



EFFECT OF HALAL DESTINATION BRANDING ON HALAL DESTINATION IMAGE IN THE HALAL CULINARY AREA OF TULUNGAGUNG STATION

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Abstract: *To support the halalization program for MSME products in East Java, the East Java Provincial Government has designated Tulungagung Regency as a pilot project for managing the halal culinary sector. However, previous studies show inconsistent findings regarding the effect of destination branding on destination image, and empirical research on halal branding in newly established halal culinary areas remains limited. This study aims to examine the effect of halal destination branding on halal destination image in the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station. Conducted in December 2024, this research used a quantitative approach. The population consisted of consumers who purchased products in the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station, with 110 respondents selected through accidental sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire measured with a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using SPSS through validity, reliability, normality, and t-tests. The results show that halal destination branding has no significant effect on halal destination image, with a t-value of 0.664 and a p-value of 0.508, which is greater than 0.05. These findings indicate that halal branding has not yet been able to build a strong halal image in the culinary area. Practically, destination managers need to strengthen halal communication, improve visible halal assurance, and educate consumers so that halal branding is not only understood as a label, but also as a credible and consistent destination experience.*

Keywords: *halal branding; halal destination branding; halal destination image; halal culinary tourism.*

Abstract: *Dalam mendukung program halalisasi produk UMKM di Jawa Timur, Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Timur menunjuk Kabupaten Tulungagung sebagai pilot project pengelolaan kawasan kuliner halal. Namun, beberapa penelitian sebelumnya menunjukkan hasil yang belum konsisten mengenai pengaruh destination branding terhadap destination image, sedangkan kajian empiris tentang halal branding pada kawasan kuliner halal yang baru dikembangkan masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji*

pengaruh halal destination branding terhadap halal destination image pada Kawasan Kuliner Halal Stasiun Tulungagung. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada bulan Desember 2024 dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif. Populasi penelitian adalah konsumen yang membeli produk di Kawasan Kuliner Halal Stasiun Tulungagung, dengan jumlah sampel sebanyak 110 responden yang dipilih melalui teknik accidental sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner dengan skala Likert lima poin dan dianalisis menggunakan SPSS melalui uji validitas, reliabilitas, normalitas, serta uji t. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa halal destination branding tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap halal destination image, dengan nilai t sebesar 0,664 dan p-value sebesar 0,508, lebih besar dari 0,05. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi halal branding belum mampu membangun citra halal yang kuat pada kawasan kuliner tersebut. Secara praktis, pengelola destinasi perlu memperkuat komunikasi halal, menampilkan jaminan halal secara lebih jelas, serta mengedukasi konsumen agar halal branding tidak hanya dipahami sebagai label, tetapi juga sebagai pengalaman destinasi yang kredibel dan konsisten.

Keywords: halal branding; branding destinasi halal; citra destinasi halal; wisata kuliner halal.

BACKGROUND

East Java Province is one of the favorite tourism destinations in Indonesia (Rafla, 2024). In terms of tourism type, culinary tourism remains among the most preferred forms of tourism after nature-based tourism (Indah, 2024). This condition makes culinary tourism not only an economic activity, but also an important medium for regional identity, local MSME development, and destination competitiveness.

Alongside the effort to increase tourism income, the Indonesian government has also strengthened the halal tourism and halal product ecosystem. Halal Product Guarantee is needed to protect consumers from products and services that may conflict with their beliefs and expectations (Nadya et al., 2023). In 2024, 1.8 million halal certificates had been issued with around 4.5 million halal-certified products (Thea, 2024). East Java also became one of the provinces with the largest number of halal certificates in Indonesia (Lampung, 2023).

Based on product category, food and beverage products dominate halal certification. Table 1 shows that food and beverage products reached 106,338 or 95.7% of all certified products in 2022. This dominance indicates that halal culinary products have strong potential to support halal tourism development in Indonesia.

The data also correspond with national consumption trends. Figure 1 shows that the value of Indonesian halal product consumption is projected to increase in several sectors, with food and beverage occupying the largest value. This strengthens the argument that halal culinary destinations are highly relevant for regional tourism development.

