



HALAL GASTRONOMY: HANDLING FOOD PRODUCTS' QUALITY IN THE LOCAL TOURISM MARKET

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Abstract

The growing demand for halal products, aligned with consumers' moral and religious standards, is driving the rapid expansion of the halal business, particularly in the travel and hospitality sectors. This study aims to evaluate the quality of halal products and their influence on the local tourism industry. Specifically, it investigates the key quality components of halal gastronomy and addresses stakeholders' challenges in maintaining and improving these standards to meet the needs of Muslim tourists. Using a qualitative descriptive analysis based on existing literature and data, the study provides an in-depth exploration of the factors influencing halal cuisine quality, including hygiene, authenticity, and compliance with Islamic dietary principles. The analysis highlights how the quality of halal food impacts Muslim tourists' experiences and the local tourism market's appeal. The findings reveal significant challenges in ensuring high-quality halal products, such as maintaining consistency across the supply chain and adhering to strict halal standards. Strategies for overcoming these challenges, such as improved quality control, certification processes, and stakeholder collaboration, are discussed. This study offers practical recommendations for stakeholders in the local tourism sector to enhance the quality of halal gastronomy, thereby improving tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness. It contributes to the existing literature by filling a gap in the understanding of halal product quality and its implications for halal tourism. This research provides valuable insights for businesses and policymakers aiming to attract and accommodate Muslim travelers by maintaining high halal food standards.

Keywords: Halal gastronomy, quality assurance, local tourism market, halal products, and hospitality.

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INTRODUCTION

In the local tourism market framework, halal gastronomy has recently garnered significant relevance and attention. Because there are more Muslim tourists than in the past looking for halal-friendly places to stay and activities to partake in, the accessibility of halal products (Usman et al., 2023), as well as the level of halal certification held by those products have become essential components in attracting (Haleem et al., 2020) and accommodating Muslim visitors. Halal gastronomy, which refers to the production, preparation, and consumption of food products (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2021) that adhere to Islamic dietary requirements (Ma'rifah et al., 2019), has evolved as an essential component of the entire tourism experience for Muslim travelers. The growing acknowledgment of halal gastronomy as a specific cultural and gastronomic offering has led to its incorporation into the local tourism industry (Raji et al., 2017). This integration has contributed to the overall appeal and competitiveness of locations.

The term “quality” of halal foods and products extends beyond simple compliance with Islamic food products regulations. It considers the food’s flavor, freshness, authenticity, hygiene, and dining experience (Othman et al., 2016; Raffi & Hasan, 2019). It is of the utmost significance for the travel and hospitality business to guarantee the highest possible quality of halal products. During their travels, Muslim tourists looking for halal options have particular standards for the food quality they consume at restaurants and other establishments. Not only does the availability of high-quality halal items add to their satisfaction, but it also helps generate a positive reputation for destinations, hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related companies. The quality of halal food is vital for Muslim tourists (Nawi et al., 2019). In addition, the availability of high-quality halal items contributes to an enhanced general view of a location as being welcoming, respectful of the many cultural and religious requirements of its visitors, and able to meet the preferences of Muslim tourists. For stakeholders in the local tourist sector to effectively satisfy the demands of this expanding market segment, they need to have a solid understanding of the notion of excellence in halal products and the impact that concept has on travel and hospitality. Figure 1 shows the relation in halal gastronomy tourism.

