

Exploring the Impact of Authenticity, Tourist Experience, and Destination Image on Loyalty in the Context of Halal Tourism

Syahrul Wibowo¹, Arif Afendi²

^{1,2} Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam, Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, Indonesia

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh *authenticity*, *experience*, dan *image* terhadap loyalitas destinasi pada wisata halal dengan objek studi Masjid Agung Jawa Tengah (MAJT) di Semarang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan data primer yang diperoleh dari wisatawan nusantara dan mancanegara yang berkunjung ke MAJT. Teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan adalah *probability* sampling dengan metode simple random sampling. Pengujian hipotesis dilakukan dengan bantuan perangkat lunak statistik SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga variabel independen, yaitu *authenticity*, *experience*, dan *image* berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap loyalitas destinasi. *Authenticity* memberikan pengaruh melalui persepsi keaslian dan kekhasan budaya yang memperkuat keterikatan emosional wisatawan. *Experience* memberikan kontribusi melalui keterlibatan emosional, aksesibilitas, dan kualitas layanan yang dirasakan selama kunjungan. Sementara itu, *image* memengaruhi loyalitas melalui kesan visual, kenyamanan spiritual, serta persepsi positif terhadap destinasi. Temuan ini memperkuat kerangka Teori *Service-Dominant Logic* yang menekankan pentingnya penciptaan nilai bersama antara penyedia layanan dan konsumen.

Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya pengelolaan nilai-nilai otentik, pengalaman yang berkesan, dan citra destinasi yang kuat dalam membangun loyalitas pengunjung, khususnya dalam konteks wisata halal di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Authenticity*; *Experience*; *Image*; Loyalitas Destinasi, Wisata Halal

Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of authenticity, experience, and image on destination loyalty in the context of halal tourism, using the Great Mosque of Central Java (MAJT) in Semarang as the research site. A quantitative approach was employed with primary data collected from domestic and international tourists visiting the mosque. The sampling technique used was probability sampling with a simple random sampling method. Hypothesis testing was conducted using

Correspondence:

Arif Afendi,
Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi
dan Bisnis Islam, Universitas
Islam Negeri Walisongo,
Indonesia
Email:
arifafendi@walisongo.ac.id

Submitted: 5 January 2025

Revised: 13 January 2025

Accepted: 20 January 2025

Published: 3 February 2025

E-ISSN: xxxx-xxxx

DOI: xxxxxxxx

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SPSS statistical software. The results show that all three independent variables authenticity, experience, and image—have a positive and significant effect on destination loyalty. Authenticity enhances loyalty through perceived originality and cultural uniqueness that strengthen emotional attachment. Experience contributes via emotional engagement, accessibility, and service quality during the visit. Meanwhile, image influences loyalty through visual impressions, spiritual comfort, and a positive overall perception. These findings support the Service-Dominant Logic framework (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), emphasizing value co-creation between service providers and beneficiaries. The implications of this study highlight the importance of managing authenticity, delivering meaningful experiences, and reinforcing destination image to build visitor loyalty, particularly within Indonesia's halal tourism industry.

Keywords: *authenticity; experience; image; destination loyalty; halal tourism*

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors contributing to a country's economic development. It not only creates employment opportunities but also supports local industries such as handicrafts, accommodation services, tour guides, and transportation (Meirezaldi, 2020). As competition in the service sector intensifies, tourism plays an increasingly strategic role in national economic growth, especially in the ASEAN Economic Community (MEA) era. The demand for leisure as an escape from daily routines and stress has positioned tourism as a psychological and recreational necessity. In Islam, traveling is encouraged not only for religious purposes such as Hajj and Umrah, but also for learning, reflection, and experiencing God's creations. As stated in QS. Al-An'am: 11, Muslims are urged to "travel through the land" to observe the consequences faced by previous peoples.

In this context, the concept of halal tourism has gained traction globally. Halal tourism refers to services that accommodate the religious needs of Muslim travelers, including prayer facilities, halal food, and religiously compliant activities (Mohsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayfi, 2016). It is not limited to religious tourism but encompasses all types of tourism that align with Islamic values (Battour, Battor, & Ismail, 2012). Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population, has been recognized for its halal tourism potential, ranking second globally in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2022, surpassing countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy sees halal tourism as a key strategy to revitalize the post-pandemic economy. Muslim travelers spent an estimated USD 2.0 trillion globally in 2011 on sectors including travel and recreation, with projections reaching USD 2.4 trillion by 2024 (Kemenparekraf, 2022). Among the most prominent halal tourism destinations in Indonesia is the Masjid Agung Jawa Tengah (MAJT) in Semarang. As both a place of worship and a tourist destination, it integrates architectural, historical, and spiritual elements. Facilities such as accommodation, the Al-Husna Tower, and the Walisongo museum elevate the experience, attracting over 6,000 visitors per day during peak seasons.

Given the dual function of MAJT as a place of worship and a tourist site, this study examines visitors' perception and behavior in the context of destination loyalty, a critical component in tourism marketing and sustainability. Loyalty is influenced by several factors, including perceived authenticity, memorable experiences, and the destination's image.

