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Halal Brand Awareness and Halal Destination Brand Equity of Homestay in Selangor

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Abstract
Understanding the relationship between brand awareness and brand equity becomes crucial as halal tourism expands, particularly in Selangor with its cultural heritage. This study uses meta-analysis to investigate how halal principles affect brand equity among homestay providers. It analyses how these providers' knowledge and behaviours influence Selangor's reputation as a halal-friendly destination. The findings provide guidelines for tourism stakeholders to increase halal awareness and enhance halal destination brand equity through strategic marketing, assisting providers to improve their halal image and understand travellers' preferences. The study aims to promote sustainable halal tourism and inclusive of cultural travel experiences throughout Selangor and beyond.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; Halal Tourism; Strategic Marketing; Sustainable Development

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1.0 Introduction
The tourism industry has witnessed a significant shift with the emergence of halal tourism, a niche market segment that caters to the demands and interests of Muslim travellers. Rahman et al. (2020) defined halal tourism or Islamic tourism as travelling that aligns with Islamic principles and values. Halal tourism comprises several aspects, which include halal cuisine, modest lodgings, prayer facilities, and tourism services that align with Islamic principles. As the halal tourism industry grows, destination providers worldwide recognise the economic and cultural value of catering to Muslim travellers. Jia and Chaozhi (2020) reported that the increased demand for halal tourism has led to fierce competition among the destinations, as several now offer these services. Selangor, Malaysia's most populous state, is famous for its varied cultural history and numerous attractions. With a substantial Muslim population and an intense commitment to Islamic principles, Selangor has developed as a preferred halal destination among travellers. It is proven by a statement by Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari, Menteri Besar of Selangor, during an interview on 19th September 2023 with The Star at the 19th Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS 2023). According to Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari, Selangor registered RM55.7 million in value from different business-matching initiatives in the halal sector in 2022, a 40% rise over the previous year. Menteri Besar Incorporated (MBI) chief operating officer, Saipolyazan Yusop, added that in various industries, the demand for halal goods and services is predicted to increase by 15% in 2022, and Selangor is well-positioned to benefit from it. Homestay is a key component of Selangor's tourism industry, providing

travellers with a genuine cultural experience while contributing to the local economy. For Selangor to sustain its position as a preferred halal destination among travellers, it is crucial to understand halal brand awareness and its influence on homestay's halal destination brand equity in Selangor.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for homestay in Malaysia increased dramatically in recent years. Data in Figure 1 indicates that the quantity of both local and foreign travellers staying at homestays in Malaysia rose from 372,475 in 2018 to 458,899 in 2019. Despite dropping to 134,017 in 2020 and 82,758 in 2021 due to the global pandemic, the number unexpectedly increased to 563,901 in 2022 and 884,007 in 2023 (Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture [MOTAC], 2024). This encouraging rise demonstrates how the homestay significantly influences Malaysia's tourism industry. Thus, the homestay program has been acknowledged as a crucial driver of the nation's economic growth (Jalasi & Ambad, 2021).

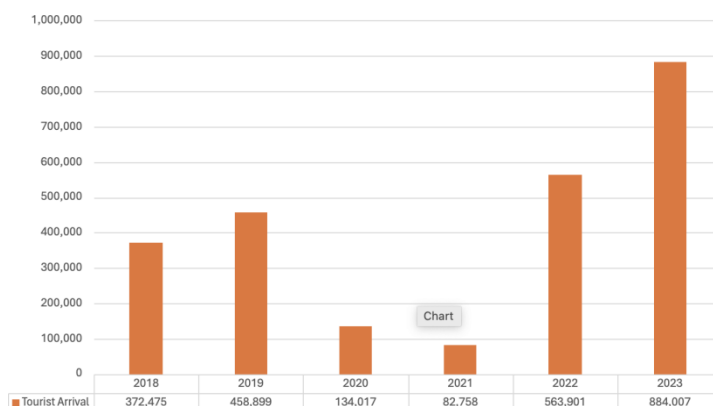|	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
■ Tourist Arrival	372,475	458,899	134,017	82,758	563,901	884,007

Fig. 1: Tourist arrival to homestay program in Malaysia
(Source: MOTAC, 2024).

