



## **Halal Tourism Branding Strategy: A Study on the Collaboration of Government, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia**

**Dinta Kharisma Almeira**

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta  
e-mail: [dintakhalmeira@gmail.com](mailto:dintakhalmeira@gmail.com)

**Aydil Safitri**

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta  
e-mail: [aydil.safitri.psc22@mail.umy.ac.id](mailto:aydil.safitri.psc22@mail.umy.ac.id)

**Surwandono**

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta  
e-mail: [surwandono@umy.ac.id](mailto:surwandono@umy.ac.id)

### **Abstract**

Halal tourism is currently a sector that has become a global trend. As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia should be able to compete in the international arena to form an image as the best country in the halal tourism sector. The article explains the nation branding strategy of the government and Islamic organizations, namely Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, in the hope of being able to raise the halal tourism industry in Indonesia. This research is analytical descriptive research using qualitative methods. The data collection techniques used are literature studies and official websites to process data related to nation branding strategies carried out. The results of this study show the strategies of the government, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah through three sectors, namely food, hotels, and halal destinations. The government is the actor who has the most effort in improving Indonesia's nation branding through the official website, followed by Nahdlatul Ulama and finally Muhammadiyah. This method is done in order to improve Indonesia's nation branding as a halal tourism country known to the world. This article contributes to the discussion of the potential development of halal tourism in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Halal Tourism, Nation Branding, Government of Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah

**Abstrak**

Pariwisata halal saat ini merupakan sebuah sektor yang telah menjadi trend global. Sebagai negara dengan populasi muslim terbanyak di dunia, seharusnya Indonesia mampu bersaing di kancah Internasional untuk membentuk citra sebagai negara terbaik dalam sektor pariwisata halal. Artikel menjelaskan strategi nation branding Pemerintah dan Organisasi Islam yaitu Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama dengan harapan mampu membangkitkan industri wisata halal di Indonesia. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif analitis dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Adapun teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan berupa studi kepustakaan dan website resmi untuk mengolah data terkait strategi nation branding yang dilakukan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan strategi dari Pemerintah, Nahdlatul Ulama, dan Muhammadiyah melalui tiga sektor yaitu food, hotel, dan halal destination. Dari ketiga sektor tersebut, ditemukan bahwa Pemerintah merupakan actor yang memiliki upaya paling besar dalam meningkatkan nation branding Indonesia melalui website resmi kemudian diikuti oleh Nahdlatul Ulama dan yang terakhir Muhammadiyah. Cara ini dilakukan dalam rangka meningkatkan nation branding Indonesia sebagai negara halal tourism yang dikenal dunia. Artikel ini berkontribusi dalam diskusi potensi pengembangan wisata halal di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Pariwisata Halal, Nation Branding, Pemerintah Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah

**Introduction**

Halal tourism is a new phenomenon in the Islamic world, formed by the development of the halal industry (Samori, Md Salleh, and Khalid, 2016). Halal tourism, often referred to as halal-friendly tourism, is a form of travel where activities, products, and services align with the rules, teachings, and principles of Islam. The alignment of the halal tourism concept with Islamic principles becomes a distinct allure, especially for Muslim travelers who wish to engage in tourism while adhering to their religious obligations (Suhartanto *et al.*, 2021); (Jia and Chaozhi, 2020). Meanwhile, (Battour and Ismail, 2016) define Halal Tourism as tourism that adheres to Islamic teachings, and involves Muslim individuals who are interested in maintaining their faith while traveling, and this extends beyond solely Muslim countries.

Furthermore, the concept of halal tourism itself refers to the economic sector within Islam. The goal of Islamic economics is the creation of societal welfare or *maslahah* (Azam *et al.*, 2019; Saharuddin and Hayati, 2021). *Maslahah* signifies goodness

attained based on Islamic law or *Maqasid al-Sharia*. Imam Syatibi's *Maqasid al-Sharia* states that the implementation of *Sharia* has the purpose of fulfilling the needs primarily (*dharuriy*), such as *Hifz ad-Din* (preservation of religion), *Hifz an-Nafs* (preservation of spirituality), *Hifz al-'Aql* (preservation of intellect), *Hifz an-Nasl* (preservation of progeny), and *Hifz al-Maal* (preservation of wealth) (Astutih, 2021).

The existence of Halal Tourism has become a trend in numerous countries, as it addresses the growing Muslim population and the demand for Halal-friendly travel (Rasul, 2019; Liberato, Sousa, and Malheiro, 2020). This is evident in the increasing number of countries venturing into the development of the Halal industry. Interestingly, it's not limited to nations with predominantly Muslim populations; even countries with non-Muslim majorities are actively participating in the development of this sector (Feizollah *et al.*, 2021). The concept of Halal tourism is also rooted in the holy Quran, Surah Al-'Ankabut, verse 20.

