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## Indonesia's role in the internationalization of halal tourism through national policy and multilateral diplomacy

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### ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the growing global acknowledgment of halal tourism as a pivotal sector within the halal industry and a significant engine for the Islamic economy. This study seeks to analyze Indonesia's role in internationalizing halal tourism by examining the synergy between its national policy development and its active participation in diplomatic forums, both of which serve as instruments for expanding its global influence. Methodologically, this qualitative study employs a systematic literature review, supplemented by content analysis of government regulations, policy documents, reports from international organizations, and relevant scientific articles on global halal tourism governance. The findings indicate that Indonesia strategically positions halal tourism as a domestic economic priority and a form of soft power. This can be achieved by strengthening halal certification, providing institutional support, engaging in nation branding, and promoting the harmonization of standards through multilateral cooperation. By leveraging multilateral diplomacy, Indonesia actively participates in shaping international norms, standardization, and networks to advance a more inclusive and globally recognized Halal tourism ecosystem. This strategy is not solely economically driven but also serves to enhance Indonesia's epistemic authority and diplomatic stature internationally. In conclusion, this study enriches the discourse on halal governance, international political economy, and tourism diplomacy, while also offering practical insights into Indonesia's potential to develop a competitive, sustainable, and influential halal tourism model through the effective synergy of national policies and multilateral engagement.

**Keywords:** Halal tourism; internationalization; national policy; multilateral diplomacy; soft power

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Interest in the halal industry has become something that is sought after by many people. Interestingly, the increase in interest is highest in countries without a Muslim majority. This is supported by the growth of USD 2.3 trillion per year, which is estimated to grow by 20% annually (Azam & Abdullah, 2020). The halal industry sector, which is currently present in the global dynamic, is no longer limited to primary aspects such as food and beverages but has expanded to the pharmaceutical, cosmetics, health, logistics, media, and tourism sectors. The number of Muslim tourists traveling globally reached approximately \$169 billion in 2016 and rose to \$283 billion by 2022 (Fauzi & Battour, 2024). This highlights the promising potential of the halal industry in various sectors, especially halal tourism.

This is why several countries, both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority, have begun competing to provide or facilitate tourism in their countries with a “halal” context to attract Muslim tourists to visit their tourist attractions. Providing halal facilities is not easy because the availability of facilities or services must comply with the principles of Islamic Sharia law (Rasyid & Hatta, 2025). This includes halal food, covering the manufacturing process to its presentation in accordance with Islamic principles, worship facilities covering basic things such as clean water free from impurities, the direction of the Qibla, separation of places between women and men, as well as providing an environment for Muslim tourists that prohibits things that are forbidden in their religion or things that are haram, such as alcohol and pork, which are prohibited in Islam.

The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) shows that Southeast Asian countries, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, are the main destinations for halal tourism. This has encouraged other countries, such as Thailand, to adopt Muslim-friendly services to attract tourists (Anggara, 2022). To create Muslim-friendly services, tourist destinations must focus on improving service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty among Muslim tourists. This can be achieved by innovating halal products, promoting Muslim-friendly initiatives, and gaining a deep understanding of the needs of the global Muslim market.

Given Indonesia's highly strategic geographical location and its demographic composition, where the majority of the population is Muslim, accounting for 87% of the total population in Indonesian society (Santoso et al., 2021). Indonesia offers a wide variety of tourist destinations covering many aspects, ranging from enchanting natural attractions, diverse cultural attractions, and culinary attractions rich in authentic flavors from each region to religious attractions that are crowded with visitors at all times. All these aspects of tourist destinations indirectly become the main attraction for tourists who want to travel in Indonesia, both local and foreign.

The contribution of the tourism sector to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has reached 10%, making this increase the highest in the ASEAN region. In view of this, there has been an improvement in service quality and the development of facilities at tourist destinations, such as places of worship and halal environments, including food and beverages. In addition, the Indonesian government has set a target to make Indonesia the center of a progressive economic ecosystem and a leader in halal tourism. This requires strong synergy and collaboration between the government, business actors, and the community to strengthen the competitiveness of halal tourist destinations in the country. Even so, the government is also working on the development and service of halal tourism in places where Muslims are a minority in Indonesia, such as Ngada, East Nusa Tenggara. Despite being a minority Muslim community in Indonesia, East Nusa Tenggara has very beautiful and stunning natural attractions, making it a potential natural tourist attraction that is sought after by many tourists (Alam et al., 2021), both from Indonesia and abroad.

