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Halal tourism is traveling fast: Community perceptions and implications

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ABSTRACT

Although halal tourists are a growing, attractive market segment, research on the topic is still incipient. This study sought to answer three questions. What opportunities and challenges exist for those promoting halal tourism? What are tourism stakeholders and communities' perceptions of halal tourism? How can halal tourist facilities enhance their image in order to become favorite halal tourism destinations? The research was conducted in New Zealand and based on a one-day symposium comprising panel discussions of the questions. The 100 participants were tourism and hospitality professionals, government authorities, community leaders, ethnic community representatives, business owners, and Muslim leaders. The findings have theoretical, managerial, and societal implications due to halal tourists' distinctive needs, including their religious and social travel motivations.

1. Introduction

Although halal tourism caters to a growing, attractive market segment (Biancone, Secinaro, Radwan, & Kamal, 2019), research on this topic is still in a quite early stage (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019). Halal tourism mainly provides products and services that meet the needs of Muslim travelers, facilitating worship and meeting dietary requirements that help these individuals conform to Islamic teachings (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019). The market for halal tourism includes travelers from Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei, as well as Muslims from South Asia, Europe, the United States (US), and the United Kingdom (UK) (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2018). Halal facilities not only include special food but also distinct entertainment, cultural activities, attire, cosmetics, and business ethics that attract tourists from these countries (Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, & Kim, 2019; Oktadiana, Pearce, & Chon, 2016).

According to the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector-Thomson Reuters's (2017) estimates, Muslim populations globally spent a total of 151 billion US dollars (\$) on travel in 2015, excluding Hajj and Umrah trips. This amount is 11% of the global travel market's expenditures of \$1.3 trillion and a growth of 4.9% over the previous year, which is higher than the 3% overall yearly increase in the global market. Muslim spending on travel is expected to reach \$243

billion by 2021, with a compound annual growth rate of 8.25% since 2015. The Muslim market for travel is the second largest globally, just after China (\$168 billion), when this group of tourists is compared to the largest source countries in tourism. Notably, the Muslim market comes in ahead of the US (\$147 billion). Top source countries of Muslim tourists based on 2014 expenditures were Saudi Arabia (\$19.2 billion), the United Arab Emirates (\$15.1 billion), Qatar (\$11.7 billion), Kuwait (\$9 billion), Indonesia (\$9.1 billion), and Iran (\$7.2 billion).

From a regional perspective, Muslim tourism expenditure was the highest in the Middle East and North Africa-Gulf Cooperation Council (\$54 billion), Middle East and North Africa-Other (\$26 billion), and East Asia (\$21 billion), followed by Western Europe (\$17 billion) and Central Asia (\$10 billion). The Middle East and North Africa-Gulf Cooperation Council region is responsible for 36% of the total travel spending by Muslims even though this region only contains 3% of the world's Muslim population. Although various studies have been published on motivational factors for tourists coming from Western countries, research on the emerging halal tourism market and the motivations of tourist originating from countries seeking halal facilities is still scarce (Han et al., 2019; Stephenson, 2014).

Prior studies that have focused on this topic from a Western perspective have used various approaches. For example, Stephenson (2014) examined the tangible elements of Islamic hospitality in both Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and non-OIC countries.

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Jeaheng, Al-Ansi, and Han (2019), in turn, identified hotel attributes and evaluated how these features strengthen Muslims' intention to visit Thailand. Al-Ansi and Han (2019) studied Muslim tourists' behavior toward a non-OIC destination. The cited authors modeled halal-friendly destinations' performance as a combination of food and meals, social environments and ambiance, facilities and amenities, local residences and staff members, information and services, and uniforms and attire.

In addition, Gabdrakhmanov, Biktimirov, Rozhko, and Khafizova (2016) argue that halal tourism's success in Russia depends largely on the food offered and halal-friendly hotels and services, including Islamic banks under public management. Razzaq, Hall, and Prayag (2016) further analyzed 367 accommodation websites in New Zealand, finding that only three sites specifically mention halal accommodations. From a different conceptual perspective, Han et al. (2019) developed a theoretical model to test South Korean destination attributes' impact and identify how relevant these features are to forming a non-Muslim country destination image. Halal tourism in Japan has been found to have great potential given the increasing number of Muslims worldwide and these individuals' growing tendency to travel abroad (Samori, Saleh, & Khalid, 2016). Oktadiana et al. (2016) report that previous studies concentrating on this topic from a non-Muslim country perspective have mainly focused on halal tourists' needs in terms of cultural patterns.

Malaysia and Singapore have been the most frequently researched contexts (Prayag, 2020; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019) in this field, while studies of tourism destinations such as New Zealand have rarely focused on halal tourists. One exception is Razzaq et al.'s (2016) research, which analyzed New Zealand accommodation websites. The present research thus answered calls made in previous publications to extend halal tourism studies' geographical scope, in this case targeting New Zealand as an example of a Western values-based society. According to Battour and Ismail (2016, p. 153), more research is needed on "how to make non-Muslim destinations friendly towards halal tourism." More recently, Cuesta-Valiño, Bolifa, and Barriopedro (2020) identified a gap in terms of the literature on Muslim-friendly destinations. Destinations that seek to attract Muslim visitors must now be not only aware of halal tourists' needs but also offer appropriate products and services to this market segment (Han et al., 2019).

Previous halal tourism studies have adopted a conceptual approach (Gabdrakhmanov et al., 2016; Stephenson, 2014) or considered a restricted number of tourism stakeholders in empirical studies. Quantitative studies have mainly gathered survey data on Muslim travelers (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Han et al., 2019; Jeaheng et al., 2019; Oktadiana et al., 2016). Qualitative studies have been based on in-depth interviews of Muslim travelers, tour operators, and academics (Han et al., 2019).

Therefore, the current research's main objective was to examine varied stakeholders' awareness and perceptions of halal tourism preparedness (Freeman, 1984) in New Zealand. This study sought to add to the literature by offering a deeper understanding of how to make New Zealand as a destination friendlier to halal tourism. The research involved collecting data from a wide range of stakeholders, namely, tourism and hospitality entities, government authorities, community leaders, ethnic community representatives, small business owners, and local Muslim leaders. This study thus aimed to expand halal tourism research by widening the field's geographical scope to cover New Zealand. The research was designed to integrate multiple stakeholders' perspectives, including tourism businesses and experts and community organizations in New Zealand (e.g. the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand and Waikato Muslim Association). Therefore, this study's contribution to the existing literature is an examination of local stakeholders' perspectives on halal tourism within a Western-style English-speaking nation.

More specifically, the research explored whether any halal tourism-related plans and strategies are currently in place based on a data-driven investigation involving local communities and private and public sector tourism stakeholders. The study also sought to connect tourism

researchers and stakeholders in New Zealand to improve the quality of tourism research on the relatively unexplored subject of halal tourism. This research investigated halal tourism's implications for New Zealand as a tourism destination, which provided an optimal opportunity to connect the local Muslim community with the wider community and tourism stakeholders. The results could further generate implications for other areas of tourism such as sustainable tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, destination capacity demand and management, employment, and tourism and related industries' training programs.

2. Literature review

2.1. Halal tourism or tourism for all

Literally, halal means "lawful" or "permitted," so halal tourism is a sector that seeks to support the essential values of Islam (Henderson, 2010). In the past, Muslims mostly traveled as pilgrims, visiting the sacred and religious cities of Mecca (i.e. Makkah) and Medina in Saudi Arabia, as these were the Prophet Muhammad's places of residence (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018).

These trips' main purpose is to visit the Kaaba, which is known to be the location of the first house to worship Allah (i.e. God). Experts have estimated that, in recent years, almost two million visitors annually have fulfilled the religious obligation of going on hajj (i.e. pilgrimage) by visiting Saudi Arabia. This tourism industry is also growing due to religious activities involving worship in mosques, spiritual centers, holy places, exhibitions, and local museums (El-Gohary, 2016; Gabdrakhmanov et al., 2016).

However, given religion's role in identity and personal behavior, religion clearly has major implications for tourism and hospitality products' provision and consumption outside of specific religious activities. Religion is an element of, for example, the "everyday" consumption of leisure tourism and hospitality due to the emergence of an Islamic middle class (Razzaq et al., 2016).