Table 1. Halal Certification Amount Based on Product in 2022

No.	Types of Product	Total
1	Food and beverage	106.338
2	Catering and restaurant	372
3	Poultry and animal slaughterhouse	263
4	Cosmetics and medicine	3,046
5	Used goods	563
6	Service products	163
7	Biological products	1
8	Chemical products	2
9	Other products	265
Total		111.003

(Processed Secondary Data from the Ministry of Religion, 2022)

Internationally, Indonesia also has strong potential in the halal food sector. Figure 2 shows that Indonesia ranked second after Malaysia based on the halal food indicator score in 2023/2024. This position confirms that halal food is not only a domestic opportunity, but also part of Indonesia's competitiveness in the global halal ecosystem.

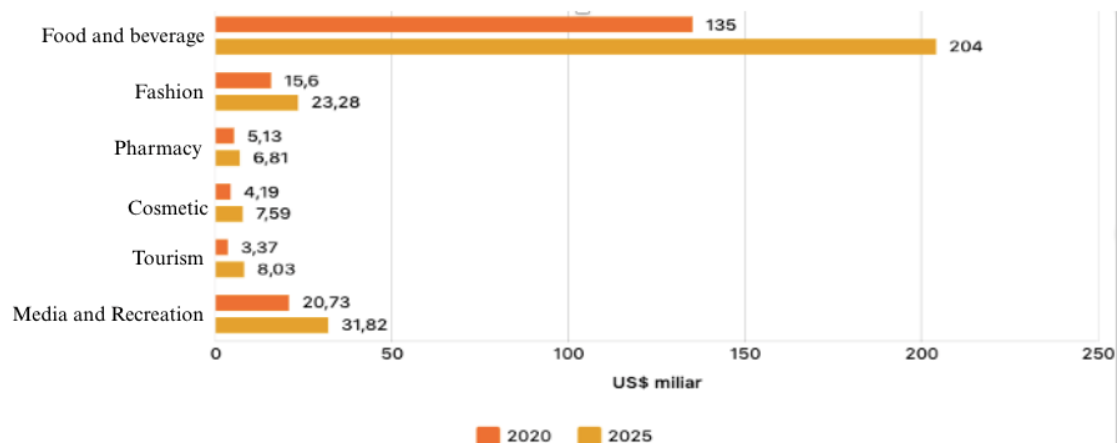


Figure 1. Consumption Value of Indonesian Halal Products per Sector 2020 and 2025
(Katadata.id, 2025)

Halal tourism refers to tourism objects, facilities, and activities that are permitted according to Islamic principles and can be used by Muslims within the tourism industry (Samsuhuda, 2020). In this context, destination image becomes a crucial factor because it reflects consumers' knowledge, impressions, beliefs, and emotional responses toward a destination (Destari, 2017; Maxim, 2019). A favorable destination image may encourage interest, satisfaction, and revisit intention (Nurazizah & Marhanah, 2020).

Branding is one factor that may shape destination image. Branding is an effort to build a distinctive impression in consumers' minds so that a product, service, or destination can be recognized and remembered (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Ramadhan & Rosyad, 2021). In tourism,

destination branding communicates the unique identity of a destination and differentiates it from competitors (Hereyah & Kusumaningrum, 2019). In halal tourism, destination branding must also communicate Islamic values, halal assurance, trust, and service consistency (Subarkah et al., 2020; Wibowo et al., 2019).