The internationalization of halal tourism is important for strengthening Indonesia's national economy and cultural diplomacy. Promoting halal destinations on the global stage is one of Indonesia's strategies to increase foreign exchange earnings by increasing the number of Muslim tourists from abroad, investment, and business growth in the halal tourism sector (Ghina, 2020). By implementing this strategy, it is hoped that Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world will be strengthened, especially as a country with a Muslim majority. Therefore, through nation branding and diplomacy, which highlight

Islamic values, local culture, and the diversity of tourist destinations (Saputri & Permadi, 2025), it is hoped that this will become a unique attraction and a “label” for Indonesia.

The literature review found that halal tourism not only focuses on providing services that comply with Sharia law, but must also include spiritual experiences or belief systems, as well as deep-rooted misperceptions and culture for Muslim tourists. Previous research in the journal *The Role of Belief Systems and Misperceptions in Halal Tourism Policy: Evidence from Indonesia* by Citra Hennida, Demas Nauvarian, Nabila Olivia Saptari, and Rizky Sugianto Putri (Hennida et al., 2024). This underlines the existence of non-material dimensions, such as cultural values and spirituality, in halal tourism. This has an impact on the increase in halal tourism, which is not only related to technical services. However, this study reveals that there are still gaps in explaining how domestic factors, such as sociocultural aspects, can be translated into Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in the international arena.

Our significant contribution to this research is the expansion of the constructivist approach from the local to the international level by explaining how Islamic values and Indonesia's domestic policy experiences can be translated into one of Indonesia's instruments of diplomacy and soft power in the internationalization of halal tourism. This research was conducted to fill a gap in the literature, which has tended to focus only on economic aspects and their implementation in the domestic sphere. To understand the role of national policy in strengthening the halal tourism ecosystem and to identify diplomatic strategies for promoting halal tourism on the global stage, this research departs from the problem formulation related to the continuation of multilateral diplomacy used by Indonesia to expand its influence and cooperation in the halal tourism sector.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a systematic literature review integrated with content analysis. This methodological framework was selected to facilitate a profound comprehension of Indonesia's tactics for globalizing halal tourism, specifically by examining the interplay between its domestic policies and its engagement in multilateral diplomacy. The study design is not intended for hypothesis testing; rather, it aims to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the meaning, context, and trajectory of relevant policies. By adopting a qualitative inquiry, this investigation endeavors to link theoretical concepts, detect emerging patterns, and elucidate the utilization of halal tourism strategies as a form of soft power. This methodological alignment ensures that the research remains focused on its core objective: probing the interconnection between Indonesia's internal policymaking and its diplomatic influence on the world stage (Sudarsono, 2017).

This study employed a systematic desk-based methodology that relied exclusively on secondary data. The primary official references consisted of publications from key Indonesian institutions, namely the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. International perspectives and metrics were procured from the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). To further substantiate the analysis, the research incorporated supplementary materials from academic journals, conference proceedings, and reputable online repositories such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and World Bank Data. A rigorous selection process was applied to all documents, prioritizing their relevance, authority, and timeliness. The analytical procedure focused on identifying consistent themes pertaining to policy development, international collaboration, and the governance of halal tourism. This strategy of cross-verifying multiple sources was implemented to ensure the findings' robustness and thoroughness (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023).

The analysis was conducted using content analysis to examine the content of policies, reports, and academic literature related to halal tourism in Indonesia. This analytical framework emphasizes two main dimensions: (1) strengthening national policies as a domestic foundation, and (2) multilateral diplomacy as an instrument of global expansion. The researchers identified narrative patterns, policy directions, and diplomatic strategies that shape Indonesia's image as the center of global halal tourism. The analysis was conducted deductively-starting from the theory of economic diplomacy and soft power-as well as

inductively by reading empirical data that emerged from the documents. With this framework, the study sought to reveal how the synergy between policy and diplomacy shapes a sustainable model of internationalization (Romdona, 2025).