Consequently, many tour operators specialize in travel packages that target Islam's sacred cities where major pilgrimage events take place each year. The Islamic tourism industry has also begun to divert tourists from the idea that halal tourism is exclusively devoted to religious tourism destinations. In the last decade, halal tourism has spread to include other geographic locations due to Muslims' rising interest in international tourism. Factors such as low airfares and greater ease of travel have promoted halal tourism's growth (Mohsin, Ramli, & Abdulaziz, 2016).

The Global Muslim Travel Index (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2018) indicates that the main drivers pushing the expansion of the halal tourism market include six factors. First, the Muslim population worldwide, represents one quarter of the world's people, who are mainly located in the Asia Pacific geographic zone. Second, changes in the Muslim population's demographics include a larger middle-class consumer base with higher income and education than previous generations and many female workers in urban zones. In addition, the rate at which new Muslims are being generated is higher than for any other religious groups. Thus, Muslim consumers are one of the fastest growing market segments with an important economic impact (Mohsin et al., 2016; Rasul, 2019).

Third, social media has made choosing halal-friendly destinations easier. The digital economy has become one of the 10 key halal trends (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2020; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019). Given this trend, Ainin, Feizollah, Anuar, and Abdullah (2020) recently analyzed halal tourism Twitter data to identify market sentiment toward Halal destinations. Fourth, the tourism and hospitality industry has acknowledged that the Muslim market is now large enough that they need to adapt services and products to serve this market segment. El-Gohary (2016) identified a list of key requirements of halal tourism. Rasul (2019) concluded that the tourism industry can be made more sustainable through a greater consistency in applying halal tourism

principles.

Fifth, the month of Ramadan is dedicated to religious and cultural practices, and a strong trend exists among travelers to seek unique Ramadan experiences. Mujtaba (2016) argues that tourism researchers can best understand this month of fasting as an interior pilgrimage experience. Last, a new workforce of Muslim business travelers—both men and women—travel for meetings, career incentives, conferences, and events, which contributes to the business travel segment. Prayag (2020) specifically contends that halal tourism should be studied from the perspective of not only a profit economy but also a well-being economy.

The literature reflects considerable debate over whether halal tourism is only for Muslims or if it can be inclusive. Mohsin et al. (2016) found that convergent opportunities exist in halal tourism, for example, traveling with family, seeking nature-based activities, and visiting cultural attractions, museums, and historical places. However, the Global Muslim Travel Index (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2018) asserts that halal tourism must include prayer rooms as Muslim travelers prefer to maintain their religious habits while on vacation (Carboni & Janati, 2016). Almost 65% of all Muslims pray five times a day (Pew Research Center, 2019). To house Muslim tourists, hospitality facilities need to have the minimum levels of services and accommodations that include prayer rooms and/or prayer mats in rooms (Battour & Ismail, 2016).

To attract Muslim tourists, hotels must offer a high level of standard services. In addition, sharia-compliant hotels, depending on the host country, can provide different services to Muslim tourists as long as these establishments can display a halal certification that assures these tourists' basic needs are met while abroad (Şen Küpeli et al., 2018).

Another requirement is halal food, which assures tourists that animals have been slaughtered according to the zibah ritual (see www.halalfoodauthority.com). The level of halal food's acceptability depends on the geographic region involved, but having access to restaurants with a halal food certification is important for Muslim travelers (Syed & Evans, 2015). For example, Japan, which is currently seeking to attract the Muslim tourism segment, has bridged the food gap in halal hotels by offering vegetarian meals and seafood options and banning pork and alcohol (Ainin et al., 2020; Hariani, 2016; Samori et al., 2016). Yousaf and Xiucheng (2018) confirmed that countries in Asia, namely, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea, market their countries as top destination for Muslims through halal food culture and cuisine.

In Europe—mostly in the UK, France, Germany, and Holland—halal restaurants and Middle Eastern cuisine attract a large number of non-Muslim guests searching for exotic dishes and halal hygiene and safety standards. Overall, halal tourists' satisfaction is a holistic concept that involves halal services and products that provide psychological well-being, quality performance, and perceived trust, which, in turn, contribute to destination loyalty (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Olya & Al-Ansi, 2018). One general conclusion that can be drawn from the literature is that halal quality certifications should be displayed as they reassure Muslim travelers that sharia requirements are being met. Halal certification is also a significant determinant of decisions to purchase halal products, especially in non-Muslim countries (Samori et al., 2016; Aziz & Chok, 2013)

2.2. Context of halal tourism in New Zealand

New Zealand is a major exporter of halal meats to different Muslim countries. Despite this link and efforts since 1990 to promote the country as a halal-friendly destination, halal tourism has not grown in New Zealand (Razzaq et al., 2016). In recent years, Muslim community organizations such as the Federation of Islamic Associations New Zealand and Waikato Muslim Association have collaborated in specific activities with tourism researchers to improve the general awareness of halal tourism opportunities, including organizing informative symposiums and meetings in New Zealand's Waikato region. These efforts have led New Zealand Tourism (n.d.) to offer a "Halal Guide for Muslim Visitors"

on its website. Cuesta-Valiño et al.'s (2020) study highlighted the role of this guide in promoting halal restaurants, hotels, supermarkets, grocery stores, and local products. Nonetheless, this country still has a long way to go before becoming a halal-friendly destination.

The process needs to begin with recognizing that halal compliance is the first important step in the production and consumption of halal products. Muslim travelers look for key features such as halal certification when planning holiday trips to destinations worldwide. Besides consumable products and services, having places of worship (i.e. mosques) at destinations adds to Muslim tourists' confidence about traveling to these places. Currently, every major city in New Zealand has a place of worship for Muslim travelers, and halal food choices are available, although these are still few in number.

However, the greatest challenge that New Zealand faces relates to its commercial accommodation sector. Razzaq et al. (2016) concluded that only 3 out of 367 accommodation websites in this country specifically mention halal accommodations. The cited authors also list six attributes usually required by Muslim travelers in their accommodations (Razzaq et al., 2016, p. 93):

- The provision of prayer mats in rooms with the *qibla* direction marked (i.e. toward Mecca)
- Information about places of worship and mosques nearby specifically available for individuals performing Friday prayers
- Halal food available within hotels, motels, or nearby restaurants and cafes
- No alcohol in room minibars
- No pornographic or sexually suggestive materials or information in rooms
- The availability of women-only swimming times and appropriately dressed staff

In addition to the availability of the above attributes, appropriate halal certification from a competent authority is important. This adds to New Zealand's challenges. How prepared the local industry and wider community is to accept halal tourists remains to be explored. This gap in the literature created the impetus for the current study.

This study thus first focused on assessing awareness about halal tourism in New Zealand. The research included exploring different tourism stakeholders' perceptions of halal tourism and related opportunities in New Zealand, as well as the associated challenges. Evaluating perceptions of halal tourism in a largely Western-style society produced important information on how to determine the best marketing strategies and foster acceptance by the wider community of this specific segment of tourists. Other benefits could include:

- A deeper understanding of how halal tourism is qualitatively a different experience compared with other cultural and/or religious experiences in cross-cultural settings
- The active involvement of local Muslim community organizations to ensure credible halal facilities are promoted to build travelers' confidence and ensure delightful experiences
- Strategies for how to plan initiatives that align diverse communities, with an emphasis on tourism's sustainability in New Zealand.

The study also carried out a robust assessment of the current state of affairs in halal tourism. This process helped develop a fuller understanding and mitigation of known or previously encountered challenges associated with the implementation of halal tourism strategies. This approach overall constitutes unique research in the context of New Zealand tourism, and its findings have economic and social implications for community collaboration that are applicable throughout the country. The primary data were collected during presentations and panel discussions in order to answer to the following main research questions for New Zealand contexts:

- What opportunities and challenges exist for those promoting halal tourism?
- What are tourism stakeholders and communities' perceptions of halal tourism?
- How can halal tourist facilities enhance their image in order to become favorite halal tourism destinations?