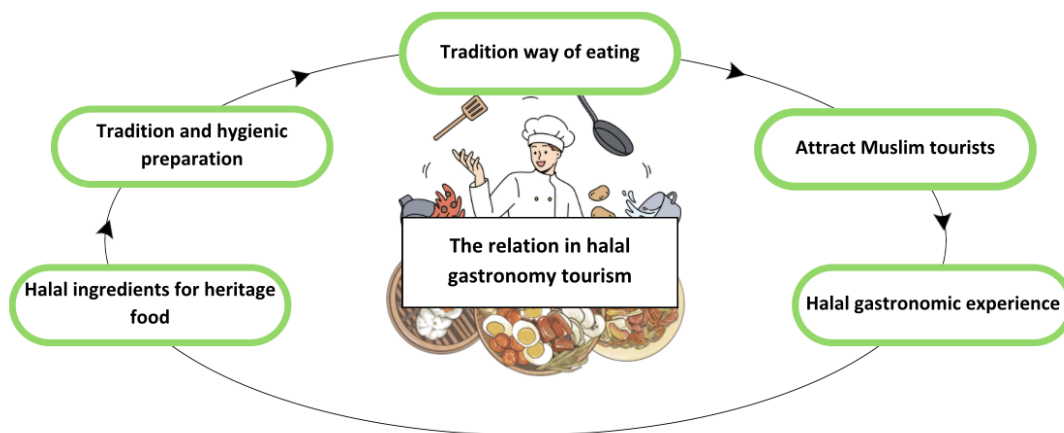


Figure 1: The Relation in Halal Gastronomy Tourism

Therefore, this paper has two distinct research aims to solve the issues affecting the quality of halal products in the local market. First, it is necessary to consider the contribution of halal gastronomy. The second goal is to investigate how halal gastronomy might help build consumer confidence in the halal sector, especially the halal tourism sector.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach. The study analyses current literature and documentation. Halal gastronomy's quality dimensions are examined using a qualitative descriptive analysis approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Saffinee, 2022). This approach allows for a deep dive into the material, providing a complete grasp. Halal gastronomy, quality standards, local tourism, and related subjects are the primary sources for this research. These secondary sources give essential insights, theories, and empirical evidence that inform the research findings. Key themes, concepts, and perspectives on quality in halal gastronomy and its effects on the local tourism sector are identified and synthesized during the evaluation process. The research explores how halal items' quality is perceived, evaluated, and maintained in the local tourism industry by building on current knowledge. It identifies the obstacles and potential of quality halal gastronomy and makes recommendations for tourist and hospitality stakeholders. Surveys and interviews were not used in this investigation. Instead, it analyses and synthesizes literature to gain insights. This study's qualitative research technique explores halal gastronomy quality in the local tourism sector, providing significant insights and recommendations for industry stakeholders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Halal Gastronomy and its influence on tourism

Halal gastronomy is crucial in attracting Muslim tourists and significantly impacts the tourism industry. It is necessary to investigate the part it plays in attracting Muslim tourists and to gain knowledge of the cultural and religious considerations that go into consumers' preferences for high-quality halal items (Othman et al., 2016). Halal gastronomy is a big draw for Muslim travelers because it meets their unique dietary needs and cultural preferences. Halal cuisine, which refers to food that has been cooked (Abdullah et al., 2021) by Islamic principles, gives Muslim travelers a sense of security and comfort while they are on their journeys. Hotels, restaurants, and other food-related businesses at a destination offer halal food options, improving the overall travel experience for Muslim tourists. As a result, Muslim tourists are more willing to select and promote the destinations that offer these options. In addition to meeting their religious requirements, halal gastronomy allows individuals to discover and appreciate a wide range of gastronomic pleasures without requiring them to abandon their beliefs.

Additionally, halal gastronomy frequently goes hand in hand with cultural authenticity, enabling Muslim tourists to fully immerse themselves in the customs and gastronomic history of the places they visit. For example, tourists will focus on cultural heritage sites in the geotourism experience (Dowling & Newsome, 2018). Showcase cultural heritage sites related to halal cuisine. Historical landmarks, traditional food markets, and heritage villages with authentic halal cuisine are examples of these sites. Muslim tourists interested in local culture and cuisine can be attracted to these areas through geotourism (Saffinee et al., 2021). It creates culinary trips that combine halal food with cultural activities. Traditional cooking methods, local ingredients, and halal cuisine's cultural relevance can be shown on these trips. Muslim travelers can take cookery classes or visit farms to learn about halal foods.