Drawing on the Service-Dominant Logic (SD-Logic) framework (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), which emphasizes value co-creation between service providers and consumers, this research investigates how authenticity, experience, and image affect destination loyalty in a halal tourism setting. Authenticity in tourism refers to the originality and trustworthiness of a destination, encompassing cultural integrity, historical truth, and genuine experience (Ram, Björk, & Weidenfeld, 2016). Authenticity enhances emotional and cognitive attachment, leading to repeat visits and recommendations (Yi et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2020). In halal tourism, authenticity strengthens spiritual and cultural resonance with visitors.

H1: Authenticity positively influences destination loyalty in halal tourism.

Experience and Destination Loyalty

Tourism experience includes emotional responses, surprise, service quality, and physical environment that shape visitors' memories (Rohman, 2021). Positive experiences stimulate post-visit intentions such as revisit or word-of-mouth recommendations (Barahama et al., 2022; Sabila et al., 2020). While some studies (Senjaya, Semuel, & Dharmayanti, 2013) suggest negative influence under specific conditions, a broader consensus affirms a positive link in religious and cultural tourism (Suryoko & Nuryulia, 2020; Prayag et al., 2017).

Therefore: H2: Experience positively influences destination loyalty in halal tourism.

Image and Destination Loyalty

Image refers to visitors' perception shaped by previous interaction and information about a destination (Rohman, 2021). A positive image builds emotional attachment and fosters loyalty (Noerhanifati et al., 2020; Afrilian & Silvandi, 2022). While contrasting evidence exists (Listyawati & Wulandari, 2022), destination image remains a widely accepted antecedent of loyalty.

H3: Image positively influences destination loyalty in halal tourism.

Methodology

This research is a quantitative study utilizing primary data. The sample consists of domestic and international tourists who visited the Great Mosque of Central Java (Masjid Agung Jawa Tengah) in Semarang. The data used in this study are quantitative in nature, involving numerical analysis and statistical calculations. The sampling technique applied is probability sampling, specifically using the simple random sampling method. Hypothesis testing was conducted with the assistance of SPSS statistical software.

Data analysis

Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents based on gender are presented in the following table:

Table 1.
Respondents by Gender

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Male	29	29%
Female	71	71%

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2023

The table above indicates that female respondents were the dominant group, comprising 71 individuals or 71%, while male respondents accounted for 29 individuals or 29%.

Respondents by Age

The demographic characteristics of respondents based on age are presented in the following table:

Table 2.
Respondents by Age

Description	Frequency	Percentage
< 30	42	42%
30 - 40	24	24%
> 41	34	34%

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2023

Based on the data above, 42 respondents (42%) were under the age of 30, 24 respondents (24%) were between the ages of 30 and 40, and 34 respondents (34%) were above the age of 40.

Respondents by Last Educational Attainment

The demographic characteristics of respondents based on their last educational attainment are presented in the following table:

Table 3.
Respondents by Last Educational Attainment

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Junior High School (SMP)	14	14%
Senior High School (SMU)	41	41%
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	29	29%
Master's Degree (S2)	2	2%
Others	14	14%

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2023

Data shows that 41 respondents (41%) had completed senior high school, 29 respondents (29%) held a bachelor's degree, 14 respondents (14%) had completed junior high school, 2 respondents (2%) had a master's degree, and 14 respondents (14%) belonged to other educational categories.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted to determine whether or not the independent variable influences the dependent variable.

Table 4.
 Classical Assumption Test

Independet Variable		
Multikolonierity Test	Tolerance	VIF
Authenticity	0,991	1,009
Experience	0,997	1,003
Image	0,990	1,010
Heterokedastisity Test (Glejser test)	Sig t-test	
Authenticity	0,087	
Experience	0,635	
Image	0,968	
Auto correlation test (Run test)	0,585	
Normality residual test		
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	0,200	

Source: Processed primary data, 2023

Table 5.
 Multiple linear regression test

Independet Variable			
Hyphotesis Tes	coefficients	t value	sig
Constant	7,317	4,226	0,001
Authenticity	0,533	4,830	0,001
Experience	0,615	5,478	0,034
Image	0,693	8,540	0,001
R square	0,644		
Adjusted R square	0,633		
F statistc	38,376		

Dependent variable: Destination loyalty

Source: Processed primary data, 2023

Discussion

Effect of Authenticity on Destination Loyalty in Halal Tourism

The findings of this study indicate that authenticity has a significant and positive influence on destination loyalty in the context of halal tourism. This is evidenced by the t-test result ($t = 4.830$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$), suggesting that H1 is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected. These findings confirm the initial hypothesis that authenticity positively affects destination loyalty. This result aligns with prior studies conducted by Ram, Björk, and Weidenfeld (2016), Liao and Xiaoxiao (2018), Yi (2018), and Chen and Zhou (2020), which emphasize the pivotal role of authenticity in enhancing tourists' emotional attachment and repeat visitation. When tourists perceive the authenticity of a destination as high, such as at the Great Mosque of Central Java (MAJT), they are more likely to express satisfaction and intention to return or recommend the site to others. This study found that respondents believed MAJT possesses unique symbols and distinctive features that are memorable and visually consistent with promotional content viewed through social media or television. Tourists viewed the site as clean, well-maintained, and faithful to their expectations, strengthening their emotional and cognitive connections. The authenticity of the destination offers a deeper experiential value that enhances satisfaction and drives destination loyalty.