Halal tourism can also benefit from an evaluation of how this sector is perceived in Western-style nations and how it can contribute to diverse communities' welfare. This study, therefore, sought to address these issues in order to generate new insights and implications. The research's results address [Battour and Ismail \(2016\)](#) and [Cuesta-Valiño et al.'s \(2020\)](#) call for more studies focused on identifying successful approaches to making destinations' Muslim friendly. More specifically, this investigation targeted a non-OIC country, New Zealand, and gathered data from diverse stakeholders.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This research relied on qualitative methods to collect primary data. To ensure this information's quality and comprehensiveness, the study took a unique approach. The data were gathered by organizing a one-day "Halal Tourism and Hospitality" symposium in New Zealand. The symposium invited 100 participants representing the tourism and hospitality industries, public sector representatives, community leaders and members, and politicians. The aim was to ensure that all tourism stakeholders' perspective would be represented in the sample.

The program involved three sessions, each organized around the main research questions listed in the introduction. Each session started with a 30-min introduction of the conceptual framework, followed by a 60-min panel discussion. Three simultaneous panel discussions were held in each session in 3 different rooms, all discussing the same research questions (i.e. 9 discussions). The participants were evenly distributed between the three different rooms to ensure an appropriate representation of different stakeholders in each panel. The sessions were moderated by three research team members to keep the discussions focused. All proceedings were recorded after the participants consented to subsequent analyses. The introductory section sought to prepare these stakeholders for the panel discussions as all the participants were treated as panel members. A final total of 3 introductory sessions and 9 panel discussions took place. Introductory sessions were held in a large room with theater-style seating. Either a round table or oblong-shaped layout was used in the smaller panel discussions' seating arrangements.

3.2. Guide for panel discussion groups

The first session was designed to answer the first research question: What opportunities and challenges exist for those seeking to promote halal tourism? The moderators in the 3 simultaneous panel discussions used 3 sub-questions to stimulate responses:

- What is the current level of awareness of halal tourism? Why?
- What can be done to enhance people's understanding of halal tourism and related business opportunities for the tourism and hospitality industry?
- What are the challenges associated with promoting halal tourism?

The second session addressed the second main question: What are tourism stakeholders and communities' perceptions of halal tourism? The moderators asked the following sub-questions to prompt further discussion:

- Are halal tourism stakeholders different from mainstream tourism stakeholders? Why or why not?

- What are these stakeholders' possible perceptions of halal tourism?
- How could these stakeholders be brought together more effectively?

The third session addressed the third main question: How can halal tourist facilities enhance their image in order to become favorite halal tourism destinations? The moderators used three sub-questions to stimulate more discussion:

- What are the most common perceptions of halal tourism destinations? Why?
- What can be done to enhance halal tourism destinations' image? How can this be done?
- What can be done to leverage halal meat exportation to expand halal tourism?

3.3. Sample design

Non-random judgmental sampling was used since participation in the "Halal Tourism and Hospitality" symposium held in New Zealand in November 2018 was by invitation only. A goal of 100 participants was set to ensure that participants fully represented the tourism and hospitality industry and the relevant government authorities, diverse community leaders, different ethnic community representatives, small business owners, and local Muslim leaders. Demographic data were not gathered from the participants as providing this information was not mandatory. All 100 participants attended the introduction of the conceptual framework. These individuals were then divided up into groups to participate in three simultaneous moderated panel discussions that addressed different topics of specific interest to a mixture of stakeholders.

All sessions were audio and video recorded with all the participants' consent. After the event, every participant received a digitalized report summarizing the feedback received on the day's topics. Overall, the 9 panel discussions resulted in a dataset of 16.5 gigabits. The data were stored in 6 Word files: 1 for each conceptual framework introduction and 1 for each panel in the 3 rooms. Analyses revealed interesting similarities that emerged around the same questions discussed in the three different rooms.

3.4. Data analysis

The transcriptions were processed using content analysis methods. The introduction transcripts were subjected to word cloud and narrative analyses, and the panels discussions were processed using Leximancer and narrative analyses. Leximancer software is a text-mining tool that can be used to process large bodies of textual data and display the results in concept maps that show the relationships between themes and concepts ([Smith & Humphreys, 2006](#)). Leximancer thus performs conceptual analysis of text data, providing both automatic and customized content analyses using seeded concept classifiers. Automatic, repeatable, and uniform coding or tagging of large amounts of text allows researchers to explore much larger masses of data to achieve their research objectives ([Cretchley, Rooney, & Gallois, 2010](#)).

To meet the present study's goals, this software provided a graphic representation of significant meanings associated with halal tourism challenges in New Zealand, with minimal human intervention. In line with the research objectives, the analysis focused on three dimensions of halal tourism: (1) opportunities and challenges, (2) tourism stakeholders and communities' perceptions, and (3) halal facilities that enhance positive destination images. The brightest concepts radiating out from halal tourism represent the main themes in each concept map generated, indicating the strength of their relationships with other concepts ([Leximancer Pty Ltd, 2016](#)).

[Table 1](#) below displays the name- and word-like frequency in the texts. The percentage indicates the frequency of each name or word in the text ([Leximancer Pty Ltd, 2016](#)). The top words in terms of count and

Table 1
Ranked concept list by panel.

Ranked Concepts from Panel 1			Ranked Concepts from Panel 2			Ranked Concepts from Panel 3		
Name-Like	Count	Relevance	Name-Like	Count	Relevance	Name-Like	Count	Relevance
Muslim	40	30%	Muslim	120	83%	New-Zealand	45	58%
New Zealand	34	26%	Malaysia	12	08%	Muslim	42	54%
Indonesia	10	08%						
Word-Like	Count	Relevance	Word-Like	Count	Relevance	Word-Like	Count	Relevance
Halal	132	100%	halal	144	100%	halal	78	100%
People	40	30%	people	76	53%	countries	24	31%
awareness	37	28%	tourism	66	46%	people	24	31%
Market	30	23%	food	39	27%	food	23	29%
government	25	19%	room	33	23%	tourism	21	27%
Food	25	19%	hotel	32	22%	meat	21	27%
industry	23	17%	group	31	22%	tourists	19	24%
Country	18	14%	business	30	21%	market	13	17%
question	12	09%	market	27	19%	destination	12	15%
friendly	11	08%	prayer	25	17%	marketing	12	15%
Service	11	08%	friendly	24	17%	world	10	13%
Training	11	08%	restaurant	16	11%	place	9	12%
concept	10	08%	service	16	11%	friendly	8	10%
Look	10	08%	certification	14	10%	nightlife	8	10%
operators	10	08%	place	14	10%	travel	7	09%
Room	10	08%	students	14	10%	information	7	09%
restaurants	8	06%	travel	12	08%	government	6	08%
marketing	7	05%	providers	10	07%			

percentage are “halal,” “tourism,” “concept,” and the level of “awareness” “people” have of this specific “market,” especially in non-Muslim countries.

4. Results

4.1. Halal tourism and hospitality

The first conceptual framework introduction highlighted that halal tourism is an opportunity for New Zealand and that the best “strategy is... [to focus on] value rather than volume. . . . It’s about making sure the visitors going home... [report] the most amazing experience[s] possible.” In addition, “when we talk about visitor[s], we do need to be clear that... [these are both] international and domestic.” Another important aspect mentioned was the need for the tourism ecosystem to address halal tourists’ needs. One moderator said, “[t]here... [is] a lot of complexity... [in] new or emerging market[s]... [b]ut the key thing is to join the dots. [The question is h]ow do we work together as an industry and really grow this market” and “get... [aligned] with better products to meet the needs of this market.” From the industry’s perspective, “[i]t’s not just direct air service, but mak[ing] sure we have the right products in terms of halal products in New Zealand to meet their [halal tourists’] need[s].” The government can also create conditions that ensure that halal tourists can apply for visas conveniently (see the concept map in Fig. 1).

The first panel debate centered around the first sub-question of what the current level of awareness of halal tourism is. The participants’ responses highlighted an overall lack of awareness of the Muslim tourism market in New Zealand, although people appear to have more knowledge of this market in larger cities than in rural towns. One participant observed:

To me, the [level of] knowledge is very poor—coming from South Africa where there is a huge Muslim population and having learned a lot about halal training and catering in the last 10–15 years. In New Zealand, there is nothing. People don’t have any idea.

The participants also agreed that uncertainty exists about what halal means exactly. A panel member suggested, “[t]hey [people] have misconceptions” and thus more education about halal practices is needed. Another person said, “I think they need to be educated.”



