Sharia Marketing and Halal Destination Branding: Is Building a Halal Destination Image Effective with Destination Branding Strategies?

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO

East Java, a popular tourist destination in Indonesia, is committed to developing culinary tourism through the concept of a halal culinary area. This initiative also supports the acceleration of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) product development. Furthermore, creating a positive perception and image of halal products through halal branding is crucial in supporting the halalization program for MSME products. Furthermore, ensuring that products are marketed according to Sharia principles is a key factor in building the halal industry. Of the various studies on product halalness, research on the image of halal products with halal branding that focuses on halal culinary areas has never been conducted. This study aims to determine the effect of halal branding on the image of halal destinations in the East Java Halal Culinary Area and its compliance with Sharia marketing principles. This study uses a quantitative method by examining the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable through a t-test using SPSS. The population in this study was buyers in the East Java Halal Culinary Area, and a sample of 110 people was selected using an accidental sampling technique. From a Sharia marketing perspective, the implemented branding strategy is in accordance with Sharia marketing principles. However, the results of this study indicate that the halal branding strategy in the East Java Halal Culinary Region does not influence the halal image or is unable to build the image of a halal destination in the region. The main finding is that while the branding strategy aligns with Sharia marketing principles, it does not significantly contribute to shaping the destination's halal image.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on regional distribution, East Java Province is a popular tourism destination in Indonesia (Rafli, 2024). Meanwhile, based on the type of tourism, culinary tourism is still the type of tourism that is most demand by the public after nature tourism (Indah, 2024). In addition to efforts to increase national income through tourism, the government is also optimizing the halal tourism sector. This is due to Indonesia's significant potential for developing its halal industry, considering that Indonesia is a country with a majority Muslim population. In order to realize the halal tourism sector, the government is aggressive in promoting halal product certification. Halal Product Guarantee (JPH) is needed in order to protect consumer rights so that they are free from things that can harm consumers (Nadya et al., 2023).

Halal tourism is a rapidly growing sector, driven by the growing awareness of Sharia principles among global Muslims, including in travel and consumption activities. In this context, halal destinations are judged not only by the availability of halal food and prayer facilities, but also by how the destination's image is built through marketing approaches that align with Islamic values. Destination branding is a crucial strategy in developing halal tourism. Branding aims to create identity, attractiveness, and trust in a destination. However, for halal destination branding to be effective, the approach used must consider Sharia values as part of the communication and promotional strategy. This is where the role of Sharia marketing becomes crucial. Sharia marketing is not only oriented towards customer satisfaction but also prioritizes the principles of honesty, transparency, and blessings in every marketing process. The results obtained by the government in the halal certification program were very significant in 2024, namely, 1.8 million halal certificates had been issued with a total of 4.5 million halal certified products (Thea, 2024).

Meanwhile, from the distribution of product areas that have been halal certified, East Java Province is still the province with the second largest number of halal certificates after Central Java in 2023 (Lampung, 2023). Currently, several tourist destinations in Indonesia and other Muslim-populated countries have begun to implement the concept of halal destination branding, but its effectiveness in shaping the image of halal destinations remains a question that requires empirical proof. Based on the types of products that are halal certified, food and beverage products dominate.

Table 1. Halal Certification Amount Based on Product

No.	Types of Products	Total
1	Food and beverage	106.338
2	Catering and restaurant	372
3	Poultry and animal slaughterhouse	263
4	Cosmetics and medicine	3046
5	Used goods	563
6	Service products	163
7	Biological products	1
8	Chemical products	2
9	Other products	265
Total		**111.003**