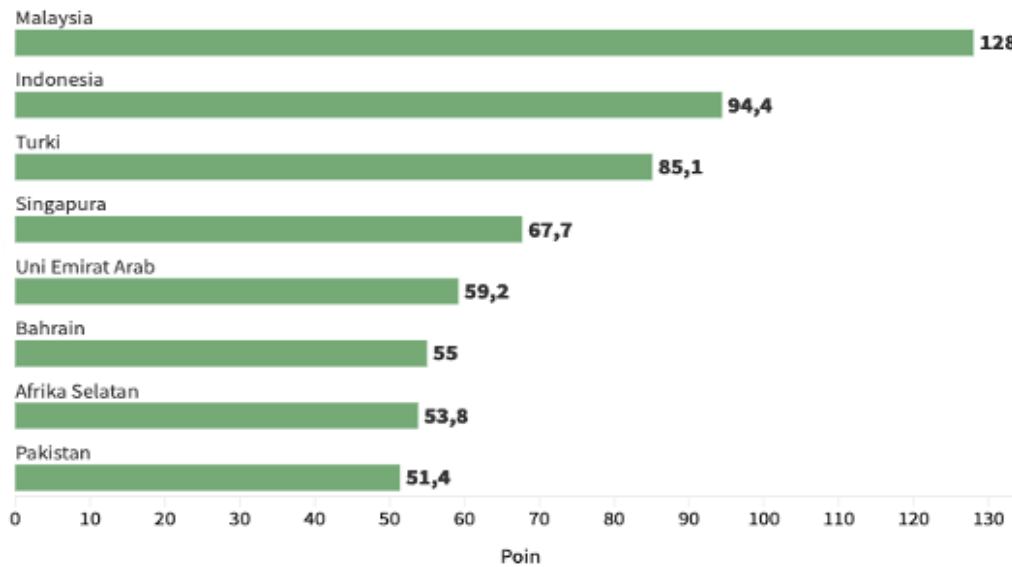


Figure 2. Eight Countries with the Highest Halal Food Indicator Scores in the World
(Dataindonesia.id, 2024)

Previous studies show inconsistent findings. Some studies argue that destination branding contributes to destination image because branding builds recognition, differentiation, and emotional attachment (Hereyah & Kusumaningrum, 2019; Lim & Weaver, 2014). In contrast, Khongrat (2021) found that destination branding did not influence destination image. In the halal context, recent international literature also emphasizes that halal brand image is closely related to trust, commitment, reputation, and consumers' concern for halal assurance (Fachrurazi et al., 2023). However, empirical evidence on whether halal destination branding directly builds halal destination image in newly established halal culinary areas is still limited.

This research gap is important because a halal label does not automatically create a halal image. In Muslim-majority regions, consumers may perceive halal as a basic expectation rather than a distinctive brand promise. Therefore, halal destination branding needs to be tested in a specific local context where the destination has just been officially introduced and where consumers may still rely more on food taste, cleanliness, price, accessibility, and direct experience than on branding messages.

Tulungagung Regency provides a relevant case. On October 3rd, 2024, the East Java Provincial Government inaugurated the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station as a pilot project for halal culinary development in East Java (Dewanto, 2024). The destination is located

around Tulungagung Station, specifically in the former Pasar Sore area on Jalan Pangeran Antasari. Since this halal culinary area is relatively new, it requires effective branding to build recognition and public trust. Based on this background, this study aims to examine the effect of halal destination branding on halal destination image in the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Boundaries

The concepts of branding, destination branding, halal branding, destination image, and halal destination image are related but not identical. To avoid conceptual overlap, this study defines each concept as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Conceptual Boundaries of the Main Terms

Concept	Definition in This Study	Main Emphasis
Brand	A sign, name, symbol, or combination used to identify and differentiate goods or services (Swasty, 2016).	Identity and differentiation
Branding	A managerial effort to build meaning, recognition, and consumer impressions toward a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016).	Communication and positioning
Destination branding	An effort to communicate the distinctive identity of a destination so that it is remembered and differentiated from competitors (Hereyah & Kusumaningrum, 2019; Subarkah et al., 2020).	Destination identity
Halal branding	Branding that aligns product or service communication with Islamic values, honesty, clarity, and halal assurance (Malihah et al., 2023).	Halal assurance and Islamic values
Halal destination branding	Destination branding that uses halal values, facilities, messages, and assurance as the core of destination identity (Wibowo et al., 2019).	Halal destination identity
Destination image	Audience perceptions, knowledge, imagination, and emotional responses toward a destination (Destari, 2017; Maxim, 2019).	Perceived destination meaning
Halal destination image	Perceptions of a destination related to halal commitment, reputation, solution, and trust (Fachrurazi et al., 2023).	Public trust in halalness

(Compiled by the Authors from Relevant Literature, 2026)

Halal Destination Branding

Halal destination branding is developed from destination branding and halal branding. It does not only attach a halal name to a destination, but also communicates halal assurance, Islamic values, cleanliness, comfort, and service consistency. According to Dewi in Wibowo et al. (2019), halal destination branding can be reflected through image, recognition,

differentiation, brand message, consistency, emotional response, and expectation. These indicators are relevant because a halal destination should be recognizable, different from ordinary culinary areas, supported by clear messages, and able to create expectations of halalness.