Fig. 1. Word cloud for first conceptual framework introduction. Note: The most frequent words are New Zealand (number = 16), work (15), visitor (14), market (13), product (13), (10), halal tourism (9), ecosystem (9), industry (8), and opportunity (8).

The second sub-question also generated much debate around the topic of what can be done to enhance people’s understanding of halal tourism and related business opportunities for tourism and hospitality industries. The discussion in all three rooms highlighted that this type of tourism is considered a niche market in New Zealand, so an opportunity exists “to communicate and build relationship[s]” based on sector-wide education (i.e. of tourism and/or hospitality staff). This can be done by bringing Muslim associations, academics, conferences, guest speakers, and visitors together in partnerships with regional tourism organizations. A simpler process is needed to encourage Halal certification (e.g. possibly as part of Qualmark star ratings), and more marketing and/or media attention should be given to halal tourism.

An analysis of the answers to the sub-question of what challenges are associated with promoting halal tourism revealed that people have doubts about which entities should be responsible for promoting halal tourism (e.g. regional tourism organizations, governments, or individual tourism organizations). A participant also asserted that another issue is the need “to have... better communication with the government and policymakers. . . . [More] promotional work needs to be done... at the marketing level.” In addition, various financial costs were identified,

including marketing and certification expenses. Another issue is the lack of readily available data on halal practices to help organizations find a balance in order to accommodate all tourists.

Fig. 2 below identifies five themes and related concepts that provide guidelines regarding future opportunities and challenges faced by the halal tourism industry: halal (tourism), government, food, training (program) and Indonesia. These themes are based on the panel discussions of the three main questions. Halal (tourism) (229 hits) is the main theme represented by a red sphere encompassing the concepts with the following likelihood percentages: halal (tourism) (100%), Muslim (30%), people (30%), awareness (28%), New Zealand (26%), market (23%), country (14%), friendly (policies) (8%), and service (8%). Malaysia, for example, has labeled itself as a halal destination attracting many tourists.

Salman and Hasim (2012) interviewed Saudi Arabian tourists who traveled to Malaysia and concluded that more than 10% would rather visit Muslim countries. However, halal tourism represents an opportunity for Western countries to gain a share of an attractive tourism industry by appealing to the global halal market. For instance, New Zealand is already one of the largest exporters of halal beef, and this country is currently promoting itself as a halal tourist-friendly destination to attract Muslim tourists, including adding varied offers targeting

Muslims (Razzaq et al., 2016).

The second most dominant theme is government (68 hits), which includes five related concepts: government (19%), industry (17%), question (9%), look (8%), and marketing (communication) (5%). The participants mentioned that the New Zealand Government and Tourism Bureau is investing heavily in Expo 2020 Dubai to market New Zealand to Gulf Cooperation Council countries. A panel participant quoted earlier argued:

The purpose of this communication with policymakers is to address public concerns [with] regard... to [the] halal concept and halal tourism. . . . There is lack of marketing... [to] sell... the whole idea... [s]o obviously somebody is not selling this... [idea well enough] to them [government officials] for them to actually invest in this industry.

These comments indicate that marketing communication also needs to find opportunities to spread marketing messages that target a growing niche market with increased purchasing potential (Jafari & Scott, 2014).

Battour and Ismail (2016) point out that assessing the level of awareness of halal tourism should take into account that it is part of a holistic industry that comprises tourism facilities and travel packages. Sandiki (2011) observes that halal tourism marketing has unique

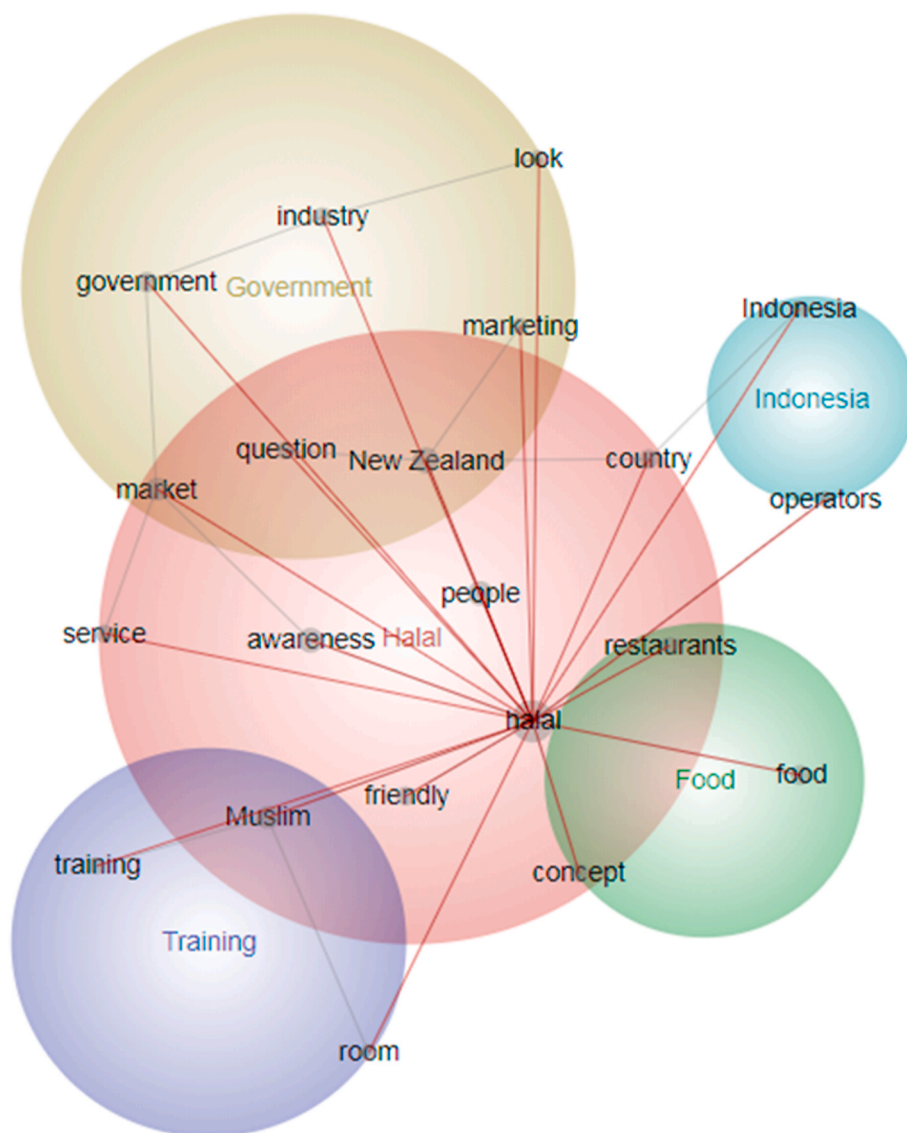


Fig. 2. Concept map of halal tourism and hospitality.

characteristics since Muslim tourists have specific needs that are distinct from the average consumer. [Akyol and Kilinç \(2014\)](#) further found that halal-related businesses include hotels, airlines, and halal finance. [Abror, Wardi, Trinanda, and Patrisia \(2019\)](#) also report that, aside from a common religious component, this particular market's tourists cannot be targeted as a uniform segment.

The government theme also highlights that the authorities can create conditions that facilitate halal tourism, such as the visa process. One possible reason that Muslims tend to choose vacations in Islamic countries is due to strict travel regulations that make visas difficult for Muslims to obtain before entering Western countries ([Timothy & Iverson, 2006](#)).

Food comes third (41 hits) and includes the concepts of food (19%), concept (8%), and restaurant (6%). Food and beverage are inseparable from tourism and hospitality and are a major concern of individuals traveling abroad. A panel participant shared:

Some restaurants ask for [notification] a day in advance to prepare halal food. . . . They just prepare a special food menu for us. . . . Awareness and training or separate preparation area [are needed] as well. . . . So, I think... food... has to be halal, not [just] Muslim friendly.

In Arabic, "halal" means "permitted by law," as halal refers to those foods and beverages that can be consumed by Muslims. Prohibited foods are common in Western countries, including pork and alcoholic beverages ([Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2010](#); [Jafari & Scott, 2014](#)). [Han et al. \(2019\)](#) conducted a study that highlighted that halal food and beverages permitted by Islam are a condition that predicts destination image, revisit intentions, and recommendation by halal tourists. Non-Muslim countries seeking to attract this growing group of travelers must acknowledge that Muslims have different food and beverage requirements and that the halal food value chain must be respected ([Timothy & Iverson, 2006](#)). Experts also recommend that halal-friendly restaurants encourage their staff to adopt formal attire or encourage the use of uniforms to respect Muslim traditions.