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Result**

##### **3.1.1. National Policy Framework**

Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Guarantee (JPH Law) is a legal basis that affirms Indonesia's commitment to developing the halal industry, including the tourism sector. This law places the obligation of halal certification not only on consumer products, but also on services that support Muslim tourist activities, such as hotels, restaurants, spas, and travel agencies. The presence of BPJPH as the certifying agency provides legal certainty and increases the transparency of the process. In the context of halal tourism, this policy is an important instrument in building the confidence of global tourists in Indonesia's halal service standards. The implementation of this law also contributes to strengthening Indonesia's sharia economic diplomacy through the affirmation of halal standards recognized by the Islamic world. Furthermore, this law plays a strategic role in strengthening the global competitiveness of Indonesia's tourism sector through a regulatory approach that is adaptive to industry needs. The integration of halal policies with international standards, as regulated by SMIIC (Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries), makes Indonesia not only a user but also a contributor to the formation of global halal norms. In public policy diplomacy, this regulation serves as an instrument that demonstrates Indonesia's ability to balance domestic and global interests. Thus, the implementation of Law No. 33/2014 is not only about the legality of halal products, but also about positioning Indonesia as a norm entrepreneur in the field of international halal governance (Azam & Abdullah, 2020).

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) plays a central role in implementing halal policies at the operational level through the “Wonderful Indonesia Halal Tourism” program. This strategy focuses on strengthening destinations that already have the necessary infrastructure and socio-cultural readiness, such as Aceh, Lombok, and West Sumatra. The approach includes integrating branding aspects, Muslim-friendly public facilities, and digital campaigns to expand the global market reach. Kemenparekraf also collaborates with the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) to measure and improve the performance of Indonesia's halal destinations on an ongoing basis (Kemenparekraf, 2024). This innovation demonstrates that halal policies are not only normative but also serve as instruments for identity-based economic development. In addition to strengthening destinations, this strategy also encompasses the dimension of tourism diplomacy through active participation in international forums such as the Dubai Halal Expo and the Global Islamic Economy Summit. In this way, Indonesia is not only a provider of halal destinations but also an agenda setter in the global conversation on halal tourism. Aceh and Lombok, which received awards from GMTI, prove Indonesia's success in implementing policies based on local wisdom but with international standards. This success also strengthens Indonesia's nation branding as a modern, tolerant, and inclusive center for halal tourism, an image that reinforces the appeal of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy at the global level (Yudiantoro & Suselo, 2024).

The long-term viability of halal tourism initiatives hinges upon effective collaboration among government bodies, private enterprises, and the broader community (Qizam et al., 2024). The government fulfills the dual role of regulator and facilitator, whereas the private sector operates as the primary engine for innovation and the direct provider of tourist services. A practical implementation of this synergy is the collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and hotel associations like PHRI to expedite halal certification for the hospitality and culinary industries. Furthermore, digital travel services such as Traveloka and HalalTrip amplify these efforts by featuring Muslim-friendly amenities in their promotional campaigns. This multi-stakeholder partnership underscores that the advancement of halal tourism is a collective endeavor and a sustained national priority (Pranika et al., 2023). This cooperative framework

also encompasses initiatives to enhance the competency of human resources within the halal tourism sector. To achieve this, the government is collaborating with academic and training institutions, including the Lombok Tourism Polytechnic, to implement a curriculum focused on halal tourism competencies. Concurrently, private entities contribute through practice-oriented upskilling and by leveraging their international networks for global promotion. This multi-pronged partnership has fostered a tourism ecosystem that is increasingly responsive to the expectations of the international Muslim travel market. In essence, this model of cooperation solidifies a comprehensive national strategy, positioning halal tourism as a convergent field for synergizing the creative economy, cultural diplomacy, and local community empowerment (Sudi, 2024).