Source: Processed secondary data from the Ministry of Religion, 2022

Based on the data in Table 1 above, the type of food and beverage products is the dominant product certified halal in 2022, namely 106.338 products or 95.7% of all certified products. With the increase in the number of halal-certified products in 2022, where the dominance is food and beverage products, Indonesia, a country with the potential for increasing consumption of halal food products.
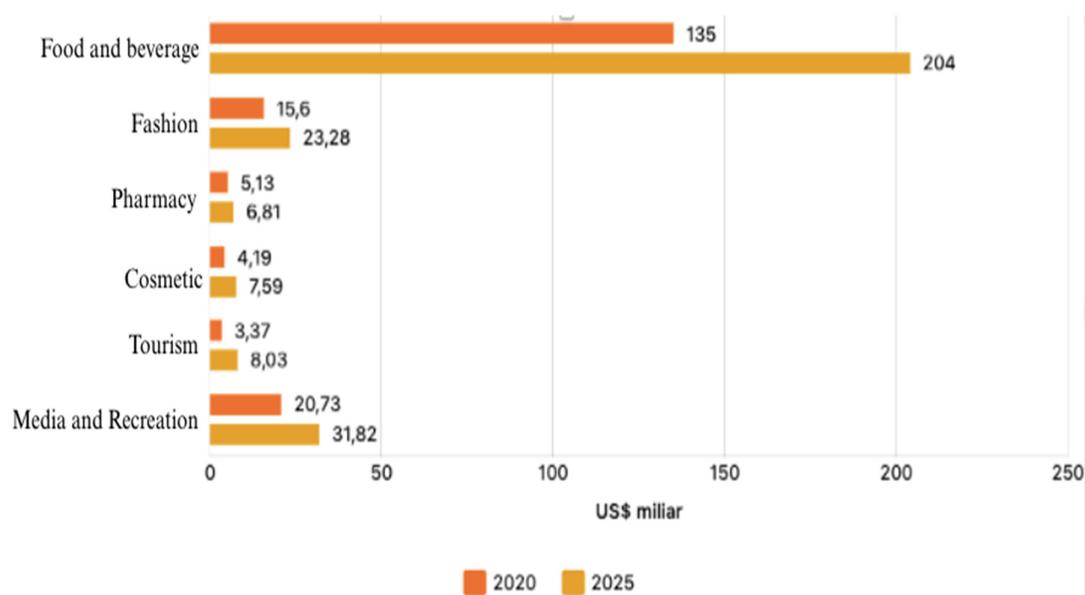
Figure 1. Consumption Value of Indonesian Halal Products per Sector 2020 & 2025
Source: Katadata.id, 2025

Based on Figure 1 above, there is a significant increase in the consumption of halal products from 2020 to 2025, especially in the food and beverage product sector. This illustrates that the absorption of halal products, especially food in Indonesia, is very large. Even the potential of halal products, especially food and beverages, is not only in domestic achievements.
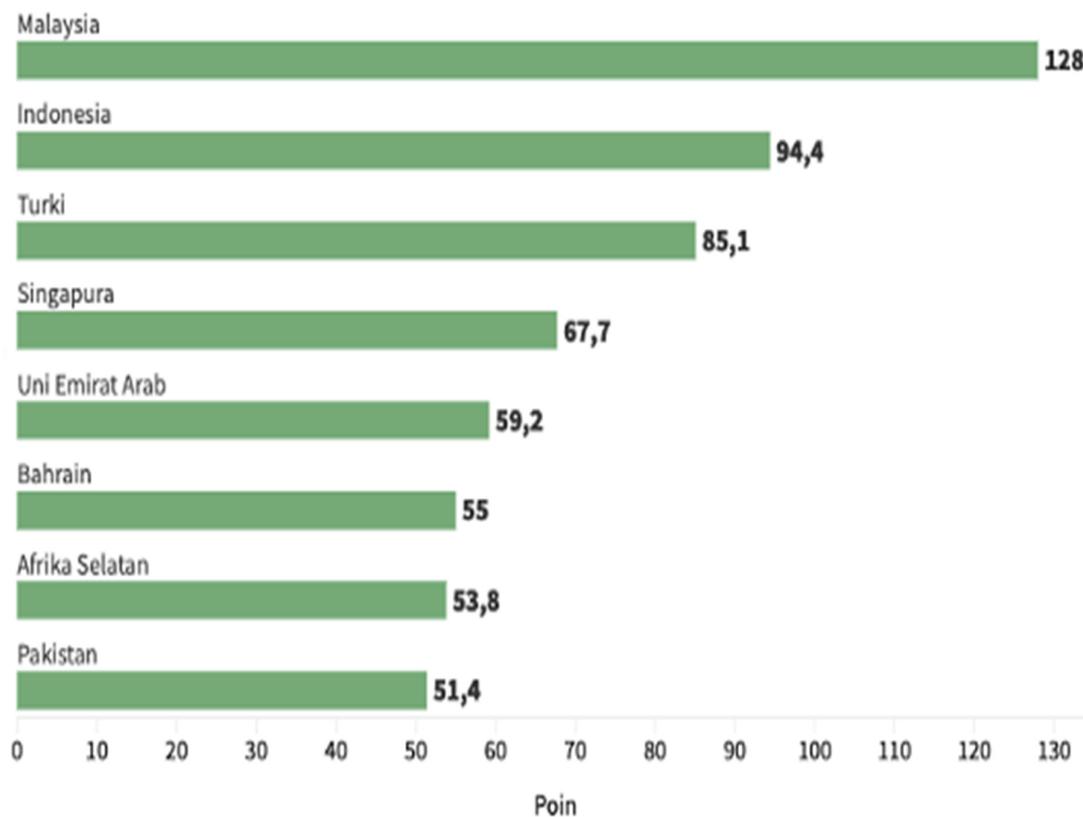