The fourth theme of training (program) (21 hits) comprises the concepts training (program) (8%) and room (6%). These results indicate that more training programs are needed, especially those that particular emphasize New Zealand contexts with room for improvement, as can be seen from the example set by other countries. According to one panel participant:

In Korea or in Japan, they actually have training programs. They invite people to train service providers who are interested. Even... [if] they are not interested, to create awareness, [trainers] invite these people to come and listen [to] what halal tourism is about and why we should invest in the sector.

[Han et al.'s \(2019\)](#) results indicate that, due to the increasing number of halal tourist, even establishments in countries where Muslims are a minority have been training their hospitality staff to welcome Muslims, particularly in Asia (e.g. Japan and Korea). The Global Muslim Travel Index ([Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2018](#)) also reports that the growth of halal tourism has increased the availability of tourism services and facilities that serve Muslim travelers. What is needed is not just isolated training to provide better services or products but instead a holistic perspective on this niche market that targets potential halal visitors in the pre-travel phase on a global level ([Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2018](#)). Furthermore, tourism service providers must have well-trained staff who understand the commercial realities of halal businesses.

The last theme of Indonesia (20 hits) is connected to the concepts Indonesia (8%) and operators (8%). [New Zealand Tourism \(2019\)](#), together with tour operators, has been trying to promote New Zealand destinations in Indonesia because it has the largest Muslim population of any Asian country. A panel member reported:

When we talk about Indonesia, we find... we only got [sic] 24 thousand visitors, but it [this number] is growing well too. . . . [T]he forecast is double [that] by 2024. . . . From Indonesia, we all understand that halal tourism is growing... [including] the tourists [not just] from Indonesia, [but also] from the U[nited] [Arab] E[mirates], [and] from Saudi Arabia. . . . They demand quality hotel[s] and quality service[s].

The Global Muslim Travel Index ([Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2018](#)) reports that Indonesia is among the top five halal-friendly Islamic destinations. [Jaelani \(2017\)](#) confirmed that halal tourism has played an important role in this country's economic development, and this tourism industry has positioned Indonesia among the world's leading destinations for halal tourists.

To join the list of countries that are considered welcoming to halal tourists, New Zealand is improving its tourism and hospitality services, but the country is still only ranked fifty-first among all non-OIC destinations. New Zealand also lacks a substantial digital presence on Muslim websites. The country's local tourism bureaus further should provide guidance to Muslim tourists in their own languages. The more recent literature on this topic indicates that halal tourism is a business opportunity for non-Islamic countries that wish to maintain the momentum needed to promote Islamic principles in tourism and hospitality activities. Further work is needed to enhance Muslims' trust and respect in both domestic and foreign tourism destinations ([El-Gohary, 2016](#)).

4.2. Stakeholders and communities' perceptions of halal tourism

The second conceptual framework introduction also highlighted "the need to... [continue] educating and talking about the value of halal tourism" to allow "everyone to understand the values and importance of halal-friendly travel." The moderator discussed the fundamental principles that would guarantee that New Zealand has halal-friendly opportunities, experiences, places to pray, food, and hotels and resorts, as well as the strategies to implement in order to engage with this new market. These steps are needed "to make it [halal tourism] known and make it inclusive, rather than [that] you [are] going to a halal airport somewhere that's only about halal travel." Halal affects all aspects of Muslims' life, so, "even though we do have places offering prayer rooms and obviously have halal-friendly food,... [being halal friendly] is... [about how] we provide... signage. So again, it's about integrating [halal practices]."

In addition, the moderator emphasized that New Zealand Trade and Enterprise "do provide great guide[line]s... [for how to approach] each of our key Muslim markets,... how we should speak, how we should communicate, and how we should acknowledge [halal tourism]." The Qualmark system could also include more halal type ratings. The official halal food guide and list of all mosques and prayer rooms should be continuously updated and disseminated. During Ramadan, hotels can offer pre-dawn meals or even some meals late at night. With regard to market segments, young Muslims and/or Millennials should be studied. The moderator concluded by suggesting that "[w]e need to be watching them and seeing what they are doing" (see the concept map in [Fig. 3](#)).

When the participants were asked whether halal tourism stakeholders are different from mainstream tourism stakeholders and, if so, why or why not, the panel members agreed that basic requirements such as quality service and comfort are the same. Thus, although halal tourism is a niche or special market, it does not have to be seen as a separate market. A participant suggested that "[the h]otel stakeholders are the same. [The f]ood suppliers are different. What else? Who are the stakeholders? The tourists themselves, tour agencies, council[s], transportation, attractions, tour guides... are looking very similar [based] on the list." Regarding the question of what stakeholders' perceptions of halal tourism might be, some panel members believe that this could be a great opportunity for businesses to tap into a growing market. However, stakeholders are unsure of how to make the changes needed.



Fig. 3. Word cloud for second conceptual framework introduction. Note: The most frequent words are New Zealand (number = 41), halal (tourism) (37), travel (29), market (27), people (24), food (20), Muslim (19), tourism (17) country (17), culture (12), friendly (policies) (12), needs (10), experiences, and faith (10).

Other participants argued instead that halal tourism will complicate the products and services they already offer. A panel member summarized this:

The perceptions [include that] they [providers] might get opportunities... [that have] both negative[s] and positives. The positives are opportunities for business. On the other side, there is also... the complication... [of] get[ting] prepared for non-Muslim[s]. For example, for [the] Novotel Hotel, it takes almost a year to educate some staff to accept the concept, you know, through the process... [of] apply[ing] for certification.

The last sub-question was how these stakeholders could be brought together more effectively. The participants see the role of associations, such as the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand, as important. The key stakeholders must be identified to run educational programs and explain the steps needed to provide halal-friendly products and services. A panel member suggested that:

The associations like... [the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand] or other Muslim associations can back them [providers]... with cooperating clients like conference clients. . . . I think... the local tourism organization[s]... could help... our operators to understand [halal tourists] more by working with... [the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand] and helping with the education program... [for] our operators. I think New Zealand Tourism can also play a part.

Tourism stakeholders and communities’ perceptions of halal tourism were discussed in three simultaneous sessions. The second panel’s results are represented by the five themes in the concept map in Fig. 4: halal, people, prayer, business, and market (see Fig. 5).

The first theme of halal (tourism) (299 hits) encompasses the concepts halal (tourism) (100%), Muslims (83%), tourism (46%), food (27%), hotel (22%), group (22%), and friendly (policies) (17%). As mentioned previously, the term “halal” comes from Arabic and means “lawfully permitted or accepted” (Olya & Al-Ansi, 2018). Halal Food Authority (2019) defines Islamic tourism as “any activity, event, experience or indulgence undertaken in a state of travel that is in accordance with Islam” and even extends the definition to include non-Muslim tourists who travel to Islamic countries. Vukonić (2010) suggests tourism is an important way to bridge the gap between Islamic and non-Islamic nations and analyzes this topic from the perspective of Islamic countries’ attitudes toward capturing international tourists.

