering services in line with halal tourism guidelines, including halal food, Qibla direction in rooms, and adequate prayer facilities. Many culinary establishments along Boulevard 2 are halal-certified, and shopping malls have Muslim-friendly amenities. Furthermore, during Ramadan in recent years, several cafés have been established with guaranteed halal offerings (Iqbal & Lestary, 2023; Rawung et al., 2023; Syarifuddin & Abdullah, 2022). With these developments and the growing demand for halal tourism, Manado is poised to become a leading destination for Muslim travelers shortly.

From a legal standpoint, fatwas are not legally binding, but they serve as guidelines that can be transformed into formal regulations by the government (Mulyati, 2019). As Johar (2019) states, although a fatwa issued by MUI does not have the same binding force as positive law, it can acquire binding authority when it is incorporated into national regulations, such as government regulations (PP) or regional regulations (PERDA) at the provincial or municipal level. After the issuance of Fatwa DSN-MUI No. 108/DSN-MUI/X/2016 regarding Sharia Tourism Guidelines, the government of West Nusa Tenggara (Lombok), which was designated as a halal tourism

destination in 2015, was prompted to regulate halal tourism practices through PERDA No. 2 of 2016 on Halal Tourism, making it the first province in Indonesia to have a dedicated regulation on halal tourism.

The guidelines emphasize that halal tourism is not just about providing halal food but also ensuring the overall environment is welcoming for Muslim tourists. Several key principles outlined in the fatwa include: (a) the provision of halal products—food, beverages, and other products offered in the tourism ecosystem must be halal-certified; (b) availability of prayer facilities—easy access to prayer spaces for Muslim tourists; (c) safety and comfort—ensuring a safe environment free from practices contradictory to Islamic law, such as gambling and alcohol consumption; (d) transparency in services—clear communication regarding the halal status of products and services (Adinugraha et al., 2021; Afif et al., 2023; Wardhani, 2023).

As a city with a majority non-Muslim population, Manado faces challenges in adopting the concept of halal tourism, although various initiatives have been undertaken. Halal tourism is often perceived as an attempt to "Islamize" tourism, whereas this concept is inherently inclusive and offers economic benefits for all stakeholders. Many tourism industry players still do not fully understand the halal tourism concept, and some food and beverage products are still difficult to find in halal versions. However, with a more inclusive and collaborative approach, halal tourism in Manado can grow into a profitable sector that attracts Muslim tourists.

Halal Tourism in Manado: A Multidimensional Perception

Perception is a process in which individuals organize and interpret environmental stimuli to form specific understandings and attitudes (Qiong, 2017; Rookes & Willson, 2005). In this study, the perception theory is utilized to analyze how non-Muslim communities perceive the concept of halal tourism, based on their experiences, culture, and the information they have received (Gibson et al., 2013). Based on the interviews, several informants provided insights into their understanding of halal tourism, shedding light on how different population segments perceive its significance, especially in Manado, where Muslims represent a minority. Informant A, an entrepreneur from Manado, shared a perspective linking halal tourism primarily to halal food. In their view, halal tourism is closely related to culinary experiences, especially the distinction between halal and non-halal food. Informant A elaborated:

"We believe halal tourism is similar to culinary tourism, distinguishing between halal and haram food. Halal tourism refers to food, both halal and non-halal. Halal tourism means there are destinations for Muslims and Christians, such as spiritual tourism, Umrah for Muslims, and trips to Israel for Christians." (Interview, Allen, Entrepreneur, Manado, 2025).

This statement suggests that for many non-Muslims, halal tourism is first and foremost associated with food offerings (Billah et al., 2020; Ramli et al., 2023). However, Informant A also alludes to a broader understanding of halal tourism, seeing it not just as a culinary experience but as a spiritual or religious travel that can appeal to different religious communities, such as Muslims visiting Mecca for Umrah or Christians visiting Israel. This reflects that halal tourism can extend beyond food to include religious and spiritual elements.

In contrast, Informant B, a public servant, emphasized the centrality of food in defining halal tourism but highlighted the importance of ensuring that destinations are compatible with Muslim values. She explained:

"Halal tourism is tourism to places that provide halal food suitable for Muslims. The most important factor is food. For tourist destinations, whether for Muslims or Christians, we always have a purpose before we go to a place. We want to ensure the place is suitable for us. For Muslims, some places, like beaches, may not be suitable. We always check whether the place and food suit us before visiting." (Interview, Jeane, Public Servant, Manado, 2025).