Figure 2. Countries with the Highest Halal Food Indicator Scores in the World
Source: Dataindonesia.id, 2024

Based on Figure 2 above, Indonesia ranks second as the country with the highest halal food indicator score in the world after Malaysia. From various data and facts about the potential for halal tourism and food, it is very appropriate if this great potential is able to encourage the domestic industry in realizing halal tourism. Halal tourism is all objects and/or actions that are permitted based on Islam to be used or involved by Muslims, which are packaged in the tourism industry (Samsuhuda, 2020). In terms of halal tourism, Indonesia has also proven to be the second-best country with halal tourism in the world after Malaysia. One of the things that makes the tourism industry, especially halal tourism, is the creation of a destination image at a tourist destination. Destination image comprises the objective

knowledge, biases, imagination, and emotional perceptions of a person or group toward a particular tourist attraction (Destari, 2017). In addition, by considering the development of the halal industry, the development of a tourist destination is important in developing tourism because the image of a tourist destination is a determining factor for a tourist to have an interest in visiting it until deciding to visit the destination (Nurazizah & Marhanah, 2020).

Many factors can influence the destination image of a tourist spot, one of which is branding. Branding is an effort to build an impression on consumers about a product so that it reaches the target being targeted (Ramadhan & Rosyad 2021). The purpose of branding is always remembered by every audience, so that a good image of a brand can be formed (Oktaviani et al., 2018). In the world of tourism, the branding of tourist destinations is called destination branding, which is a way of communicating a unique identity about a tourist destination by differentiating the destination from its competitors (Hereyah & Kusumaningrum, 2019). Based on Hereyah and Kusumaningrum (2019), destination branding is a key factor in building the image of a museum tourist destination. In addition, Lim and Weaver (2014) examined the effects of destination branding and destination image. They explained that the collaboration of destination branding and destination marketing can form a positive image of a tourist destination.

The terms brand and trademark often create confusion and ambiguity among the general public. Many people mistakenly equate the two, assuming they hold the same meaning, when in fact, they are fundamentally distinct concepts. A brand can be described as a distinctive sign, whether it's an image, name, word, letter, number, color arrangement, or a combination of these elements designed to differentiate goods and services in the marketplace (Swasty, 2016). However, a brand encompasses much more than what meets the eye, it represents the overall quality of a product, the reputation of a company, and the effectiveness of its business practices, as well as the interactions it maintains with its audience (Medić et al., 2009). Branding, therefore, is the strategic endeavor involved in cultivating a brand around a product. This aligns with the definition provided by Kotler and Keller (2016), which describes branding as the process of embedding a name, term, symbol, or sign individually or in combination to facilitate the identification of a product or to establish its distinction from competitors. The concept of branding has evolved significantly across various domains, with destination branding being a notable advancement. According to Subarkah et

al. (2020), destination branding involves creating a unique name, symbol, logo, slogan, or image that distinguishes a destination from others. This approach aims to create an attractive identity that is memorable for visitors, offering them a distinctive emotional experience. One of the key objectives of destination branding is to ensure that the destination firmly resonates in the minds of the public, making it a top choice in their decision-making process.