In the Tafsir Al-Wajiz, Shaykh Wahbah az-Zuhaili, expert in jurisprudence and exegesis of Syria: If you have performed prayers and have free time, then spread yourself out on earth, seek fortune from Allah's virtue earnestly and remember Allah a lot with your speech and mouth in your different assemblies with enthronement, prayer beads, *istighfar* and other similar *dhikr* so that you can win the good of the hereafter.

In this verse, man is permitted by God to spread to all corners of the earth and engage in various activities. In the context of tourism, people are encouraged to comply with Sharia laws, such as performing prayers, even while on vacation. The command to always remember Allah SWT also shows that in tourism activities, humans are required to guard themselves against everything contrary to sharia law, such as avoiding consumption that is not halal, transactions that are not by sharia, scenery that is forbidden, and other prohibited acts such as gambling and prostitution (Hutagaluh, Abubakar and Haddade, 2022).

Various concepts and themes have been explored by scholars from around the world to depict their interest in the study of halal tourism. By using VosViewer software, researchers processed data in the form of previous research on halal tourism sourced from the Scopus website with the following visualization results:

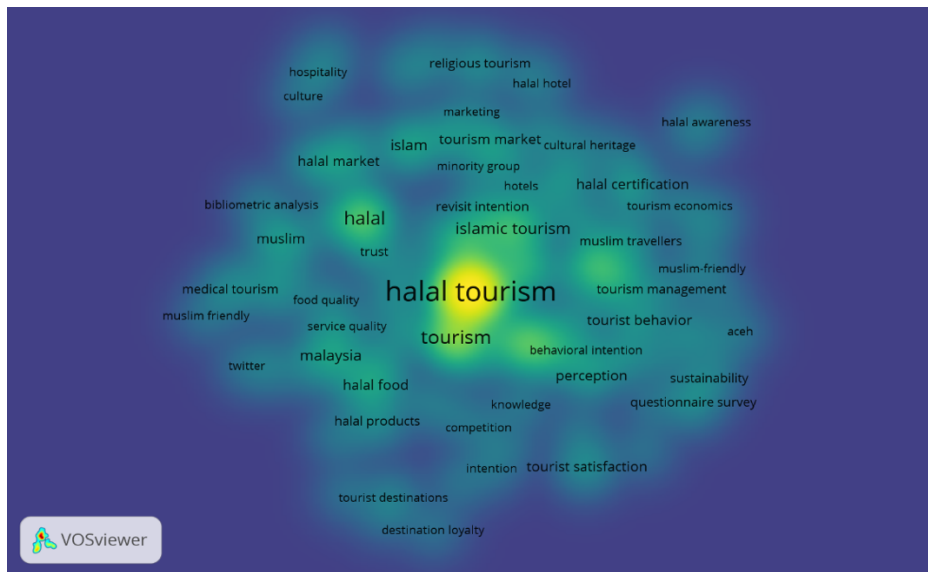


Figure 1: previous research on halal tourism

Source: Scopus

Figure 1 shows that "halal tourism" is a keyword that has been widely researched or studied before, regarding the halal Tourism market, halal products, Muslim travelers, tourism management, Muslim friendly, food quality, Malaysia, halal certification, etc. However, there have been no keywords for previous research on government institutions and religion, especially in Indonesia. Therefore, to provide a fresh perspective on the study of halal tourism, the author has decided to narrow down the discussion by focusing on Indonesia as the object of study, utilizing the concepts of nation branding to analyze the strategies employed by the Indonesian government, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah through the halal tourism sector.

Furthermore, this article aims to explore the analysis of branding strategies in the context of halal tourism in Indonesia to become a top global halal industry country. The Indonesian government, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah are the key actors in this study. The focus of this research is to analyze news from official websites about halal tourism to see the extent to which the branding strategy affects Indonesia's image as a country with halal tourism destinations in the eyes of the international arena.

## Method

The research is a descriptive-analytical study employing a qualitative method approach. The objects of the study are the Indonesian government, specifically the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), and the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), along with the two largest Islamic community organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah. The data collection technique utilized in this article is a literature review, encompassing the examination and study of various books, journals, articles, and national and international newspapers. Additionally, the researcher also employed official websites as data sources, extracting news categorized into three main areas: halal food, Sharia hotels, and halal destinations. This approach was undertaken to enhance the analysis and facilitate readers' comprehension of the strategies employed by the Indonesian government, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah in enhancing Indonesia's national branding within the halal tourism sector.