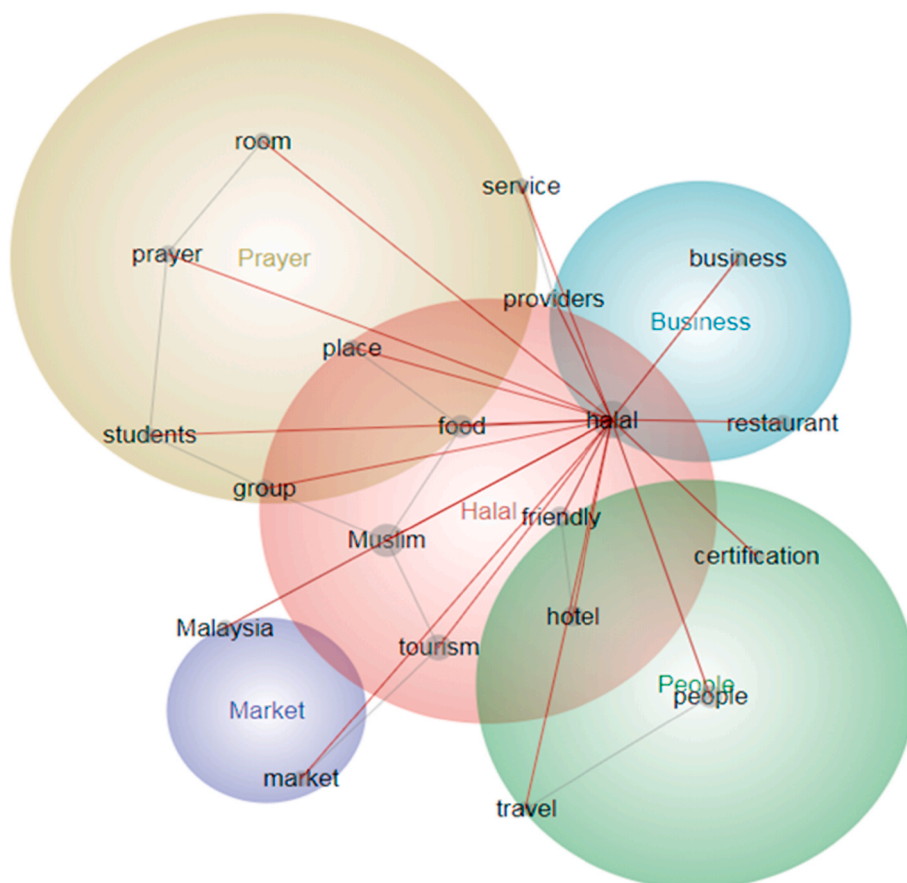


Fig. 4. Concept map of halal tourism stakeholders.



Fig. 5. Word cloud for third conceptual framework introduction. Note: Most frequent words are halal (tourism) (number = 53), Muslim (41), tourism (35), New Zealand (30), travels (21), food (16), people (14), government (13), Maori (12), country (11), experiences (10), and tours (10).

Stephenson (2014) goes a step further, asserting that Islamic hospitality and tourism constitutes a mature Islamic industry that is ready to welcome tourists from different religious backgrounds. Hospitality comprises the ways providers can greet and treat guests that respect cultural and religious boundaries. Overall, understanding halal tourism requires a recognition of how religious practices impact tourism activities (Moshin et al., 2016).

The second theme of people (98 hits) includes the concepts people (53%), certification (10%), and travels (8%). This theme suggests that implementing halal certification can open up markets and attract Muslim travelers. One participant suggested:

Muslim people need it [halal], but other people can utilize it. . . . There are a lot of people who are very adaptable... [regarding] halal food. They do not see that as a problem, unlike those who are anti-halal. . . . If you do have [a] halal-friendly certification, you have some halal-friendly options.

The first halal regulations date from 1945 when the Muslim Judicial Council Halaal Trust in South Africa sought to certify that Islamic food principles were being followed (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2019). Currently, a wide range of halal services and products certifications are available from organizations responsible for guaranteeing certifications (Stephenson, 2014). For example, the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America certifies halal food production, and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils does the same for meat and non-meat products. In Europe, Muslims can rely on the European Institute of Halal Certification, which is responsible for food, drug, and cosmetic product inspections. Halal certifications are particularly important for Muslim countries that import food, as well as tourists from non-Muslim countries who are looking for destination countries that can cater to their faith-related needs.

The third theme of prayer (82 hits) comprises the concepts prayer (23%), room (17%), place (10%), student (10%), and service (1%). Prayer rooms that meet religious requirements are highly advised for countries that want to maintain halal tourist flows or attract new Muslim tourists, thereby increasing this niche market's positive impact on destinations. A panel member asked:

When you build a new airport or upgrade your airport, why can't... you provide a pray room for... Muslim[s] and a proper room for ablutions? And in... hotel[s], you don't need [to] approve... new hotel construction [projects]. You can always put that [halal] as part of the requirements [for all hotels]. If you can't install a proper washroom for every room, at least you [can] have a floor, two facilities somewhere [or] a prayer room... for Muslim customers.

In non-Islamic countries, many people do not understand the need for separate halal-friendly facilities, such as the number and location of prayer rooms for women and men. The right number of prayer rooms is difficult to find, and they do not appear in many key locations (Yonhap News Agency, 2017). The halal concept also goes beyond prayer rooms and extends to other facilities for leisure activities, including swimming pools built to accommodate men and women separately and bathrooms that face away from Mecca (Stephenson, 2014).

The fourth theme of business (55 hits) includes the concepts business (21%), restaurant (11%), and provider (7%). Service providers that have a halal-friendly business, particularly in countries where Muslims are a minority, face substantial challenges. A restaurant owner on one panel stated:

When it comes to food, it [a restaurant] has to have two separate kitchens. It cannot be one kitchen preparing [both] halal and non-halal food [because of t]he fear of contamination. . . . [W]e have a burger business. . . . They [the restaurants] do have... separate area [s], but... [you] have to request [it] if you want your burger to be halal. They will prepare [it] in a separate area in that facility that is certified.

Mastercard-CrescentRating (2018) identifies six key needs that Muslim travelers have but states that halal food is of the utmost importance. Restaurants that have a halal certification and that are easy to find are tourists' preferred option. The halal food served in these restaurants represents a major business opportunity in countries that want to attract Muslim tourists (Han et al., 2019). Henderson (2016) reports that, when choosing a destination country, tourists search for easily accessible halal food since finding a place that Muslim travelers can trust enough to eat in is not always easy. Halal-friendly countries should especially invest in restaurants that can accommodate large families and kids.

The last theme of market (37 hits) contains the concepts market (19%) and Malaysia (8%). Halal tourists' spending is significant, and their needs extend to different aspects of hospitality. A participant suggested:

I think this also comes back to New Zealand Tourism. . . . They always says breakdown [the market into] different market[s] such as [the] Southeast Asia market. . . . They only talk about the Malaysia market and Indonesia market. But they don't give you an idea of [the] halal concept. So, most... tour operators have no idea what exactly [they need to do] to tap into a particular market.

For centuries, Muslim consumers remained invisible. In the late twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century, marketers identified new consumers in Islamic markets with strong purchasing power (Sandikci, 2011). From the beginning of the 2000s, consultancy firms have had to address the importance of Islamic markets due to this emerging potential and their size. Malaysia is the number one OIC destination (Mastercard-CrescentRating, 2018). This country has passed legislation to ensure that important domestic goods are halal certified (Syed & Evans, 2015), making it a prime example of a halal tourism hub. The best practices implemented in Malaysia can serve as an example for both Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

4.3. Halal tourism destination image of New Zealand

The moderator of the third conceptual framework introduction asserted that "halal tourism is not a hard thing to achieve. Many of the requirements are in line with... non-Muslim[s'] requirements." More specifically, "Muslim travelers wish to visit the same places as non-Muslim travelers. They want to... experience cultures, taste good food, [and] relax just like non-Muslims. There is no difference." Regarding halal tourists' motivations, they "come to New Zealand because of the landscape... and also because New Zealand is considered [a] Muslim-

friendly country.” The moderator went on to say that:

One of the biggest challenges... [will] be to educate New Zealand tour operators. . . . Halal-friendly tour operators should advise... guest[s] how to find the nearby mosque, provide list[s] of cafes and restaurants that serve halal food, put [out] prayer mats and [provide] signage [showing]... the direction to the prayer room. . . . [Additional items are] organizing special events such as halal banquets, maybe [offering] segregation... [of] fitness places for women and men, and maybe employ[ing] Arabic-speaking staff if you have Middle East[ern] visitors.

Finally, many experts recognize that “the government needs to have [special] policies” and acknowledge that “diversity is the key.”

The first question asked of the panels was what people’s perceptions of halal tourism destinations are and why. The participants feel that New Zealand is Muslim-friendly, namely, clean, green, safe, secure, and family-friendly, as well as fostering wellbeing and demonstrating openness to accepting Islam’s beliefs. One panel member concluded, “we see [that] New Zealand has all these potential [features].” However, although this country is halal-friendly, New Zealand has not achieved a high level of awareness among tourists. Another participant said, “if you ask a Muslim, I don’t think... [this country is] their first choice as a tourist destination for them to travel [to]. Probably it’s their second, third, or fourth.”