This viewpoint reinforces the idea that the availability of halal food primarily defines halal tourism (Ayyub, 2015; Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2021). However, Informant B also touches on the importance of the broader environment, emphasizing that Muslim tourists are likely to consider factors such as the destination's cultural values, dress codes, and overall alignment with their personal beliefs. The perception that halal tourism encompasses not just food but also the suitability of the destination for Muslim tourists indicates a nuanced understanding of what halal tourism entails.

From the hospitality industry perspective, Informant C, a hotel marketing professional, provided insights into how halal tourism is perceived in the context of hotels and the accommodation sector. She said:

"Since I work in the hotel industry, I believe halal tourism in hotels is about providing services, like offering halal food in restaurants. Halal food is available in nearly all hotels across Indonesia." (Interview, Freny, Hotel Marketing, Manado, 2025).

This statement highlights the strong link between halal tourism and food services, especially in the hospitality industry (Bukido et al., 2025; Jakiyudin et al., 2024; Ramli et al., 2023). However, Informant C acknowledged that halal hotel tourism goes beyond food to encompass other Muslim-friendly services. This includes the provision of halal certification, Muslim-friendly facilities such as prayer spaces, and operational policies that align with Islamic principles, such as avoiding alcohol and providing gender-segregated areas for activities like swimming.

Informant D, an academic, provided a broader perspective on halal tourism, expanding its scope beyond religious and culinary aspects to include health, social, and cultural considerations. She shared:

"Halal tourism is not only about religious needs but also about catering to people with specific health requirements. Some halal tourism places are designed for those who cannot consume certain foods for religious or health reasons. It could also refer to locations where guests must respect social norms, such as appropriate dress codes for certain areas." (Interview, Dina, Academic, Manado, 2025).

In this case, Informant D recognized that halal tourism can serve a wider audience, including individuals with health conditions restricting certain foods or dietary preferences (Alia et al., 2024; Battour et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2022). Furthermore, she pointed out halal tourism's social and cultural aspects, noting that respect for local customs, such as appropriate dress codes, is essential to preventing conflicts between tourists and local communities. The example of Naen Island,

where religious and cultural practices coexist with tourism, illustrates how halal tourism can be both inclusive and respectful of diverse traditions.

The varied perspectives provided by the informants suggest that halal tourism, as understood by the people of Manado, is multifaceted. While food remains a central feature, there is a growing recognition that halal tourism extends to other elements, such as spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions. These findings are consistent with the idea that halal tourism should be viewed as an inclusive concept that addresses the diverse needs of Muslim tourists, incorporating not just halal food but also suitable accommodations, services, and cultural sensitivity.

In the context of Manado, where Muslims are a minority, the idea of halal tourism is shaped by a mix of religious practices, social norms, and tourism facilities. For non-Muslim communities, halal tourism is not just about having halal food; it is about respecting the region's cultural and religious diversity. The responses from informants highlight that halal tourism involves more than just food—it also includes accommodations, religious tourism, health, and cultural awareness. As halal tourism grows, especially in diverse and minority areas, understanding these different perspectives will be crucial for its success.

Non-Muslim Behavior Towards Halal Tourism in Manado

In the context of the growing interest in halal tourism in Manado, the perspectives shared by local informants reveal a blend of openness, caution, and strategic thinking regarding the implementation of halal tourism in the city, particularly from the standpoint of non-Muslim residents. These insights are important for understanding how halal tourism could be integrated into a region where Islam is a minority religion. Local customs, values, and economic interests must be considered.

Informant A, an entrepreneur from Manado, expressed a positive outlook on halal tourism, underscoring the value of unity and tolerance in the local community. He noted:

"In my opinion, a positive response is fine as long as we follow the motto 'Torang Samua Basudara' (we are all brothers) and support and look out for each other. I think it is perfectly acceptable." (Interview, Allen, Entrepreneur, Manado, 2025).

This sentiment reflects the local principle of "*Torang Samua Basudara*" ("We are all brothers"), a phrase often invoked in Manado to highlight the city's ethos of mutual respect and inclusivity (Astuti et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2020). Informant A emphasized that, as long as halal tourism is developed with respect for the area's diverse religious and cultural makeup, it would be welcomed. He noted that for most of Manado's residents, including the Christian population, there is no significant objection to promoting halal tourism to advance local tourism and the region's economy.

While Informant A supported halal tourism, Informant B, a government official, took a more cautious approach. She highlighted the necessity of creating a balance between halal tourism and the existing culinary traditions in Manado, many of which cater to non-Muslim tastes. She pointed out:

"For example, if it is specified in the tourism sector, such as in Tondano, which is focused solely on natural tourism, it could be proposed there." (Interview, Jeane, Public Servant, Manado, 2025).