Abdullah et al. (2020) stated that by improving Islamic tourism without sacrificing the distinctiveness and originality of Malaysian culture, Malaysia might grow its Islamic tourist industry while respecting Islamic culture and values. As a result, Malaysia's homestay is appropriate for the market as an Islamic tourism product. Islamic Tourism Centre (2023) emphasised that with a market potential of more than 50 Muslim countries and no less than 1.6 billion Muslims, tremendous opportunities await those willing to meet the demands for Muslim-friendly tourism products and services (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2023). In an interview with Utusan Malaysia on July 13, 2022, Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, the Minister of MOTAC, gave her word that industry participants and the government will keep pushing Muslims to travel to Malaysia in the future, even if that means bringing about changes to the country's tourism landscape.

Therefore, the meta-analysis presented in this paper is needed to observe and analyse homestay halal brand awareness and halal destination brand equity in Selangor. Three objectives are developed for this study, which are (i) to identify the main finding for halal brand awareness, (ii) to identify the main finding for halal brand equity, and (iii) to identify the research methods that have been used to research halal brand awareness and halal brand equity.

2.0 Literature Review

Malaysia's homestay program is not merely an accommodation but a tourism experience of local people's lifestyle, culture, and economic activities. Jalasi and Ambad (2021) highlighted that the homestay program is one of the tourism products that is a unique priority of the Malaysian government. This program creates an opportunity for the local communities, especially in rural areas, to contribute to the local economic development.

2.1 Homestay Program

MOTAC (2023) defined a homestay program as an experience for tourists living with their chosen family. It allows them to interact and gain daily homestay family life experiences and study rural community culture in Malaysia. Homestay products are not classified as accommodation facilities. It focuses on lifestyle and experience, including culture and economic activity. Jalasi and Ambad (2021) discovered that the homestay program's history in Malaysia started in Pahang. In the 70s, a local lady named Mak Long provided breakfast, dinner, and accommodation in her house to a group of guests at Kampung Cherating Lama, Pahang. Later, in 1988, the Malaysian government officially launched the homestay program. Remarkably, after decades, the number of local people involved in the program started to grow rapidly. In 1995, MOTAC introduced the Malaysian Homestay Program as an official tourism product.

Meanwhile, there were 3,397 participants registered under the homestay program in 2022. Many of these homestay accommodations are built in rural areas nationwide. Until today, Malaysia's official homestay program is under the purview of the MOTAC. The leading players of the program are the accommodation on offer, the willingness of tourists to stay a minimum of overnight, and the host families that provide basic supplies for the stay to be enjoyable. MOTAC adopted diverse procedures from those homestay concepts practised abroad. The Malaysian concept emphasises that tourists stay with host families and do daily activities together, such

as eating, cooking, and participating in many activities with their adopted families, allowing two parties with different cultural backgrounds to collaborate, learn, and gain from each other.

2.2 Islamic Tourism

Islam is regarded as a comprehensive way of life because all areas of human life and living things are included in its teachings, directly or indirectly. Al-Qur'an pays particular attention to tourism, and Muslims' attitude towards it is seen as one of the blessings of the holy books of the Qur'an (Peristiwo, 2020). Muslims must travel the world to completely comprehend the magnificence of Allah SWT's creation and visit their friends and family. They must extend hospitality to guests protected by Islamic law while upholding their civic rights. Peristiwo (2020) stressed the importance of raising awareness of halal products, which can lead to growth in the business. Islamic tourism involves an engagement with the environment, culture, and creative expression that aligns with Islamic principles rather than just visiting a mosque. Islamic tourism should adhere to religious ideals and other aspects of life compatible with Islam (Abdullah et al., 2020). Abdullah et al. (2020) reported Malaysia's Islamic economic sector has expanded significantly, with enterprises operating in several areas such as gastronomy, finance, insurance, fashion, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, entertainment, and tourism. Efforts should be made to promote Islamic tourism without sacrificing the distinctiveness and originality of Malaysian culture as a new strategy for developing Malaysia's Islamic tourism while following Islamic culture and values. Research by Abdullah et al. (2020) identified that the Islamic tourism industry in Malaysia has significant potential but is underutilised.