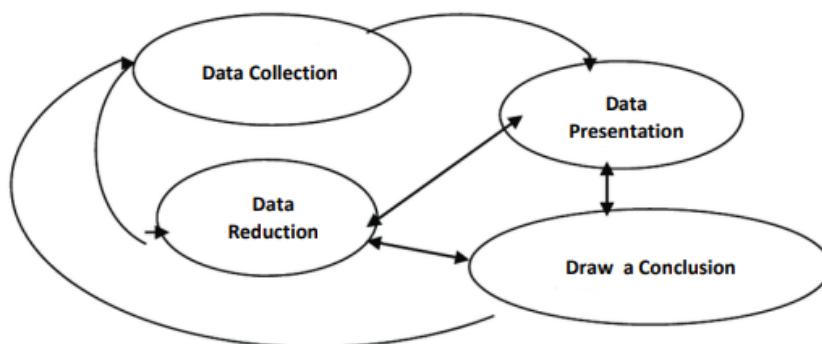


Figure 2. Data Analysis Techniques  
Source: Miles and Huberman

In this research, researchers will use the Miles and Huberman model (Miles and Huberman, 1992) where the Analysis Technique is divided into 3 paths, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. In this study, researchers used the concept of nation branding as an analysis knife.

## Result and Discussion

### Nation Branding Concept

In his book "Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice," (Dinnie, 2022) describes nation branding as a set of long-term tactics that include how a country is portrayed and marketed to increase its attractiveness to a worldwide audience. (Dinnie *et al.*, 2010) highlights that nation branding is not only focused on visual imagery but also includes aspects such as culture, economy, and policies. Improving a nation's standing and image abroad is the main objective of this strategy, which has favorable effects on exports, tourism, foreign investment, and diplomacy (Szondi, 2008). In this case, halal tourism is considered a strategic sector capable of contributing to the country's economy by enhancing Indonesia's image as the best halal tourism destination in the world (Fathan, Mustahal, and Basit, 2022). It is predicated on Indonesia's enormous potential, particularly in the travel and tourist industry (Cheriatna, 2018). As a result, Indonesia should legitimately tap into and make use of this potential for the good of the country.

The process of nation branding needs to be strategic, ongoing, and involve a range of stakeholders, including the public and corporate sectors as well as society (Dinnie, 2022). The successful development and upkeep of a favorable national image depends on cooperation and coordination among these many parties (Kim, 2012). The government is essential in developing policies that highlight the nation's advantages, principles, and distinctive features. Meanwhile, the private sector contributes by coordinating its marketing initiatives with the national brand and highlighting corporate social responsibility, innovation, and economic success (Kim, Shim, and Dinnie, 2013).

In addition, nation branding is a purposeful process to improve a country's reputation abroad, according to Simon Anholt's perspective (Anholt, 2008). It goes beyond simple promotion or visual appearance. This idea covers a wide range of topics, including investments, tourism, culture, society, and government. Stated differently, nation branding encapsulates all of the hard work that goes into creating a favorable image of a nation abroad (Anholt, 2010).

Indonesia understands the value of nation branding, especially when it comes to halal tourism. Indonesia, a well-known travel destination, employs tactics to build a reputation as the world's top halal travel destination. The construction of halal-friendly infrastructure and the encouragement of religious and cultural diversity are two projects that the Indonesian government actively supports and encourages halal tourism (Palupi, Romadhon, and Arifan, 2017; Winarti, 2017).

The private sector and religious institutions like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama play a significant influence in determining Indonesia's reputation as a halal travel destination (Miswanto and Tohirin, 2021). Travel companies, restaurants, and hotels all take an active part in this by ensuring that their services adhere to halal standards. This partnership enhances the idea that Indonesia offers halal-compliant tourism, attracting tourists who give halal considerations priority while planning their trips. Together, the public, business, and societal sectors work to provide a strong basis for enhancing Indonesia's reputation as a leader in halal travel worldwide (Zarkasyi, Kurniawan, and Anggara, 2022).

### **Halal Tourism Sector in Indonesia**

The history of halal tourism in Indonesia has deep roots in its rich Islamic traditions and cultural pluralism. As a country with the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia has long been a destination for religious tourism for Muslims from both within the country and abroad (Jafari and Scott, 2014). However, the development of halal tourism as a systematic and structured concept began in the early 2000s (Surur Fadhil, 2020). In 2002, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia officially launched the "Wonderful Indonesia" program to promote Indonesian tourism to the international market. This program encompassed various aspects of tourism, with halal tourism being one of its main focuses. The Indonesian government recognized the significant economic potential of Muslim tourists and decided to develop tourism infrastructure and services that align with Islamic principles (Ramadhanty and Krisnando, 2019).