Informant B advocated for a segmented approach, suggesting that halal tourism could thrive in specific areas of Manado, such as Tondano, which is known for its natural beauty and is less reliant on halal culinary offerings (Dabamona et al., 2025; Jia & Chaozhi, 2020). She expressed concern that an all-encompassing approach to halal tourism in the city could negatively impact non-halal businesses. Thus, she proposed that establishing halal-certified zones could ensure that the local economy would not be harmed while meeting Muslim travelers' needs.

Informant C, a hotel marketing professional, added to the discussion by emphasizing the growing demand for Muslim-friendly amenities and services in Manado. She noted:

"Many guests from outside the region, especially those coming in Muslim tour groups, require facilities that are more accommodating to their needs." (Interview, Freny, Hotel Marketing, Manado, 2025).

With the influx of Muslim tourists, especially in organized groups, the demand for halal food, prayer spaces, and culturally appropriate accommodations has risen (Aji et al., 2021; Han et al., 2019). Informant C acknowledged that while the hotel sector in Manado has begun to cater to these needs, there remains a challenge in finding enough halal dining options outside of the hotel environment. She noted that visitors often rely on hotel recommendations for halal food and pointed to the Sindulang area as a popular choice for its seafood restaurants. Despite this, she recognized that the lack of halal options in the broader city posed an obstacle to fully realizing the potential of halal tourism.

Meanwhile, Informant D, an academic from Manado, presented a more nuanced perspective, suggesting that halal tourism should be implemented selectively rather than universally across the city. She suggested:

"In my opinion, halal tourism does not have to be implemented throughout the entire city, but it would be better to apply it in specific locations." (Interview, Dina, Academic, Manado, 2025).

Her viewpoint acknowledged that Manado's Christian majority could find certain practices, such as restrictions on non-halal foods or religious dress codes, potentially problematic in mixed-religion areas. Thus, she advocated for a careful, zoned approach that respects religious and cultural differences. By adopting such a strategy, she believed halal tourism could be introduced without causing unnecessary tension between religious groups, fostering a harmonious balance between the needs of Muslim visitors and the local culture.

Lastly, Informant E, a tourism expert with experience in the development of halal tourism, expressed a strong belief in the feasibility of halal tourism in Manado, despite the city's predominantly Christian population. She stated,

"In my view, as an expert, we should develop it because it does not mean that we cannot develop halal tourism in areas where the majority is Christian." (Interview, Lagarens, Professor, Manado, 2025).

Informant E emphasized that the development of halal tourism was not restricted to Muslim-majority areas and could be integrated into Manado's existing tourism framework (Billah et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2022). However, she underscored the importance of preparing the necessary infrastructure and facilities, such as female diving instructors for Muslim women and halal certification for hotels and restaurants, to ensure the comfort and safety of Muslim tourists. She pointed out that there needs to be clarity in the certification process to avoid confusion and ensure trust among Muslim visitors. "So, halal tourism is excellent, but the instruments must be prepared." She added, highlighting the need for well-trained staff, adequate facilities, and proper certification to build a reliable halal tourism system in the region.

The informants' perspectives emphasize a common recognition of the potential for halal tourism in Manado, while acknowledging the need for a thoughtful and inclusive approach that respects Manado's diverse religious and cultural environment. Success depends on finding a balance between meeting the needs of Muslim tourists and preserving local traditions and economic interests, making halal tourism a mutually beneficial opportunity for all parties involved.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined non-Muslim communities' perceptions and behaviors towards halal tourism in Manado, a city characterized by religious and cultural diversity. The findings reveal a broad spectrum of attitudes towards halal tourism, shaped by food preferences, cultural values, and economic interests. While halal tourism is generally viewed positively, particularly from the perspective of fostering unity and inclusivity, concerns regarding its integration into Manado's existing tourism ecosystem are also evident. Non-Muslim residents of Manado, including entrepreneurs, government officials, and hospitality professionals, expressed a range of perspectives. Some support the development of halal tourism, recognizing its potential to enhance the city's appeal to Muslim travelers and promote economic growth. Others, however, advocate for a selective, zoned approach that balances the needs of Muslim tourists with the preservation of local cultural traditions and culinary diversity.

Halal tourism in Manado holds significant promise, especially given the city's strong values of tolerance and its existing infrastructure for Muslim-friendly services. However, challenges remain in fully accommodating halal tourism outside the hospitality sector, particularly culinary offerings. The key to successful implementation lies in strategic planning that respects Muslim tourists' needs and Manado's diverse cultural context. Ultimately, the development of halal tourism in Manado should be approached in a way that fosters economic and social inclusivity, ensuring that all communities, regardless of religion, benefit from the growing tourism sector. So, Manado has the potential to position itself as a leading destination for Muslim tourists while maintaining its reputation as a model of religious harmony and cultural respect.

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