Several terminologies define Islamic tourism, including *Sharia* tourism, *halal* tourism, *halal* travel, and Muslim-friendly destinations. Islamic tourism is an activity supported by various facilities and services offered by the community, businesses, the government, and local governments by Islamic and Sharia standards. Islamic tourism aligns with Islamic principles and ethics and is similar to the concepts of *halal* and haram. Whereas haram is defined as forbidden, *halal* implies justified. *Halal* may be understood from both an industry and a religious standpoint. Religious viewpoint refers to what is permissible for Muslim consumers to consume according to Islamic teachings and beliefs. Therefore, *halal* tourism is described as the practice of Muslim travellers adhering to Islamic principles, which is a current growing trend in the global tourism sector.

2.3 Brand Awareness and Halal Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is essential for brand equity (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It relates to the consumer's ability to recognise a brand. Similarly, Kotler and Keller (2016) suggested that brand awareness is connected to the strength of brand knowledge, which allows marketers to access consumers' capacity to recognise brands in various situations. Furthermore, brand awareness positively impacts consumer behaviours, perceptions, and likes (Aaker, 2014). Zia et al. (2021) claimed that brand awareness is increased among consumers through efficient marketing and communication channels, including headphones, the internet, television, and open advertising. As a result, brand awareness may influence a consumer's purchase decision (Hien et al., 2022).

From an Islamic perspective, the need for distinctive products and services is not the only factor to consider. The goods and services must adhere to *halal* standards for ingredients and cleanliness. Therefore, Pratama et al. (2023) reported that this has raised awareness of halal brands throughout various businesses, including non-Muslim countries. Halal brand awareness refers to consumers' recognition and knowledge of products or services that follow Islamic dietary regulations and ethical values. The word "*halal*" refers to what is allowed or legal in Arabic and is frequently connected to food and drinks. Still, it also covers various other industries, such as cosmetics, medicine, banking, and tourism. In tourism, *halal* brand awareness includes accommodations, dining options, recreational activities, and overall destination amenities.

Maintaining *halal* brand awareness requires ensuring *halal* regulations are followed and persuading consumers of the benefits of purchasing *halal*-certified goods and services. To achieve effective *halal* brand awareness, a comprehensive strategy that includes adhering to *halal* standards, transparency, moral behaviour, quality control, cultural integration, digital marketing expertise, customisation, and ongoing improvement. By prioritising these components and genuinely interacting with the *halal* community, brands may create a robust online presence, foster credibility, and promote sustained success in the *halal* industry.

2.4 Brand Equity and Halal Destination Brand Equity

Over the last few decades, research has demonstrated that academics, marketers, and business managers have become highly engaged in brand equity (Amin & Nika, 2019). Brand equity is defined by Aaker (1991) as a collection of brand assets and liabilities associated with the brand's name and symbol, which may increase and decrease the value of goods and services while also adding value for the consumer and the business. The five aspects of brand assets are brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets, representing the primary means of creating brand equity. The significance of comprehending brand equity from the consumer's perspective is emphasised by Keller (1993), who defines consumer-based brand equity as the variation effect of brand knowledge on consumer reaction to the brand's marketing.