In recent years, halal tourism in Indonesia has experienced significant growth (Devi and Firmansyah, 2019). The Indonesian government and various stakeholders, including religious institutions like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, have collaborated to promote and develop halal tourism services (Destiana, Kismartini and Yuningsih, 2020; Zarkasyi, Kurniawan and Anggara, 2022). Many restaurants, hotels, and resorts in Indonesia have obtained halal certification and provide Muslim-friendly facilities (Rachmiatie *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the emergence of specialized online platforms and applications that facilitate Muslim travelers in seeking information and booking halal tourism services has had a positive impact on the development of halal tourism in Indonesia. Muslim travelers have become more aware of their need for tourism experiences in line with Islamic principles, and they are increasingly selective in choosing their travel destinations (Katuk *et al.*, 2021).

As a result of these efforts, Indonesia has become one of the primary halal tourism destinations in Southeast Asia (Wahyono, Abbas, and Razak, 2020). The Indonesian government and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia set a target of 20 million international visitor arrivals by 2019, according to the Tourism Channel (Putra Ivan, 2016). Consequently, starting in 2016, the government began developing ten tourist destinations intended to supplement Bali as new tourism hubs in Indonesia. Lake Toba (North Sumatra), Tanjung Kalayang (Bangka Belitung), Mandalika (West Nusa Tenggara), Wakatobi (Southeast Sulawesi), Morotai Island (North Maluku), Thousand Islands (Jakarta), Tanjung Lesung (Banten), Borobudur Temple (Central Java), Mount Bromo Tengger Semeru (East Java), and Labuan Bajo (East Nusa Tenggara) are the ten planned tourism destinations for government-led development (Reza, 2020). Overall, the history and growth of halal tourism in Indonesia showcase an increasing focus on the requirements and preferences of Muslim visitors. The government, religious organizations, and participants in the tourism sector have made efforts to meet these needs by offering infrastructure and services that adhere to Islamic norms. As a result, Indonesia has become a world-leading destination for halal tourism, which has had a positive impact on the country's tourism industry growth.



Indonesia has undertaken various efforts to enhance its competitiveness in the field of halal tourism. Halal tourism in Indonesia possesses unique characteristics compared to several other countries. In recent years, halal tourism in Indonesia has experienced significant growth. The Indonesian government and various stakeholders, including religious institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, continue to strive to promote and develop halal tourism services in Indonesia, considering that Indonesia has long been a religious tourism destination for Muslims from both within and outside the country.

In 2002, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia officially launched the "Wonderful Indonesia" program to promote Indonesian tourism to the international market (Chotijah, 2023). This program encompassed various aspects of tourism, with halal tourism being one of its main focuses. The Indonesian government recognized the significant economic potential of Muslim tourists and decided to develop tourism infrastructure and services that align with Islamic principles (Ramadhanty and Krisnando, 2019). In 2015, Indonesia achieved three awards simultaneously at The World Halal Travel Summit Exhibition (Kompas, 2015). This marked the increasing attention towards halal tourism in Indonesia and strengthened its position as a global halal tourism destination. Following that, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy launched the 'Indonesia Muslim Travel Index' program to assess and enhance the quality of halal tourism services in various destinations across Indonesia (Utama and Mawardi, 2023).

Significantly, Indonesia's position in the halal tourism sector, when compared to other countries worldwide that also implement halal tourism, can be observed through the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) rankings.

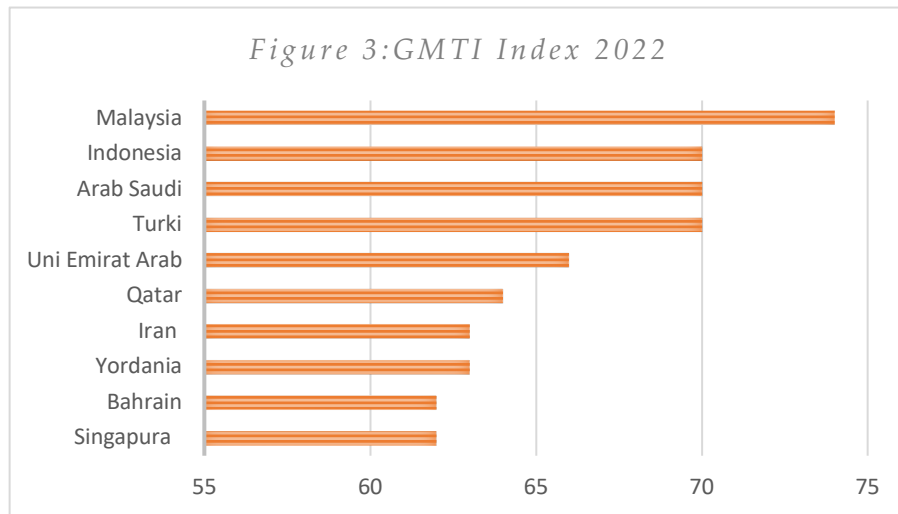


Figure 3: GMTI Index 2022  
Source: GMTI Index 2022

Halal tourism in Indonesia ranked second-best according to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) in 2022, as presented in *Figure 3* (GMTI, 2022). This achievement is the result of the government's efforts and strategies, along with the collaboration of Islamic community organizations, to continually enhance the quality of halal tourism in Indonesia. Therefore, in this article, the author will discuss the strategies of the government and several Indonesian Islamic organizations, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, in enhancing Nation Branding through the halal tourism sector. This will provide a more detailed overview of the development of halal tourism in Indonesia.