### **3.1.2. Indonesia's Multilateral Diplomacy Efforts**

Indonesia plays an active role in various multilateral forums such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the G20 to promote the harmonization of halal standards at the global level. Through the OIC, Indonesia is involved in developing halal standards together with SMIIC as a form of commitment to establishing a mutually recognized certification system among member countries. At the UNWTO, Indonesia encourages the integration of halal principles into the sustainable and inclusive tourism agenda (GMTI, 2024). Meanwhile, in the G20 forum, the issue of halal tourism has begun to be raised in the context of inclusive recovery and sustainable development after the pandemic. This active role shows that Indonesia is not only a recipient of standards, but also a contributor to the global halal governance architecture. Indonesia's involvement in these forums also strengthens its diplomatic position as a bridge between the Islamic world and the global community (Haninah, 2025). The approach taken is collaborative, with Indonesia emphasizing the principles of mutual recognition and capacity sharing for developing countries. Through this normative diplomacy, Indonesia seeks to shape the global perception that halal standards are not merely a religious issue, but part of international economic governance that ensures fairness and transparency. Thus, Indonesia's participation in multilateral forums reflects a foreign policy strategy that is adaptive to global geopolitical and economic dynamics, while affirming its identity as a leader in international halal governance (Afifah & Zhulkarnain, 2023).

In the context of economic diplomacy, Indonesia optimizes its participation in various halal tourism expos and bilateral cooperation to expand its influence. Through activities such as the Indonesia Halal Tourism Expo, ASEAN Halal Conference, and Arabian Travel Market Dubai, Indonesia not only showcases halal products and destinations but also introduces the concept of inclusive and sustainable tourism. Bilateral relations with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia are key to the exchange of halal certification policies and capacity building in the tourism sector (Aziz & Athoillah, 2019). This cooperation also opens up opportunities for joint investment in tourism infrastructure and the development of digital-based halal certification technology. Beyond economic aspects, halal tourism diplomacy is also utilized to strengthen the promotion of Indonesian culture as a moderate Muslim country. Through arts, culinary, and cultural festivals, Indonesia leverages cultural diplomacy to refine its national image in the eyes of the world. This strategy shows that the development of halal tourism is not only a tool for trade, but also a medium for strengthening soft power and expanding public diplomacy networks. By combining economic and cultural dimensions, Indonesia has succeeded in building a global narrative that halal tourism can be a means of harmony across nations and religions, while strengthening Indonesia's position in the global Muslim travel network (Lutfika et al., 2022).

Indonesia's effective integration of domestic strategy and international engagement is evidenced by its notable achievement in cultivating a global identity as a Muslim-friendly destination. Spearheaded by the digitally-promoted "Wonderful Indonesia Halal Tourism" campaign, this effort has culminated in Indonesia securing a top-tier ranking on the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) (Nabila et al., 2025). This branding is not only based on physical facilities, but also on the values of hospitality, tolerance, and spirituality that are inherent in the culture of the people. This approach shows that Indonesia's halal image is not just a marketing strategy, but a reflection of the nation's open and inclusive identity towards global tourists. The process of shaping this image is also strengthened through cross-agency cooperation, such

as between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and the Indonesian diaspora abroad. Promotion through international exhibitions, media cooperation, and halal travel ambassador programs play an important role in expanding the reach of Indonesia's public diplomacy (Anindya & Desi, 2023). With its growing reputation, Indonesia has successfully positioned halal tourism as a new face of economic diplomacy that emphasizes a balance between economic benefits, cultural values, and global image. This demonstrates that Indonesia's halal tourism strategy is not merely an economic project but also a foreign policy instrument capable of articulating national interests in a universal language-ethical, sustainable, and civilized tourism (Churiyah et al., 2021).