Regarding the sub-question of what New Zealand can do to enhance its image as a halal tourism destination and how it can do this, the participants believe that the most important tactics are to promote diversity, develop marketing strategies, and marketing campaigns using Muslim ambassadors. Word-of-mouth recommendations are also extremely powerful. Lowering visa barriers and forming partnerships

with airline carriers were also suggested. A panel member proposed that:

The first thing is to have i-site[s] like kiosk[s], maybe at the airport, but basically... information point[s]... [that] Muslim travelers can refer to. . . . Having pamphlets... [is a] good thing, but nobody [is] going to read 50 pages. . . . Halal accreditation is one... [strategy]. So, for the providers, maybe a standard platform [should be developed to] say this is our standard for halal [tourism].

The last concept map shown in Fig. 6 is related to themes about enhancing New Zealand’s image as a halal tourism destination: halal (tourism), New Zealand, Muslims, world, and marketing (strategies). The halal theme (95 hits) encompasses the concepts halal (tourism) (100%), meat (27%), food (29%), and information (9%). This theme refers to the importance of non-Muslim countries providing information to halal tourists upon arrival. One participant said:

One of these [strategies] I think [is that] we need to highlight more the contributions of... [New Zealand’s] meat export[s, which include] being the biggest halal lamb provider in the world. . . . They actually give you, at the airport, flyers telling you exactly where to find halal food,... and actually it gives you [that] information. . . . A lot of restaurants and bars here [don’t know that] their food... [is] already halal, especially meat. . . . We do believe that we can leverage our position as [a] producer of halal food—not only... meat, but much wider aspects.

Academics and practitioners commonly agree that, in order to attract and maintain a share of the halal tourism market, these tourists’ specific needs must be met (Jeaheng et al., 2019). Countries that respect Muslim travelers’ basic food needs are better able to attract tourists (Oktadiana et al., 2016). Battour and Ismail (2016) also assert that countries

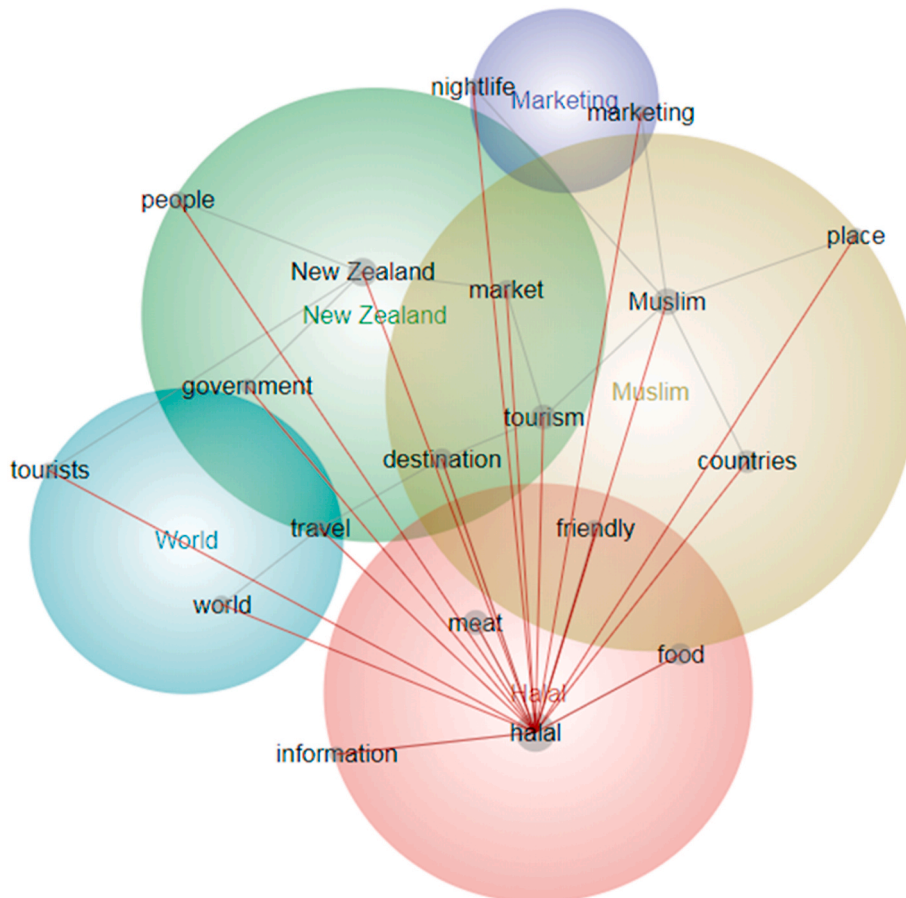


Fig. 6. Concept map for New Zealand’s halal tourism destination image.

promoting halal-friendly vacation will attract Muslim tourists. [Jeaheng et al. \(2019, p. 743\)](#) argue that “halal foods and beverages and halal friendly facilities are highly [reliable] predictors of affective evaluation [s] which [are] related to Muslim[s]’ perceived feelings and emotions.” New Zealand has space for improvement, but destination countries can also follow established best practices and make available information on restaurants, supermarkets, prayer rooms, hotels, and other types of facilities, as well as cultural activities that can attract halal tourists.

The second New Zealand theme (85 hits) comprises the concepts Muslim (54%), tourism (24%), countries (31%), place (12%), and friendly (policies) (10%). New Zealand is currently making substantial efforts to sell itself as a halal-friendly destination for Muslims. A participant in the panel discussions suggested:

The general consensus is that New Zealand is not perceived to be a halal-friendly tourism destination because we don’t market [ourselves] like that. . . . [but f]or example, . . . [I] feel that New Zealand allows you to have self-contained holidays where you are able to move about independently, which means you are able to cook and prepare food.

However, [Razzaq et al. \(2016\)](#) analyzed accommodation websites and found that a number of hospitality attributes might discourage halal tourists and that less than 1% of the websites mention halal practices. Researchers have raised concerns about how New Zealand intends to accommodate Islamic tourists and offer them satisfying experiences. [Mohsin et al. \(2016\)](#) provide practical guidelines that can help countries like New Zealand improve their conceptualization of hospitality and welcome Muslims. These recommendations include 1) building trust in accommodation facilities through halal certification, 2) giving a voice to Islamic organizations that can work side by side with local tourism providers, and 3) introducing loyalty programs that can attract and maintain halal tourist flows. Halal-friendly service performance is a multidimensional construct that includes halal food and meals and halal-friendly social environments, ambience, facilities, amenities, local residences, staff, information, services, uniforms, and attire ([Al-Ansi & Han, 2019](#)).

The third theme of Muslims (82 hits) comprises the concepts New Zealand (58%), destination (15%), market (17%), people (31%), and government (8%). The Muslim consumer market is expanding in New Zealand due in part to local governments’ involvement in efforts to attract more Muslims to the country. A panel member emphasized that:

The fact of being one of the largest halal meat exporters [must] surely [help] people . . . see that this is a Muslim-friendly country. We are [the] biggest . . . halal lamb exporter. . . . We are Muslim-friendly, and we already know it. Our life experience is clean [and] green, [including] fresh water, safety, and security.

Another participant said, “I sent them [visitors] to a place where the local[s] really meet that was in Invercargill. A lot of Muslim are meeting there because it is a small population.”

Since the late 1990, New Zealand has increased its willingness to attract the niche market of Muslim tourists. The country has a growing Muslim community and its universities welcome Muslim students. New Zealand is, as mentioned previously, also a major supplier of halal meat ([Razzaq et al., 2016](#)). In addition, New Zealand Tourism’s (n.d.) website displays a halal guide for “New Zealand Muslim tourists” that addresses the “range of halal-friendly food choices throughout New Zealand” and directs tourists to the [Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand](#). Not all Muslim travelers follow the same principles, but providers can follow basic rules such as halal food (i.e. no alcoholic beverages) and prayer rooms.

The fourth theme of world (34 hits) includes the concepts world (13%), tourism (27%), and travels (9%). One panel participant argued that:

[New Zealand has t]he best halal lamb in the world. . . . Some advertisement[s] . . . can [be] use[d] to attract . . . tourists from all over the world. These are the [Muslim-friendly] places we have to show, and we have some halal activities, . . . [but] the cost [of halal facilities] in New Zealand is not cheap.