Halal Destination Image

Halal destination image refers to the image formed in consumers' minds regarding the halalness of a destination. It is not only cognitive, but also affective and evaluative. In this study, halal destination image is viewed through four indicators adapted from Fachrurazi et al. (2023), namely commitment, reputation, solution, and trust. A destination has a strong halal image when consumers believe that the destination is committed to halal principles, has a good reputation, offers solutions for halal assurance, and creates public trust.

Relationship Between Halal Destination Branding and Halal Destination Image

Theoretically, halal destination branding should influence halal destination image through a communication mechanism. Branding provides symbols, messages, and experiences that help consumers interpret the meaning of a destination. If halal branding is clear, consistent, and supported by visible halal cues, consumers are more likely to perceive the destination as trustworthy and halal. Conversely, if the halal message is weak or not supported by consumer experience, branding may fail to form a positive halal image. This mechanism explains why branding is not always sufficient; its effect depends on whether consumers notice, understand, and trust the brand message.

Table 3. Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Indicators	Source of Adaptation	Reason for Selection
Halal destination branding	Image; recognition; differentiation; brand message; consistency; emotional response; expectation	Dewi in Wibowo et al. (2019)	These indicators represent how a halal destination communicates identity, uniqueness, message consistency, and consumer expectations.
Halal destination image	Commitment; reputation; solution; trust	Fachrurazi et al. (2023)	These indicators reflect consumers' perception of halal credibility and public trust in a halal brand or destination.

(Compiled by the Authors, 2026)

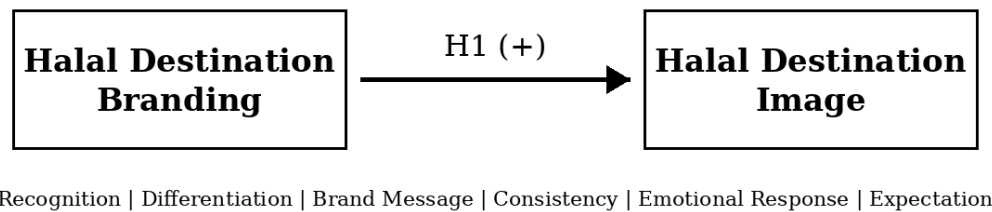


Figure 3. Conceptual Model of the Research (Developed by the Authors, 2026)

Based on the theoretical relationship above, the hypothesis proposed in this study is as follows:

H1: Halal destination branding has a positive and significant effect on halal destination image.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative research approach. The approach was selected because the study aimed to test the effect of an independent variable, namely halal destination branding, on a dependent variable, namely halal destination image. The research was conducted in December 2024 at the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station.

The population consisted of consumers who bought products in the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station. Respondents were selected based on the following criteria: they had visited or bought products in the area, were at least able to understand the questionnaire items, and were willing to participate voluntarily. The sample consisted of 110 respondents. This number follows Ferdinand's (2014) rule of thumb, which recommends five to ten times the number of indicators. Since this study used 11 indicators, the minimum to ideal sample range was 55 to 110 respondents; therefore, 110 respondents were considered adequate.

The sampling technique used was accidental sampling. This technique was chosen because the exact number of buyers visiting the culinary area during the research period was not available, and respondents had to be approached directly at the location. The technique is appropriate for exploratory consumer-based research in public destinations, although it has limitations because the sample may not fully represent the entire population of visitors.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared by adapting indicators of halal destination branding from Dewi in Wibowo et al. (2019) and halal destination image from Fachrurazi et al. (2023). Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Before analysis, the questionnaire responses were checked for completeness.