### **3.1.3. Outcomes and Achievements in Halal Tourism**

One of the tangible indicators of the success of Indonesia's national strategy and multilateral diplomacy in the halal tourism sector is Indonesia's rising position in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) published by Mastercard-CrescentRating. In recent years, Indonesia has successfully ranked at the top alongside Malaysia as the best destination for Muslim tourists worldwide. This improvement reflects the government's success in building an integrated halal tourism ecosystem, ranging from the provision of worship facilities and halal cuisine to Muslim-friendly services for families (Bin Ab Rahman et al., 2023). This also demonstrates the effectiveness of the "Wonderful Indonesia Halal Tourism" branding, which is strategically managed by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and supported by various local governments. Success in the GMTI is not merely a symbolic achievement, but also proof of international recognition of Indonesia's ability to implement globally recognized halal standards. The top position in the index strengthens Indonesia's reputation as a pioneer in the development of halal tourism based on local values and global modernity (Alam et al., 2023). This achievement also shows that Indonesia is able to compete with other countries such as Malaysia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates in professionally marketing the potential of halal tourism. With this reputation, Indonesia is now a model for other developing countries in integrating spiritual values into sustainable tourism strategies.

Halal tourism has made a significant economic contribution to national tourism revenue. Based on data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the halal tourism segment continues to show positive growth after the pandemic, with an increase in the number of domestic and foreign tourists seeking Muslim-friendly destinations. This potential is reinforced by growing global awareness of the halal lifestyle, which encompasses not only consumption but also travel experiences. As a result, the halal tourism sector has a multiplier effect on other sectors such as hospitality, culinary, transportation, and the creative industry (Putra, 2024). In addition to financial contributions, the socio-economic impact of halal tourism is also felt through job creation, empowerment of local MSMEs, and strengthening of community-based economies. In regions such as Lombok, Aceh, and West Sumatra, the development of halal destinations has been proven to improve the welfare of local communities through active participation in the tourism ecosystem. This shows that Indonesia's halal tourism model is not only oriented towards economic profit, but also towards sustainable development based on community values and participation. Thus, this sector plays an important role in supporting the national agenda towards an inclusive and globally competitive economy (BAPENAS, 2019).

Another important achievement is international recognition of Indonesia's halal system and standards, particularly following the enactment of Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Guarantee (JPH) and the strengthening of the role of the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH). Through cooperation with international organizations such as SMIIC (The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries) and OIC, Indonesia has gained legitimacy as a country with a credible, transparent, and measurable halal certification system. This has fostered global confidence in Indonesian tourism products and services, including hotels, restaurants, and tourist destinations (Ali & Alnasrawi, 2023). In addition, this recognition also opens up opportunities for Indonesia to export its expertise in halal management and certification to other countries. Several Asian and African countries have begun exploring technical cooperation with BPJPH and MUI to develop halal certification systems based on Indonesia's experience. This shows that Indonesia is no longer just a user of standards, but also a producer of knowledge and halal policy models that are adopted at the international level. With this increasingly strong position, Indonesia

has the potential to become a global hub in the halal industry, where tourism is a key sector that harmoniously brings together values, economics, and diplomacy (Putra, 2024).

## **3.2. Discussion**

### **3.2.1. Integration of Policy and Diplomacy**

Domestic policies play an important role in creating a foundation that supports the implementation of Indonesia's halal tourism diplomacy at the global level. The Indonesian government has developed specific regulations related to halal certification, the establishment of a halal logo, and national halal tourism branding, as well as the provision of religious Islamic services and facilities with guaranteed halal status to increase the appeal for visiting Muslim tourists (Saputri & Permadi, 2025). This policy can strengthen Indonesia's image as a Muslim-friendly destination and can also be an effective public diplomacy instrument. Examples include Indonesia's participation in national and international exhibitions through collaboration within the framework of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle or IMT-GT (Rokhanyah & Almeida, 2023). In addition, through multilateral diplomacy such as Indonesia's cooperation in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation or OIC forum and the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth Triangle or IMT-GT initiative.

It is believed to have expanded Indonesia's influence on the international stage and strengthened the legitimacy of its national halal policy (Amanullah & Dzikri, 2025). With diplomacy, Indonesia's role is not only in increasing market access for halal products and halal tourism, but Indonesia's role can also strengthen its nation branding as a country with the largest Muslim population and a rapidly growing halal ecosystem. The recognition obtained by Indonesia regarding Indonesian halal certification at the international level, involving collaboration with global halal certification institutions, has been key in building Indonesia's competitiveness and trust globally (Qolby & Astuti, 2024). In public, diplomatic strategies such as participating in international exhibitions and promoting halal tourism with other countries will indirectly strengthen Indonesia's position as a key player in the global halal industry.