Several different aspects of culture and religion have a role in driving consumer demand for halal products of excellent quality (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, 2017). In Islamic tradition, a strong focus is placed on the quality, purity, and ethical origin of one's food. As Allah S.W.T mentions in Surah al-Baqarah, "O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy" (al-Quran 2:168). Muslim tourists look for halal food options that adhere to Islamic dietary standards and satisfy their preferences regarding taste, cleanliness, and the whole eating

experience. Throughout food production and preparation, they emphasize utilizing fresh products, the genuineness of regional flavors, and observing halal regulations (Khan et al., 2022). The need for high-quality halal items that can accommodate larger groups or families is also influenced by cultural factors. For example, Muslim countries' emphasis on communal dining and food sharing contributes to this demand. In addition, the growing awareness and consciousness among Muslim tourists regarding the health and sustainability elements of food further drives the need for high-quality halal products that align with their values and preferences.

Therefore, halal gastronomy is essential in attracting Muslim tourists to a destination by facilitating their access to halal dining alternatives and elevating the quality of their trip. The demand for high-quality halal products is driven by cultural and religious elements that emphasize flavor, authenticity, conformity to Islamic dietary standards, and consideration of the health and sustainability aspects of the product. To effectively respond to the requirements and preferences of Muslim tourists, travel destinations and enterprises in the tourism sector need to have a solid understanding of the factors that influence those tourists.

Ensuring quality in halal products for the local tourism market

The study of local culinary practices and techniques to improve quality in halal gastronomy and the discussion on ensuring halal integrity and quality assurance are necessary to ensure the quality of halal products for the local tourism market. In the study, researchers developed three themes reflecting on ensuring the quality of Halal products.

Theme: Selecting halal ingredients

Establishing and practicing comprehensive quality control measures and standards is vital to guarantee the quality of halal products sold in the local tourism industry. Thorough evaluations of the entire supply chain must be carried out, beginning with procuring ingredients and continuing through the preparation and serving of food (Azmi et al., 2020; Kamisah et al., 2018). Regular inspections, audits, and monitoring are all potential components of quality control procedures that can be implemented to guarantee conformity with halal regulations and standards such as MS1500:2019, Food Act, and slaughtering requirements. This review procedure helps uncover potential problems or non-compliance, enabling early corrective steps and continual development in the quality of halal items given to visitors.

Table 1: Ensuring Quality of Halal Products when selecting the ingredients.

Principles	Discussions	References
Cleanliness and hygiene	Halal foods are those that Muslims are allowed to eat or drink under Islamic Law, which specifies what foods are allowed and how they must be prepared. Halal ingredients are carefully selected to ensure they do not contain any haram elements, such as pork, alcohol, or certain types of meat or animal by-products. Halal food must be prepared and served cleanly and hygienically. As mentioned in Surah al-Baqarah verse 172, "O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is Him that you worship."	(Ali et al., 2017; Majid et al., 2023; Soon et al., 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2020)

Purity of ingredients	The ingredients used in halal food must be pure and free from any haram substances. The concept of cross-contamination is strictly avoided in halal gastronomy. It means ensuring that halal food is not in contact with non-halal ingredients, utensils, or surfaces. Separate utensils and equipment are used exclusively for halal food preparation to eliminate the risk of cross-contamination. This rigorous separation of halal and non-halal elements also extends to storage areas, ensuring that halal products are stored separately and away from any potential sources of contamination.	(Nazaruddin et al., 2023)
Slaughtering	The slaughtering of animals for halal food must be done in a specific way that follows Islamic guidelines. The animal's throat is cut with a sharp dagger, severing the jugular vein (wajadain), carotid artery, and windpipe (mari'). At the time of slaughter, the animal must be alive and in good health, and the procedure must adhere to the specific guidelines outlined by Islamic law. Skilled individuals are entrusted with the responsibility of slaughtering animals in a particular manner while pronouncing Allah's name. They ensure a swift and humane procedure by Islamic law.	(Chandia & Soon, 2018)

Theme: Toyyib process preparations

Toy yib, which translates to “good” or “wholesome” in Arabic, goes beyond the basic halal standards and incorporates broader aspects of food safety, health, and ethical issues. In other words, Toy yib is a more stringent standard than halal. It reflects the Islamic teachings that emphasize the need to consume clean and pure food for the well-being of individuals and society.