On the other hand, Lassar et al. (1995) defined brand equity as the consumers' impression of a particular brand's product to be superior to others, distinguishing five features of brand equity: it involves consumer perceptions; it consists of the brand's overall value; the overall value stems from its physical aspects as well as the brand name; the brand equity is relative to the competition rather than absolute; and it has a positive impact on the brand's financial performance. Azzahrah et al. (2024) mentioned that brand equity measures a company's perceived value. Mas'ud et al. (2022) found that amenities, including comfort, fair costs, satisfaction, and receiving something of value, all contribute positively to destination brand value. While Preko et al. (2022) stated that destination brand equity is significantly impacted by perceived *halal* brand quality and *halal* brand image.

Halal destination brand equity applies to a certain travel destination's perceived value and reputation among Muslim travellers who follow Islamic principles and criteria, including acceptable (halal) actions. Halal destination brand equity includes trust, credibility, differentiation, consumer happiness, and social responsibility. Destinations may improve sustainability, competitiveness, and attractiveness by prioritising Muslim travellers' demands and preferences in the expanding halal tourism industry. Destinations that prioritise halal tourism and actively invest in creating and maintaining brand equity will profit in the long run in attracting and retaining Muslim travellers worldwide. Collaboration amongst tourism stakeholders, such as government agencies, tourism boards, hospitality providers, halal certification authorities, and local communities, is necessary to develop and market halal-friendly experiences and offers to build halal destination brand equity.

3.0 Methodology

This research adopts a meta-analysis design, a secondary study format that discovers, investigates, and evaluates all relevant studies on a particular issue domain. A meta-analysis is a reliable and objective scientific approach for analysing and integrating different data. A meta-analysis is a statistical process that involves analysing and synthesising many linked study findings. While choosing a topic for the meta-analysis, it is crucial to ensure that the various studies give data that can be pooled, even if the term "similar" is not defined in this context (Ahn & Kang, 2018). Chen et al. (2021) emphasised that meta-analysis constantly solves the problem of studies with large sample sizes.

3.1 Search Strategy and Data Sources

The search technique for this study began with identifying the publication period of the articles, ranging between 2019 and 2024. Several databases, including Emerald and Google Scholars, were used to narrow the scope of past research on halal brand awareness and halal destination brand equity. These databases were chosen as they might improve the likelihood of discovering pertinent literature.

3.2 Eligibility Criteria

Studies are carefully selected to meet specific criteria to ensure that the analysed data appropriately answers the objective. These criteria include (i) keywords that include halal tourism, brand awareness, brand equity, homestay programmes and (ii) published journal articles. Only publications addressing brand awareness and brand equity were included in the paper's first selection of 20 articles. Subsequently, the initial selection of publications without journal articles was eliminated. Ultimately, six articles that satisfied the predetermined criteria were found.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Research Question 1: What are the main findings related to brand awareness?

Brand awareness is crucial in the tourism industry, affecting the travellers' decisions and destination selection. Table 1 shows the findings of the brand awareness study. Social media plays a vital role in raising brand awareness and brand experience in the tourism sector, which increases the possibility of travellers visiting product destinations. Destinations can interact with customers, build brand loyalty, and successfully promote tourist growth by leveraging social media. Ultimately, brand awareness is a crucial predictor of brand image, trust, and loyalty. Businesses focusing on increasing brand awareness may develop important brand image characteristics, establish better consumer interactions, and achieve long-term success.

Table 1. Main findings of brand awareness

Studies	Objectives	Findings
Haryanti and Praswati (2023)	To investigate the effect of social media marketing activity on visit intention, utilising brand experience and brand awareness as mediating factors.	Using social media may improve brand awareness and brand experience for consumers. Consumers with good brand awareness and understanding are more likely to visit the product destinations.
Rimadias et al. (2021)	To analyse how social media marketing on TikTok affects brand awareness and brand image of the tourism industry in Indonesia.	Customer brand engagement significantly impacts brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty in the tourism industry in Indonesia. Improving customer interactions is crucial for increasing brand loyalty to tourism in Indonesia.
Bernarto and Beny (2020)	To investigate how brand awareness, image, and trust positively impact brand loyalty.	Increased brand awareness leads to improved image, trust, and loyalty. Brand awareness significantly predicts brand image, trust, and loyalty.