### **3.2.2. Soft Power and Nation Branding**

Leveraging halal tourism as an instrument of soft power diplomacy has proven highly effective in showcasing Indonesia's identity as a Muslim-majority nation that is both tolerant and open to the world. By utilizing public diplomacy and destination marketing for its halal tourism sector, Indonesia can present its cultural and religious values to a global audience. This approach facilitates the introduction of Islam, as practiced within its society, in a manner that emphasizes its universal principles, thereby making it more accessible and palatable to the international community (Ghina, 2020). This will strengthen Indonesia's perception as a friendly, open country that values diversity.

Indonesia's success as the country with the highest number of halal tourists is recorded in the Global Muslim Travel Index and the World's Halal Tourism Award, and it has won awards for the large number of Muslim tourist visits. This is clear evidence that halal tourism can strengthen nation branding and Indonesia's position in the global world (Indon et al., 2021). The development of halal tourism destinations in Indonesia is well known, even in areas with a Muslim minority such as Bali. In fact, Bali, which uses the wali pitu concept, has become a tourist destination that demonstrates Indonesia's commitment to religious moderation and tolerance (Raya, 2022). By applying this strategy, Indonesia has not only increased the attractiveness of its tourist destinations, but also strengthened international cooperation and cultural diplomacy. Thus, Indonesia is increasingly recognized as an example of a Muslim-majority country that harmoniously embraces diversity within its borders.

### **3.2.3. Opportunities and Challenges in Promoting Halal Tourism**

Opportunities in promoting halal tourism are believed to be enormous with the massive growth of the global Muslim population, while at the same time the demand for tourism that complies with Sharia principles in terms of facilities and a supportive environment is increasingly sought after by tourists (Ruiz-Muñoz et al., 2025). Therefore, in order to support the creation of comfortable tourism for tourists, the

government is trying its best to innovate in marketing by involving the use of digital media, as well as collaborating with creative industry players who can expand and facilitate tourists when they want to travel to tourist destinations (Triansyah, 2023). Thus, a halal tourism ecosystem that is recognized in the international market will be created.

Cross-sector collaboration is essential in the development of halal tourism. Collaboration and cooperation between the creative economy, sharia-based fintech, and halal education are needed to strengthen the halal industry ecosystem and the sharia economy in Indonesia. The growth of integrated digital technology and sharia-based entrepreneurship has opened up enormous opportunities for global market access, increasing business efficiency and strengthening compliance with religious sharia principles, which are key to the appeal of halal tourism. However, challenges such as low digital literacy and complex regulations still require further adjustments (Qolbi et al., 2024). Sharia-based Fintech plays a significant role in expanding financial inclusion and strengthening economic resilience, especially when supported by partnerships in the financial ecosystem.

The creative economy can also synergize with the halal sector in the development of digital-based products, services, and promotions, although there are still challenges in infrastructure and market understanding (Klein & Sychalska-Wojtkiewicz, 2020). Improving halal education, both in Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities, plays an important role in equipping the younger generation with knowledge of entrepreneurship, technology, and sharia principles. This is expected to encourage the emergence of sharia technopreneurs and creative, high-quality halal product innovations for the next generation (Qizam et al., 2024). The success of this cross-sector collaboration will indirectly be the key to creating an inclusive and sustainable halal ecosystem.

Considering Indonesia as a country with a large population, Indonesia is considered to have great potential in becoming a center for research and training related to global halal tourism, solely because Indonesia has the largest Muslim population. In addition, cultural diversity and abundant natural resources have their own value as attractions in Indonesia (Ramadhani & Nugroho, 2024). The deep concern for the concept of sharia among Indonesian citizens has led to numerous contributions from sharia-based hotels, infrastructure development, and service innovations that prioritize sharia principles, which are the core strengths in serving and meeting the needs of international Muslim tourists. This certainly increases Indonesia's competitiveness on the international stage (Yoshinta et al., 2024). Supported by human resource development through training, skill enhancement, competency, and education related to halal sharia, it is very important in creating an international standard halal ecosystem.