The instrument test consisted of a validity test and a reliability test. Validity was examined using Pearson product-moment correlation by comparing r -count with r -table at $N = 110$, while reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS and included descriptive statistics, normality testing, and hypothesis testing using a t -test in simple linear regression. Ethical considerations were applied by explaining the purpose of the study to respondents, ensuring voluntary participation, and using the data only for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station had long been known as a culinary area before being formally introduced as a halal culinary area. The area is located near Tulungagung Station and stands on land and buildings owned by PT KAI. In December 2024, 69 traders in the area had been halal verified. The characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	14	12,7
	Woman	96	87,3
Age	<20 years	26	23,6
	21-25 years	41	37,3
	>25 years	43	39,1
Income	<1 Million	42	38,1
	1 – 3 million	10	9,1
	3 – 5 million	39	35,5
	> 5 million	19	17,3
Profession	Student	31	28,2
	College student	27	24,5
	employee	37	33,6
	Self-employee	15	13,7
Domicile	Tulungagung	96	87,3
	Outside Tulungagung	14	12,7
Religion	Islamic	93	84,6
	Non Islamic	17	15,4

(Processed Primary Data, 2024)

Table 4 shows that respondents were dominated by women (87.3%), respondents aged above 25 years (39.1%), employees (33.6%), respondents domiciled in Tulungagung (87.3%),

and Muslim respondents (84.6%). This profile indicates that the halal culinary area was mostly accessed by local consumers during the research period.

Table 5. Distribution of Answers for Halal Destination Branding Variable

No.	Statement	Answers					Mean
		SS	S	CS	TS	STS	
1	Halal destination branding is a form of improving the halal image of the destination	12	16	23	32	27	2,58
2	Halal branding is an important thing for the sustainability of a destination.	4	9	28	30	39	2,35
3	Halal destination branding is a differentiator from other competitors.	11	14	32	29	24	2,33
4	Halal destination branding as a form of propagation of Islamic values	31	37	25	12	5	3,71
5	Halal branding is not only about brand name but also other elements.	10	13	26	27	34	2,43
6	Halal branding can create emotional responses and experiences for consumers.	8	12	24	29	37	2,31
7	Behind halal branding are various consumer expectations for the halalness of a product	13	36	26	26	9	3,11

(Processed Primary Data, 2024)

Description: SS = strongly agree; S = agree; CS = quite agree; TS = disagree; STS = strongly disagree.

The average score of halal destination branding was 2.68, which indicates a generally low response. The highest mean was found in the statement that halal destination branding is a form of propagation of Islamic values (3.71). However, the lowest mean appeared in the statement that halal branding can create emotional responses and experiences for consumers (2.31). This result suggests that consumers may understand halal branding as a religious or symbolic message, but they have not yet felt it as a meaningful consumer experience.

Table 6. Distribution of Answers for Halal Destination Image Variable

No.	Statement	Answers					Mean
		SS	S	CS	TS	STS	
1	Becoming a benchmark for halal commitment	15	33	23	26	13	3,1
2	Creating the best reputation among other halal destinations	10	31	27	32	10	2,99
3	Becoming a solution for consumers who want halal assurance	12	28	21	37	12	2,91
4	Creating public trust in the reputation of halal destination brands	12	17	39	26	16	2,84

(Processed Primary Data, 2024)

Description: SS = strongly agree; S = agree; CS = quite agree; TS = disagree; STS = strongly disagree.

The average score of halal destination image was 2.89, which also indicates a low perception. The highest mean was found in the statement related to halal commitment (3.10), while the lowest mean was related to public trust in the reputation of halal destination brands (2.84). This finding shows that the halal image of the destination has not been strongly formed in consumers' minds.

Table 7. Normality Test Results

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic	df	Sig.	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	df	Sig.	Decision
Halal destination branding	0.084	110	0.054	0.977	110	0.055	Normal
Halal destination image	0.120	110	0.068	0.980	110	0.073	Normal

(SPSS Output, 2024)

The normality test shows that the significance values of both variables were above 0.05. Therefore, the data were considered normally distributed and could be analyzed using simple regression.

Table 8. Instrument Test Summary

Variable	No. of Indicators	Validity Criterion	Reliability Coefficient	Decision
Halal destination branding	7 indicators	Pearson correlation compared with r-table = 0.195	Cronbach's alpha = 0.628	Reliable
Halal destination image	4 indicators	Pearson correlation compared with r-table = 0.195	Cronbach's alpha = 0.686	Reliable

(SPSS Output, 2024)

The instrument test was conducted before the hypothesis test. The reliability coefficients of both variables were higher than 0.60, indicating that the instruments were sufficiently reliable for exploratory social research. The validity assessment used Pearson correlation by comparing each item score with the total score based on the r-table value of 0.195.