With the development of technology and the increasing urgency in meeting the needs of halal tourism, there has also been a rise in research and articles about halal tourism from various fields of knowledge.

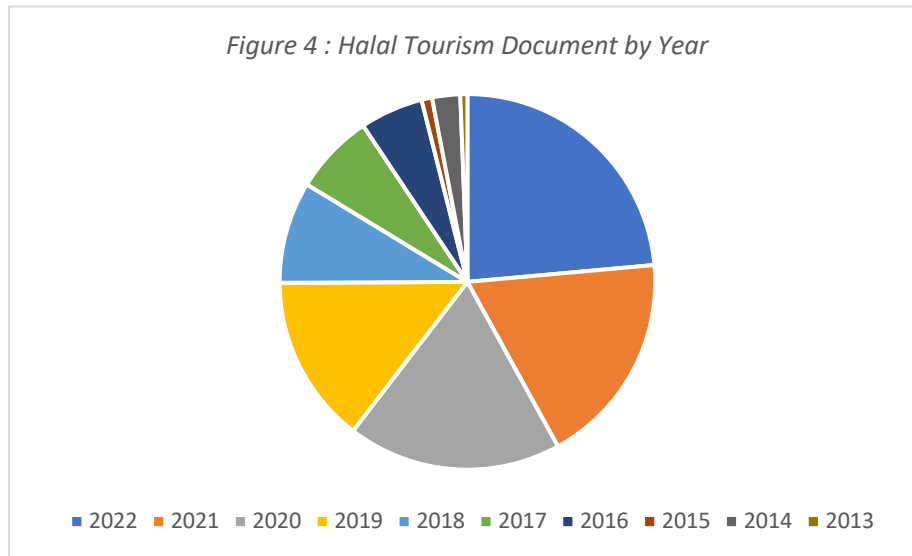


Figure 4: Halal Tourism Document by Year  
Source: Scopus

The significant increase can be observed in the diagram (*Figure 4*) above. To conclude the growing research in halal tourism, the author presents a diagram depicting the rise in the number of studies related to halal tourism over the past decade. Starting from the year 2013, indexed Scopus research on halal tourism was remarkably low, less than 5. However, it continued to experience a significant annual increase, reaching a total of 78 studies in the year 2020. This increase serves as a reference point for the author to also contribute by presenting articles related to halal tourism but with a distinct focus.

In this section, the researcher analyzes news articles related to halal tourism sourced from the official websites of the Indonesian government, specifically the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), as well as the two societal organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, to identify the nation branding strategies being employed. Following the research method, this article generates graphs indicating trends in efforts to shape Indonesia's image as a nation with halal tourism destinations adhering to Islamic teachings and principles.

In this context, the researcher's focus is to categorize news articles related to halal tourism found on the official websites or portals of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and the Indonesian Ulama Council, combining them under one

category (Government), along with Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. To enhance comprehension, the researcher employs three keywords for classifying the approaches or tendencies of these entities in developing and promoting halal tourism in Indonesia. The number of news articles collected from the official websites using the keyword 'halal tourism' for each entity is as follows:

No.	Actor/Organization	Total News
1.	Government (Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy and Indonesian Ulema Council)	30
2.	Nahdlatul Ulama	30
3.	Muhammadiyah	26

Table 1: The number of news articles on the official websites

Based on the news that the author got from the official website, the author classifies it into 3 parts as follows.

### Halal Food Classification

One of the provisions or regulations related to halal tourist areas is not to provide haram foods. All kinds of drinks and food that are traded and offered in the tourist area must be ensured by the tour manager that everything is *halal-an Tayyiban* (halal and tayyib) (Huda, 2022). The description of Sharia Maqasid in the context of halal food is elaborated through the five principles of *ad-dharuriyatul khomsah*, taking into account the ranking of each principle and maintaining the five aspects of benefit; *hifdz ad-diin*, *hifdz an-nafs*, *hifdz al-'aql*, *hifdz an-nasl*, and *hifdz al-maal* (Mashudi, 2018). So that the author compares news news about the halal tourism sector that has supported or provided information about halal food from the official websites of the Government, NU, and Muhammadiyah in the following graph:

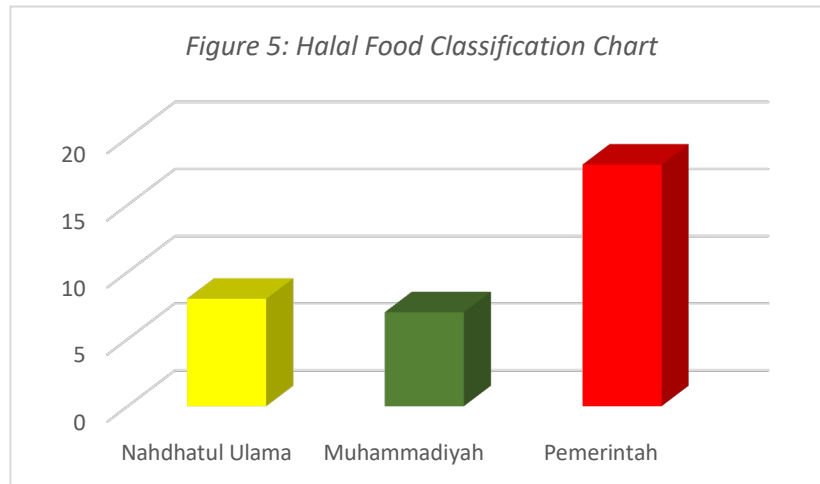


Figure 5: Halal Food Classification Chart  
Sources: Kemenparekraf, MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah official website

As shown in *figure 5*, the Government in this case the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and MUI have the biggest role in shaping Indonesia's branding as a country with tourism destinations whose food or restaurants have been tested and certified halal. Out of 30 news articles, 18 of them are related to halal food, either discussing its development or providing information about halal food options in Indonesia. Consistently sharing news about halal food, instills a sense of trust, especially among Muslim travelers, ensuring that their choice of destination aligns with Islamic teachings and principles.

Anca Syah (Universitas Indonesia, 2022) stated that food managers in various restaurants in Indonesia are required to obtain halal certificates from halal certification bodies recognized by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), namely LPH LPPOM MUI, LPH Sucofindo and LPH Surveyor Indonesia. Consequently, the growing number of certified halal products can be a contributing factor in the increasing number of Muslim tourists wanting to enjoy Indonesia without concerns about the halal quality of food products (Humas UI, 2022; Purusottama and Wijanarti, 2022). Moreover, managing halal food involves product distribution, processing, preparation, and serving. Processed food ingredients must be kept separate from non-halal products. The same applies to cooking processes, which cannot involve non-halal food items such as non-halal animals, cooking wine, rum, and other alcoholic products.

Moving on to the second position, as shown in *Figure 5*, out of 30 news articles on the official website, there are 8 articles discussing halal food in Indonesia. These articles encompass aspects like the development of halal food and halal food certification. When compared to the Government's coverage, these 8 articles are notably insufficient, even not reaching half the amount. However, forming a nation branding requires commitment and collaboration between the government and private sectors. According to the author, although in the GMTI Index 2022, Indonesia is ranked second, with a variety of cultural diversity, especially in culinary tourism (halal food) owned by Indonesia, many opportunities can still be developed to encourage Indonesia to become a halal tourist destination that has culinary wealth by the teachings and rules in Islam.

Moving on to the third position, as depicted in *Figure 5*, Muhammadiyah is represented with a total of 7 out of 26 news articles discussing halal food. When analyzing the news articles on the Muhammadiyah website, there's a similarity with the halal food-related news on the official Nahdlatul Ulama site. Most of the articles revolve around the discourse of developing and certifying halal food in Indonesia, indicating that there's still much room for development to make Indonesia's national branding in the halal tourism sector more achievable.

Regarding Muhammadiyah's Halal Food initiatives, the University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) has a Food Technology Study Program that has integrated Islamic values into its Tri Dharma activities. The Center for Safe and Halal Food Studies (PKMAH) is a research-based organization that offers community-based training and education on producing halal and safe food. Additionally, PKMAH provides a path for the University of Muhammadiyah Malang to fulfill its vision and mission, which is to become a leading university in developing science, technology, and arts (IPTEKS) based on Islamic values. In this context, PKMAH employs the concept of *halalan thoyyiban* to carry out the University's Tri Dharma (education and teaching, research, and community service) based on Islamic principles (Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, 2018).