4.2 Research Question 2: What is the study's main finding related to brand equity?

Brand equity in the tourism sector refers to the perceived worth of a destination among travellers. A strong brand may increase the number of visitors, higher spending, and favourable word-of-mouth marketing. It reflects a destination's reputation, perception, and overall popularity among travellers. Table 2 shows the findings of the brand equity study. Cultural heritage, marketing efforts, hospitality, unique attractions and overall tourist experiences all contribute to building brand equity in the tourism industry. Strong brand equity may lead to competitive advantage, crisis resilience, and long-term tourist growth.

Table 2. Main findings of brand equity

Studies	Objectives	Findings
Janjua et al. (2023)	To examine the antecedent and consequent relationship between sustainable tourism, marketing, and brand equity in the Malaysian rural community-based homestays (RCBHs) perspective.	Environmentally sustainable tourism marketing (ESTM) practices are an important antecedent of sustainable brand equity for homestays (BEH).
Preko et al. (2021)	To investigate the effects of halal brand equity on destination brand equity within the tourism sector.	Halal brand awareness and value have a favourable and significant influence on destination brand equity. Furthermore, halal image and halal perceived brand quality had a negative but substantial effect on destination brand equity.
Rahman et al. (2020)	To examine tourists' heritage brand experience (HBE), cultural intelligence, and destination loyalty and test whether these impact consumer-based heritage destination brand equity (CBHDE) formation.	The structural equation modelling (SEM) results reveal that tourists' HBE, cultural intelligence, and destination brand loyalty are positively related to CBHDE, thus implying the impact of these influences on CBHDE, which is mediated by heritage destination brand loyalty.

4.3 Research Question 3: What research methods have been used to research brand awareness and brand equity?

Three broad methodologies are available to researchers: mixed-method, qualitative, and quantitative. Every approach has a unique architecture for gathering data and presenting the analysis results. Techniques might be broadly defined (e.g., qualitative or quantitative) or narrowly defined (e.g., grounded theory or experimental). Like theories, methodologies are only somewhat useful based on how well they align with the ideas and practices used, the hypothesis being studied, and the study's selected topic (Smith & Zajda, 2018). Methodologies, like theories, cannot be true or false. The methods and designs employed by a few researchers in addressing the ideas of brand awareness and brand equity are displayed in Table 3.

Table 2. Main findings of brand equity

Approaches	Design	Sample Group	Studies
Quantitative	Self-administered survey	Food and Beverage Industry	Haryanti and Praswati (2023)
Quantitative	Self-administered survey	Tourism Industry	Rimadias et al. (2021)
Quantitative	Self-administered survey	Food and Beverage Industry	Bernarto and Beny (2020)
Quantitative	Self-administered survey	Tourism Industry	Janjua et al. (2023)
Quantitative	Self-administered survey	Tourism Industry	Preko et al. (2021)
Quantitative	Self-administered survey	Tourism Industry	Rahman et al. (2020)

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

The quantitative research undertaken in the tourism sector has offered valuable insights into various industry elements. This study revealed significant industry trends, patterns, and correlations through thorough data collection and analysis. From studying travellers' preferences and behaviours to assessing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, the quantitative method has helped researchers reach relevant findings and provide informed suggestions to stakeholders.

However, this study has certain limitations. First, the study only uses Google Scholar and one database, Emerald, which may not thoroughly cover all brand awareness and brand equity studies. Second, this study relies on specific phrases from the search phase to address the research questions, which would have excluded the alternative subjects. However, the missing issues might be investigated further by tackling various objectives in a separate literature review. This paper contributes to the understanding of brand awareness and brand equity. However, future research could focus more on the halal aspect to better address the expanding Muslim population, given the substantial economic influence that the homestay industry has.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study
This study would contribute to halal brand awareness, halal brand equity, and homestay operations.

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