The number of Muslim travelers continues to rise, and halal tourists’ spending and this market’s growth has attracted the tourism industry’s interest ([Henderson, 2016](#)). Even though New Zealand is the largest exporter of halal-slaughtered meat in the world, [Wan-Hassan and Awang’s \(2009\)](#) study of 99 restaurants showed that travelers still have difficulty finding halal food in New Zealand. Restaurants also do not perceive the Muslim market as significant, so they are unwilling to offer halal food.

The last theme of marketing (20 hits) covers the concepts marketing (strategies) (15%) and nightlife 10%). A participant observed that “not many Muslims are looking [sic] for nightlife . . . because [Western] nightlife for some Muslim is not [their] kind of nightlife. It’s more like spending time with family and things like that.” The spending habits of 1.6 billion Muslim consumers is clearly still underresearched, and the halal tourism market is not all the same for all Muslim travelers. [Sandiki \(2011\)](#) argues that the term “Islamic marketing” causes unease because this area of marketing is thought to be different just because it targets Muslim consumers. Marketing communication might need to be different, and marketers should acknowledge that Muslim consumers’ demographic characteristics are changing. For example, more women are traveling for professional reasons, and this market includes a rising number of entrepreneurs and high-income consumers.

5. Conclusion and implications

The present study sought to answer three main research questions linked with halal tourism within the context of New Zealand. The findings are based on content analysis of three panel discussions with 100 highly engaged stakeholders. The first research question addressed was as follows: What opportunities and challenges do those seeking to promote halal tourism currently face? The results reveal a lack of awareness and misconceptions about halal tourism in New Zealand.

To address these issues, education is of the utmost importance, including training programs for staff in the hospitality sector and conferences and academic research concentrating on this topic. On the supply side, information about how to get halal certification is also relevant. Halal certification is acknowledged to be an important component of becoming a halal-friendly destination ([Şen Küpeli et al., 2018](#)). Moreover, providers’ perceptions include that finding a balance that allows facilities to accommodate all types of tourists might be difficult and that targeting this niche market would entail extra costs. Although stakeholders recognize the need for a marketing communication plan, some are still unsure who should be responsible for promoting halal tourism, even though communication is seen as an important component of creating a halal-friendly destination. [Cuestra-Valiño et al. \(2020\)](#) found that the official organizations in non-OIC countries that have risen in the Global Muslim Travel Index have launched online platforms to promote their destinations among private entities.

The second main question was worded as follows: What are tourism stakeholders and communities’ perceptions of halal tourism? The panels reported that Muslim and mainstream tourists’ basic requirements, such as the level of service, and their travel motivations are the same. While the participants agreed that halal tourism stakeholders are similar to mainstream stakeholders including, among others, tourists, tour agencies and/or guides, transportation, and hotels, halal millennials’ behavior still needs to be studied specifically. Other panel members felt that, although halal practices create a different tourism market segment, these tourists do not have to be viewed as a separate market. The key to success appears to be making inclusive offers. This finding offers new

insights in response to Prayag's (2020) call for the identification of a systems-thinking approach to how halal tourism fits within mainstream tourism.

To attract halal tourists, the hospitality industry should offer halal food. The availability of this food is an important attribute affecting tourists' selection of halal destinations (Cuestra-Valiño et al., 2020) and destination performance assessments (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019). These destinations also should adapt their service schedule during Ramadan and develop strategies to facilitate segregation between men and woman in fitness facilities. Halal-friendly amenities and facilities are further understood to be an important component of a halal-friendly destination image (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019).

Some stakeholders see halal tourists as a small niche market that can offer prime opportunities for business development. Other stakeholders are still challenged by multiple perceptions of halal, so these entities are unsure of how to make the changes needed and avoid the risk that halal tourism could complicate the products and services that already exist. The panel participants highlighted the role of cooperation with Muslim associations, such as the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand, to promote initiatives that provide benefits and clarify the steps needed to provide halal tourism to the relevant stakeholders.

The last main research question was as follows: How can halal tourist facilities enhance their image in order to become favorite halal tourism destinations? The panel members agreed that, although New Zealand is Muslim-friendly, insufficient awareness exists of this country as a halal tourism destination. Muslim and non-Muslim travelers have the same travel motivations and want to visit the same places. However, specific market segments need to be properly studied, such as halal Millennials. This study's confirmation of halal Millennials' potential as a target segment is an important contribution, especially as Prayad (2020) argues that halal tourism studies often assume homogeneity in consumer practices.

The participants agreed that, to enhance New Zealand's halal tourism destination image, diversity, marketing strategies, and marketing campaigns must be promoted using Muslim ambassadors and government initiatives, including lowering visa barriers and developing partnerships with airline carriers. Word-of-mouth recommendations are especially powerful in this context. This finding is in accordance with previous studies that highlighted the digital economy's role in halal tourism (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2020; Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2019)

The results suggest that halal practices' acceptance needs to be improved in New Zealand in order to attract a larger number of Muslim travelers. This country can easily pay particular attention to offering halal food in restaurants, hotels, and supermarkets because New Zealand is already a major supplier of halal food to other countries (Razzaq et al., 2016). Another potential problem is that, despite New Zealand's large Muslim community, this country is not perceived as a halal tourism destination. Thus, working with local communities (i.e. restaurant owners, accommodations, tourism authorities, transportation systems, and Islamic organizations) could enhance the country's halal-friendly image and attract more Muslim tourists.

The above findings offer significant theoretical contributions. First, the present findings help expand the new field of research on halal tourism in non-Islamic countries, especially as studies of tourism and Islam, in general, are still scarce. This study's results contribute to the literature by providing a deeper understanding of how to make destinations halal friendly based on multiple stakeholders' perspectives. More specifically, the first step toward becoming a halal-friendly destination is to increase local awareness of halal needs, products, and services among service providers.

One of the most significant findings is the need to provide an inclusive offer to both mainstream and halal tourists. This approach is cost effective for the tourism industry, and this strategy might also attract Muslims who intend to visit new destinations and enjoy local cultures and authentic experiences without contravening Islamic teachings. The

results show that being halal friendly does not require building new hotels or restaurants since facilities can be adapted to integrate both halal and other market segments.

Second, more publications are needed that can help determine the real-world conceptualization of halal tourism within Western contexts. This study is also the first research project in this field to focus on New Zealand.

Third, the present study's methodology was based on data collected in a single day from panel discussions in order to reflect diverse expert stakeholders' perspectives. The participants were from public and private institutions, and these individuals shared quite specialized knowledge when they were asked to discuss New Zealand's halal tourism. The results contribute solid evidence that religion can influence purchase intentions among consumers of tourism and hospitality products and services, namely, when booking hotels and choosing restaurant services while traveling abroad.

The findings also have practical implications for different stakeholders in the tourism industry, that is, hotels, restaurants, tourism operators, small food companies, other businesses, the airline industry, trade associations, the government, and local communities (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). One of the study's most important managerial implications is that, to develop halal tourism, New Zealand must ensure a balance between religious travelers' demands and mainstream international tourism (Rinschede, 1992; Vukonic, 1996) to be able to attract Muslim and halal tourists. The panel discussion participants concluded that halal tourism stakeholders are similar to mainstream stakeholders (e.g. tour agencies and/or guides, transportation, and hotels), but halal practices create a distinct tourism market segment. Thus, the panel experts pointed out that the key to success in promoting halal tourism is to make innovative, inclusive offers appealing to both halal and mainstream tourists.

The present results further offer societal implications. Educating different stakeholders is important to overcome the misconceptions that are likely to influence tourists and host nations' attitudes. Due to poor relations between Muslim and Western nations, Islam has often been associated with conservatism, oppression, terrorism, and anti-Western sentiment (Armstrong, 2001). Tourism can provide opportunities for building cultural bridges and mutual understanding.

Future research directions could include Millennial travelers' market trends and gender's role in halal tourism. Studies may also want to concentrate on identifying halal tourists' main push and pull motivations and ways that this new market segment creates opportunities to offer affordable, unique experiences. Finally, another area that merits further research is what constitutes the most effective marketing communication mix and advertising and marketing campaigns targeting halal tourists.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Asad Moshin: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - original draft, Project administration, Funding acquisition. **Ana Brochado:** Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft. **Helena Rodrigues:** Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft.

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