The Toy yib method of preparing food involves several essential steps, including sourcing high-quality and pure ingredients, adhering to stringent hygiene and cleanliness standards, taking into consideration ethical practices in the sourcing of animal products, putting into practice continuous quality control measures, and paying attention to the presentation and serving of food. Because of these factors, the food is guaranteed to be halal, free of pollutants, prepared in a hygienic atmosphere, sourced ethically, and presented deliciously.

Table 2: Ensuring the quality of Halal products during the preparation process.

Principles	Discussions	References
Physical separation	Physical separation eliminates the possibility of cross-contamination by preventing any contact between halal and non-halal items. Utmost care is taken to ensure that halal ingredients are handled and processed independently from non-halal ones, minimizing the risk of unintentional mixing. Moreover, dedicated cooking areas or separate cooking times may be established to avoid cross-	(Supian, 2018)

	contamination. The activities are significant when dealing with ingredients with intense flavors or aromas, as they can quickly transfer onto other foods during cooking. The risk of cross-contamination is effectively minimized by maintaining a clear distinction between halal and non-halal cooking spaces.	
Proper labeling	Proper labeling and precise identification of halal products are essential in halal gastronomy. It enables easy recognition and differentiation, allowing individuals involved in food preparation and service to identify and handle halal items without confusion accurately.	(Perguna et al., 2021)
Intention and consciousness	The intention of individuals involved in its preparation and consumption plays a vital role in adhering to the guidelines of Islamic Law and seeking blessings through the consumption of halal food.	(Ma'rifah et al., 2019)

Theme: Culture acceptance (Uruf)

From an Islamic point of view, the degree of cultural acceptance, also known as uruf, is an essential factor in determining food quality. Investigating how cultural norms and traditions play a role in selecting halal food products is necessary. Additionally, it is vital to explore the relationship between cultural acceptability, authenticity, and culinary experiences.

From an Islamic point of view, cultural acceptance receives a significant amount of weight when assessing food quality. In the food industry context, "cultural acceptance" refers to the degree to which various food products adhere to a specific group or society's cultural norms, customs, and values (Al-Zarqa, 2001; Al-Zuhayli, 2006). It incorporates features such as traditional ingredients, cooking techniques, and presentation styles that resonate with the local culture and go beyond simply adhering to halal requirements. The concept of cultural acceptability considers the entirety of the experience of ingesting food, its cultural meaning, emotional connection, and the social setting in which it is consumed. It is possible to have a higher level of overall happiness and a higher perceived quality of the eating experience when food is aligned with cultural acceptable.

Cultural norms and traditions are crucial when assessing and selecting halal food products. The norms and customs of each location and community are distinct, and these differences impact the criteria used to evaluate the quality of the meal (Filimonau et al., 2023). For instance, a specific culture may place a high value on particular spices, ingredients, or ways of preparation, and the presence or absence of these factors may affect how halal food is regarded to be of a higher quality. The appraisal process takes on an even greater significance due to incorporating cultural norms, which play a role in selecting particular foods for use at religious events or celebrations. Food producers, retailers, and facilities serving food must understand and respect their target audience's cultural norms to fulfill that audience's requirements and preferences.

It is necessary to consider how cultural acceptance, authenticity, and culinary experiences interact (O'Meara et al., 2022; Sthapit et al., 2023; Valverde-Roda et al., 2023). Because it represents the traditions, practices, and heritage of a particular culture or group, cultural acceptance is a factor that contributes to the authenticity of a meal experience. Consequently, authenticity improves the quality of the gastronomic experience (Ma'rifah et al., 2019) by creating a more profound connection to the area and the culinary traditions of that culture.