## Sharia Hotel Classification

In the tourism industry, sharia hotels are one of the sectors that are currently popular and become an integral part of the phenomenon of halal tourism that attracts attention. Sharia Hotels play an important role as halal tourist destinations, especially in terms of accommodation. In view (Sofyan, 2011) Sharia hotels are described as places to stay that ensure that all aspects of provision, procurement, and use of products and facilities comply with the provisions of Sharia rules. Just like halal food, this shari'ah hotel also upholds the concept of *maqashid shari'ah* through the five principles of *ad-dharuriyatul kbomsab*, which in terms of facilities, services, and benefits as well as its objectives are oriented to Islamic sharia (Izza, 2018). So in this section, the author also compares news about the halal tourism sector that has supported or provided information about shari'ah hotels from the official websites of the Government, NU, and Muhammadiyah in the following graph:

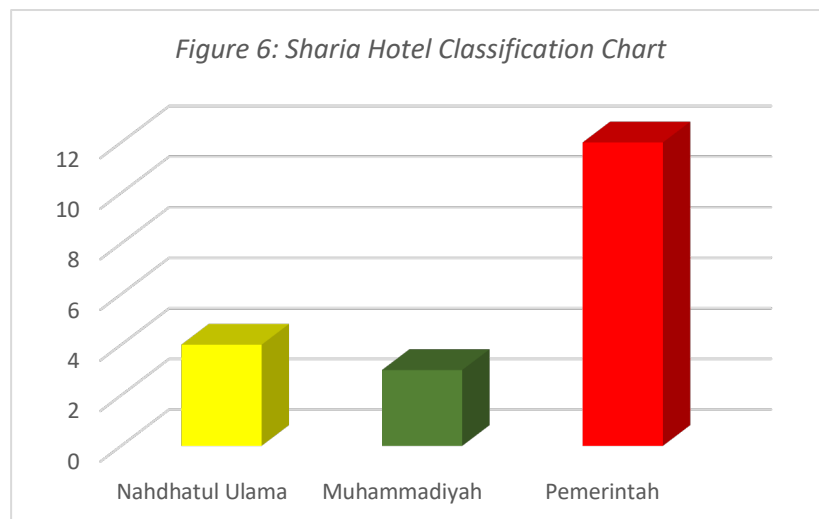


Figure 6: Sharia Hotel Classification Chart  
Sources: Kemenparekraf, MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah official website

In figure 6 which has an important role in the development of halal tourism, especially in the hospitality sector, is the government. Out of 30 news articles, 12 of

them discuss the provision of Sharia hotels and provide information about the availability of Sharia hotels in Indonesia. Sharia hotels are a crucial element that must be fulfilled in halal tourism facilities. The more news is provided, the easier it becomes for tourists to access information about Sharia hotels in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, there are currently no exclusively state-owned Sharia hotels. Most of the Sharia hotels in Indonesia are managed by individuals or private entities, such as the Sofyan Hotel Jakarta, which is the first Sharia hotel in Indonesia (Pratomo and Subakti, 2017). This Sharia hotel is recognized by MUI and its services adhere to the Halal Assurance System. Apart from prohibiting alcohol in food and beverages, the hotel requires all employees to dress modestly and participate in regular religious study sessions each week. To facilitate Muslim guests, the hotel provides various amenities such as prayer facilities, Qur'an, ablution areas, Qibla direction indicators, and prayer schedules in each room. Additionally, there are public prayer rooms available, and even the in-room television broadcasts predominantly local and Middle Eastern channels (CNN Indonesia, 2021).

Moving on to the second position according to *Figure 6*, from the 30 articles on Nahdlatul Ulama's official website, there are 4 articles discussing Sharia hotels in Indonesia. These articles cover topics such as the provision and certification of halal hotels. When compared to the government's efforts, these 4 articles are relatively few, and even collectively, they are insufficient. In reality, the development of halal tourism requires collaboration between the government and Islamic community organizations. This collaboration is essential to realize Indonesia's national branding as the world's leading destination for halal tourism.

Next in the third position is Muhammadiyah, as seen in *Figure 6*, where out of 30 articles on Muhammadiyah's official website, there are only 3 articles discussing Sharia hotels. Similar to the halal food sector, most of these articles revolve around the discourse of developing and certifying Sharia hotels in Indonesia. Therefore, it is expected that Muhammadiyah can play a more active role in providing news related to Sharia hotels.



Muhammadiyah manages two Sharia hotels, namely SMIP Sharia Hotel in Slawi, Tegal, and SM Tower and Convention in Yogyakarta (Setiawan Silvy, 2023). SMIP Sharia Hotel serves as an educational hotel with a Sharia concept managed by SMK Muhammadiyah Slawi, and it is located on Jalan Profesor Ahmad Yamin in Slawi. This SMIP Sharia Hotel is frequently visited by the central leadership of Muhammadiyah or regional leaders of Muhammadiyah in Central Java whenever there are activities related to the organization (Kabar Pendidikan, 2022). Meanwhile, the SM Tower and Convention is the first Sharia hotel built by Muhammadiyah (Yanuarwati Wulan, 2023).