The lack of harmonization in halal certification alignment between countries is a challenge that needs to be addressed today, as it greatly affects the trade cycle and ultimately consumers. The existence of different standards, regulations, and procedures in various countries that want to join the halal ecosystem network, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, and other Gulf countries, causes its own complexity for producers when they want to trade, because they must meet different requirements for each country. This complicates export and import activities by adding additional costs and time to obtain halal certification (Sudi, 2024). In fact, the lack of harmonization between countries is due to differences in the interpretation of sharia concepts, national interests, and various systems in the supervision of halal certification institutions (Kamil et al., 2025). Nevertheless, Indonesia's efforts towards harmonization, such as the cooperation between BPJPH and JAKIM Malaysia through the principle of reciprocity, as well as the ASEAN and SMIIC initiatives, have begun to be implemented to encourage mutual recognition and simplify halal standards for the common good (Gumantia et al., 2025). Harmonization related to halal certification is considered very important in increasing global consumer confidence and encouraging international trade, thereby strengthening the position of Indonesia's halal market industry in the world.

The existing disparities in infrastructure in halal tourist destinations in Indonesia also remain a major obstacle to the development of competitive halal tourism. Tourist destinations such as Borobudur Temple, Banyumas, Sunang, and Sambas still face limitations in terms of transportation access, which is still inadequate for tourist attractions, as well as uneven distribution of infrastructure, such as facilities that are concentrated in one area while other areas remain untouched (Sutono et al., 2021). With limitations in

the development of uneven infrastructure, this can actually have an impact on the low level of foreign Muslim tourist consumption. This also certainly has an impact on the country's local economic growth (Haninah, 2025). Therefore, to overcome this inequality, an integrated policy focused on equitable infrastructure development is needed to support the advancement of Muslim tourism (Rozikin et al., 2024). This will enable Indonesian halal tourism to develop competitively and sustainably as expected.

Another challenge lies in the fierce competition in the halal tourism industry, especially among Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Based on the latest Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), Malaysia has consistently been the top destination for foreign tourists. Indonesia is now starting to rank among the top countries in the GMTI, with Saudi Arabia in third place (Rasyid & Hatta, 2025). In terms of promotion, Malaysia is known to excel in targeting tourists from the Middle East, while Indonesia uses its cultural diversity and wealth of tourist destinations to increase its competitiveness as a country rich in culture and natural resources (Muhyidin et al., 2025). On the other hand, to be able to compete with other countries, Indonesia may need improvements in infrastructure, creative tourism destination management, and service quality that meets the needs of Muslim foreign tourists (Lestari et al., 2022). Through targeted and appropriate policy measures, Indonesia possesses a significant opportunity to perpetuate its influential role in the international arena as a nation deeply committed to fostering the development of halal tourism.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Boasting the world's largest Muslim-majority population, Indonesia holds a strategic position to become a leading force in international halal tourism. This potential is actively being realized through strategic national policies dedicated to elevating the quality and assurance of its halal tourism offerings. Concurrently, the nation is engaged in proactive multilateral diplomacy, a crucial endeavor for promoting its premier halal destinations on the world stage. It is believed that integrated domestic regulations, coupled with collaboration in international forums, will significantly enhance global awareness and accessibility for Indonesia's halal tourism sector. Consequently, Indonesia's strategy extends beyond merely catering to the demands of international Muslim travelers. This dual approach solidifies its standing in the global arena, establishing the country not just as a participant, but as a pivotal leader and standard-bearer for the halal tourism industry worldwide.

#### **Ethical Approval**

Not Applicable

#### **Informed Consent Statement**

Not Applicable

#### **Authors' Contributions**

ANAW contributed to research conceptualization, literature review, data analysis, and drafting of the manuscript. NF contributed to data collection, content analysis of policy documents, and revision of the manuscript.

#### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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## Notes on Contributors

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