The total dining experience can be more enjoyable by cultivating a sense of belonging, nostalgia, and familiarity through cultural acceptance and authenticity. In the presentation and preparation of halal cuisine, producers and food outlets can create memorable gourmet experiences that resonate with customers by combining elements of cultural acceptability and authenticity.

Promoting Halal gastronomy as a solution

It is essential to increase consumer confidence in the halal market through halal gastronomy, particularly in the tourism industry. Customers have more faith in halal gastronomy. Halal gastronomy takes into account the dietary requirements of Muslim tourists, allowing them to travel without sacrificing their religion. Serving food certified as halal is one way for businesses to earn the trust of their customers. Halal gastronomy also ensures the integrity of food products and services (Ali et al., 2017). Customers can believe in halal products and claims since halal certification requires extensive inspections and ensures the product complies with halal regulations. Through halal gastronomy, Muslim tourists can partake in the culinary customs and flavors of the host country while adhering to halal guidelines. Authenticity helps develop local links and creates unique experiences, which contribute to increased customer confidence in the halal industry.

In other words, making halal gastronomy a top priority and providing excellent service can develop a favorable customer reputation (Husny et al., 2017; Windasari et al., 2023). Customers who are happy with their experiences as Muslim tourists are likelier to tell others about their positive experiences via word-of-mouth, online reviews, and social media, boosting customer trust and attracting additional Muslim tourists. In addition, the number of Muslim tourists searching for halal-friendly locations and activities has contributed to the expansion of halal tourism (Saffinee et al., 2019). High-quality halal gastronomy can help businesses expand. Therefore, the development of halal gastronomy is essential in boosting consumer confidence in the halal industry, especially in the halal tourism industry. It satisfies religious responsibilities, ensures halal integrity, enriches authentic experiences and cultural encounters, establishes a favorable reputation, and engages the rapidly expanding market of Muslim tourists. Businesses can build trust, draw in more customers, and contribute to the growth and prosperity of the halal tourist industry as a whole by giving halal gastronomy priority.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has highlighted the significance of quality in halal products and its effects on the regional tourism market and hospitality sector. The study discovered that ensuring the quality of halal products extends beyond halal certification alone and includes cultural acceptance (Uruf). According to Islamic viewpoints, cultural norms, traditions, and culinary practices are important factors in influencing the quality of cuisine. The Toyyib preparation method prioritizes hygiene, moral considerations, and quality control, essential for delivering healthful and fulfilling dining experiences. Halal gastronomy also helps Muslim tourists enjoy local culture and authenticity while fulfilling their religious requirements.

The findings could affect the local tourism market and the hospitality sector in several ways. Firstly, emphasizing the quality of halal items could be beneficial in attracting and retaining Muslim tourists, who represent a significant and increasing market segment. Destinations and businesses may stand out by providing high-quality halal gastronomy experiences. Thus, it may result in greater visitor satisfaction, favorable word-of-mouth, and a positive reputation within the halal tourism industry. Furthermore, embracing cultural acceptance and authenticity

in food offerings can improve a destination's allure and appeal.

Based on the research's findings, several recommendations can be made to stakeholders in the local tourism market and the hospitality industry. In addition, they must engage in training and instruction to ensure that food service providers are thoroughly aware of halal requirements, cultural acceptance, and the Toyyib preparation process. Collaboration with halal certification organizations can assist in creating credibility and increase customer trust. Stakeholders should concentrate on obtaining high-quality and pure ingredients, upholding stringent hygiene and cleanliness requirements, including ethical considerations, and implementing effective quality control mechanisms. Thus, to improve the dining experience for Muslim visitors, emphasis should also be placed on how halal food is presented and served. By putting these suggestions into practice, stakeholders may improve the quality of halal products, meet the unique requirements of Muslim tourists, and support the expansion and development of the regional tourism market and hospitality sector.

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