Deni Asy'ari (Muhammadiyah, 2023) mentioned during the inauguration of SM Tower and Convention that SM Tower is not just about commercial pragmatism. Instead, SM Tower has a mindset that is oriented towards building a network that becomes a strength for the congregation and the Muslim community. This network can eventually create a new ecosystem within the economy, with money circulation benefiting the community. SM Tower aims to differentiate itself from existing hotels with the brand 'Living Muslim Hotel'. The goal of Living Muslim is not only to provide accommodation for Muslims at SM Tower but also to implement core Muslim values within SM Tower.

### **Halal Destination Classification**

The halal destination is one of the essential facility components that should be present in halal tourism. A halal destination encompasses facilities such as route provision, travel agencies, or locations that provide a safe and comfortable experience for Muslim travelers, especially during their activities of worship or meals throughout their journey (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia, 2022). As such, here the author also conducts a comparison of halal destinations among the three key actors, namely the government, NU, and Muhammadiyah, which is then visualized in the following graph:

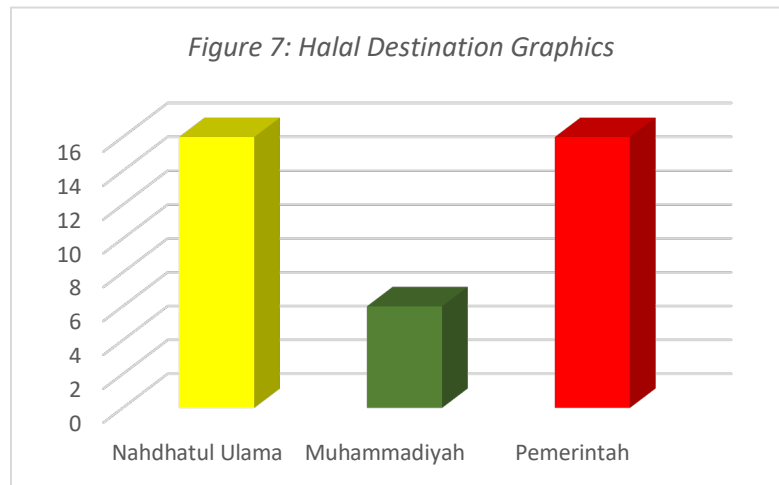


Figure 7: Halal Destination Graphics  
Sources: Kemenparekraf, MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah official website

This can be seen in *Figure 7*, where the Government and Nahdlatul Ulama play an important role in the halal destination sector, with the same number of news articles, namely 16 articles. Halal trips are also a significant indicator of halal tourism, where tourists are taken to tourism destinations that uphold Islamic values. It is the Government and NU that actively provide news related to this sector. Almost all of these articles discuss development and information related to halal trips. However, upon closer examination, it is found that the articles on Nahdlatul Ulama's official website mostly focus on discussions and support in promoting halal destinations, indicating the need for more concrete actions to achieve Indonesia's national branding in the halal tourism sector.

Next, in the last position is Muhammadiyah, out of the 30 news articles obtained from Muhammadiyah's official website, there are only 6 articles discussing halal trips. Similar to the news on Nahdlatul Ulama's official website, there is a focus on discussing the development and certification of halal destinations in Indonesia. Some of the halal destinations developed by Muhammadiyah are located in various regions of Indonesia, such as the UMM Sengkaling Park in Malang, East Java (Humas UMM, 2022) and forest tour Education at the University of Muhammadiyah Mataram (Junaidin, Syafril and Wulandari Dewi S, 2022).

Indeed, the Government of Indonesia and Muhammadiyah have the same view regarding the meaning of a halal destination. The government, in this case, Sandiogo Uno as Minister of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy said that halal destination is not an effort to make a tourist spot sharia and closed. Efforts to make tourists more comfortable and safer in traveling (Priyanto, 2022). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah on its official website explained that halal destination does not intend to change tourist attractions to halal but refers to providing services such as the availability of halal food, places of worship, and hotels that are comfortable for tourists (Ilham, 2021). Based on these similar opinions, it is hoped that Islamic community organizations can balance the progress of the government so that collaboration is formed in the development of halal tourism. So that Indonesia's national branding in the halal tourism sector can be achieved.

## **Conclusion**

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia is making various efforts to build its image as the best halal tourism destination globally. In this regard, the Indonesian government and Islamic organizations (Nahdlatul Ulama & Muhammadiyah) play a significant role as key actors in realizing Indonesia's national branding. To examine the strategies of these actors, Indonesia's branding as the best halal tourism destination is classified into three categories: halal food, Sharia hotels, and halal destinations. In this classification, the government takes the leading position, followed by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. However, it is found that a significant portion of the branding efforts remains largely unrealized, with much of the reported halal tourism being more in the realm of discourse than balanced implementation. Therefore, through this article, the author suggests that the government, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah engage in more collaboration to formulate a more effective national branding strategy. The focus of this article is solely on the quantity of news held by the three key actors, and for further research, it is recommended to explore the latest developments in the halal tourism sector in Indonesia.

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