Effect of Experience on Destination Loyalty in Halal Tourism

The results also reveal that experience significantly and positively influences destination loyalty, as demonstrated by the t-test result ($t = 5.478$, $p = 0.034 < 0.05$). Therefore, H2 is accepted, affirming the initial hypothesis. These findings are consistent with the studies by Bayu et al. (2020), Sabila et al. (2020), Suryoko and Nuryulia (2022), Triantafillidou and Petala (2016), Wu (2016), and Prayag et al. (2017), all of which support the positive influence of memorable and meaningful experiences on tourists' loyalty behavior. In the case of MAJT, tourists experienced not only a spiritual atmosphere but also aesthetic, social, and emotional engagement. Group visits from religious communities, school excursions, and travelers passing through Semarang all contributed to the depth of the experience. Visitors enjoyed capturing photos, admiring the view from the Al-Husna Tower, and appreciated the ease of accessibility, all of which enhanced their perceived comfort and security. As noted by Rohman (2021), experience involves emotional responses, physical environment, service interaction, and access quality. When tourists feel that their expectations are exceeded through these touchpoints, it fosters a strong emotional bond, which reinforces their intent to revisit or recommend the destination.

Effect of Image on Destination Loyalty in Halal Tourism

The statistical analysis also confirms that destination image significantly and positively impacts destination loyalty, with a t-test result ($t = 8.540$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). Consequently, H3 is accepted, supporting the hypothesis that destination image plays a vital role in shaping tourists' loyalty. This finding corresponds with previous studies by Sabila et al. (2020), Peppy and Givara (2022), Stephanie and Tunjungsari (2020), and Afrilian and Silvandi (2022), which have shown that a positive destination image enhances emotional and attitudinal loyalty among visitors. Tourists who perceive the destination as attractive, reputable, and enjoyable tend to feel more committed to returning. Respondents in this study viewed MAJT as a well-integrated religious and cultural site. Its architectural aesthetics, religious relevance, and visitor-friendly amenities contributed to a positive and

lasting impression. As Rohman (2021) highlights, destination image is formed through interactions and judgments during and after a visit. When managed properly, it becomes a critical antecedent to visitor behavior, particularly revisit intention and word-of-mouth promotion. Moreover, tourism providers should not only prioritize technical aspects such as infrastructure but also invest in visual appeal, emotional experience, and cultural harmony. A cohesive and appealing destination image supports tourist satisfaction and serves as a preliminary trigger of loyalty behavior.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the influence of authenticity, experience, and image on destination loyalty in the context of halal tourism at the Great Mosque of Central Java (MAJT). Based on the statistical analysis and hypothesis testing, the findings confirm that all three independent variables authenticity, experience, and image positively and significantly affect destination loyalty. First, authenticity demonstrated a significant positive influence, indicating that the more authentic a destination is perceived to be, the stronger the tourists' emotional and behavioral loyalty (Ram, Björk, & Weidenfeld, 2016; Yi, 2018; Chen & Zhou, 2020). The distinct characteristics, cultural symbolism, and alignment with visitor expectations enhance their attachment and revisit intention.

Second, experience was also found to significantly influence destination loyalty. This aligns with previous findings (Prayag et al., 2017; Triantafillidou & Petala, 2016; Sabila et al., 2020), highlighting that meaningful and memorable tourism experiences, including emotional, social, and environmental aspects, strengthen tourists' commitment to return and recommend the destination. Third, image significantly contributed to loyalty. A positive destination image, shaped by perceptions of visual aesthetics, cleanliness, and religious ambiance, leads to deeper affective and cognitive attachment (Afrilian & Silvandi, 2022; Stephanie & Tunjungsari, 2020). The study underscores the critical role of managing destination image to sustain and grow visitor loyalty in halal tourism settings. Collectively, the results support the Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), which posits that value is co-created through interactions between service providers and beneficiaries. In the context of halal tourism, this value is constructed through perceived authenticity, engaging experiences, and a positive image, all of which culminate in enhanced destination loyalty.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the study focused on only three independent variables authenticity, experience, and image without considering other potential antecedents of destination loyalty such as satisfaction, perceived value, trust, or religiosity. Second, the research was limited to a single site, the Great Mosque of Central Java, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to other halal tourism destinations. Future research is encouraged to expand the model by incorporating additional variables and applying it to different geographic and cultural contexts, particularly to compare multiple halal destinations across Indonesia or other Muslim-majority regions. A mixed-method approach may also provide deeper insights into visitor motivations and behavioral patterns within the halal tourism framework.

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