Table 9. Regression and t-Test Results

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.	Decision
Constant	10.781	1.636	-	6.589	0.000	-
Halal destination branding - > halal destination image	0.052	0.078	0.064	0.664	0.508	Not significant

(SPSS Output, 2024)

Based on Table 9, the significance value was 0.508, which is greater than 0.05. The t-count value was 0.664, which is lower than the t-table value of 1.981. Therefore, halal destination branding did not have a positive and significant effect on halal destination image. Thus, H1 was rejected.

Discussion: Halal Destination Branding and Halal Destination Image

The findings show that halal destination branding has not been able to build halal destination image in the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station. This result differs from studies stating that destination branding may strengthen destination image (Hereyah & Kusumaningrum, 2019; Lim & Weaver, 2014), but it supports Khongrat (2021), who found that destination branding does not always influence destination image. The difference indicates that branding is not automatically effective; it depends on the clarity, credibility, and consistency of the branding message in consumers' actual experience.

Several contextual factors may explain this finding. First, the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station was still relatively new when the research was conducted. A destination image usually requires repeated exposure, consistent communication, and accumulated consumer experience. Since the area had just been inaugurated on October 3rd, 2024, public awareness and interpretation of the halal label may not yet have been fully established.

Second, most respondents were local consumers from Tulungagung. For consumers in a Muslim-majority area, halal may be perceived as a normal expectation rather than a special attraction. As a result, the halal label may not be strong enough to differentiate the destination from other culinary areas unless it is supported by visible facilities, clear halal information, clean stalls, transparent certificates, prayer-friendly facilities, and consistent service quality.

Third, the descriptive results show that consumers gave the lowest score to emotional responses and experiences. This suggests that halal branding was still understood as a formal label or religious message, but it had not yet created a distinctive consumer experience. In

branding theory, image is formed not only through symbols and names, but also through repeated interactions between consumers and the destination (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, halal destination branding should be implemented as an integrated strategy, not only as a naming or certification program.

Fourth, the halal destination image variable also received a low mean score, particularly in public trust. This implies that trust is not formed merely by the existence of a halal culinary area. Trust requires continuous communication, visible proof, and consistency between branding promises and the actual condition of the destination. This finding is in line with Fachrurazi et al. (2023), who emphasize that halal brand image is related to commitment, reputation, solutions, and trust.

The practical implication is that the destination manager should not rely only on the halal label. The management needs to strengthen halal communication through signage, information boards, halal certificate display, social media education, cleanliness standards, seller training, and service consistency. Halal branding should also be connected with consumers' everyday concerns, such as food safety, cleanliness, comfort, price fairness, and accessibility. These elements can help transform halal branding from a formal label into a trusted destination image.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that halal destination branding has not been proven to have a positive and significant effect on halal destination image in the Halal Culinary Area of Tulungagung Station. The t-test result showed a significance value of 0.508 and a t-count of 0.664, indicating that the hypothesis was rejected. The descriptive findings also showed low mean scores for halal destination branding and halal destination image, which means that the halal label has not yet become a strong image-forming factor for consumers.

The main contribution of this study is the empirical evidence that halal branding in a new culinary destination does not automatically build halal destination image. In the context of Tulungagung, consumers appear to need more than a halal label; they need consistent messages, visible halal evidence, service quality, cleanliness, and trustworthy experiences. Therefore, destination managers should strengthen halal branding as an integrated communication and service strategy.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was selected using accidental sampling, so the findings cannot be generalized to all visitors. Second, the research was conducted shortly after the destination was inaugurated, so public awareness may still have



been developing. Third, this study only tested one independent variable, while halal destination image may also be influenced by service quality, food quality, cleanliness, price, accessibility, social media promotion, and religiosity. Future studies are recommended to use a larger and more diverse sample, apply longitudinal research, and include additional variables to explain the formation of halal destination image more comprehensively.

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