One emerging trend in branding is the concept of halal branding, which is still relatively new in the field. As highlighted by Malihah et al. (2023), halal branding seeks to establish a brand that complies with Islamic law, drawing upon the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. This approach involves both explicit and implicit characteristics, aiming to present a genuine state, condition, or composition without misleading customers. Consequently, halal branding encompasses essential elements of Sharia and Islam, including honesty, transparency, and accountability. In Indonesia, the growth of halal branding has become increasingly important due to the country's significant Muslim population. This demographic necessitates guarantees and services that align with Islamic principles. Moreover, Islamic branding serves as a viable business strategy, functioning as a solution that reflects adherence to Allah SWT (Safira & Rahmanto, 2022).

Halal branding extends beyond products, encompassing both goods and services. Destinations can also embrace halal branding, as highlighted in the research by Wibowo et al. (2019), which merges the concepts of destination branding and halal branding. This approach to halal destination branding involves promoting a location by Islamic law, drawing from the teachings of the Quran and *Hadith*. According to Dewi in Wibowo et al. (2019), the elements of halal destination branding include image, recognition, differentiation, brand message, consistency, emotional response, and the creation of expectations. Brand image refers to the impressions and emotions that consumers associate with a brand or product when they see or hear about it. Similar to how destinations cultivate their identity, brand image can be developed in line with halal principles, leading to the creation of a distinct halal brand image. This halal brand image encompasses a range of perceptions held by customers, reflecting their beliefs, concerns regarding halal practices, and commitment to halal standards (Fachrurazi et al., 2023).

Similar to branding, the concept of a destination is closely tied to its image. According to Maxim (2019), destination image refers to the mental picture that tourists have of a

particular attraction, shaped by their biases, knowledge, imagination, and emotions. Over time, this idea has evolved to incorporate the concept of halal, resulting in what is known as a halal destination image. This term describes the perceptions that travelers hold regarding the halal attributes of a destination. Fachrurazi et al. (2023) outline several key indicators that define the halal brand image, which include commitment, reputation, solutions, and trust. However, various studies provide different results and facts about the influence of destination branding on destination image. One of them is the results of Khongrat's (2021) research, which examined destination branding, destination image, and its influence on destination selection. The results of the study showed that there was no influence of destination branding and destination image. The difference in research results confirms the existence of a research gap on the influence of destination branding on destination image.

A product is declared halal when it meets the halal criteria. There are several dimensions to a product's halal status. The halal status of a product has dimensions including materials, processing, storage, packaging, distribution, sales, and presentation (BPJPH, 2023). Therefore, employing Sharia marketing concepts in the distribution and sale of halal products is an appropriate strategy to meet the halal criteria that are in accordance with the dimensions of a product's halal status. This is none other than because Sharia marketing contains the principles of Islamic morality and ethics, where both principles are in line with the values contain in the product halalization program (Nurfatikasari & Susilo, 2024). Sharia marketing as an ideal concept in ensuring the halal guarantee of a product is also a finding from the research of Khodijah et al. (2023), in addition to the main findings, namely that the Sharia label and the Sharia marketing concept influence the decision to purchase halal products. Sharia Marketing is the application of a strategic business discipline that is by Sharia values and principles, namely, carried out based on the Islamic concept taught by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. According to Kartajaya & Sula (2006), the core values of Sharia marketing are integrity and transparency, so that marketers should not lie and people buy because they need it, and according to their desires and needs, not because of the discount. The characteristics of Sharia marketing in Kartajaya & Sula (2006) are contains several emphases on the values of God *(rabbaniyah)*, ethics *(akhlaqiyah)*, Realistic *(al waqiyyah)*, and Humanistic *(al insaniyah)*.

The food and beverage industry is included in the culinary industry category, while culinary is a type of tourism, so it encourages an increase in the tourism sector in each region through the variety of food and beverage products it has. By looking at various facts about tourism, especially culinary tourism, halal products, and halal tourism, is not surprising that product marketers are encouraged to collaborate with them in halal culinary tourism. Moreover, the tour is built in an area that has tourism potential and a large Muslim population. The synergy of regional MSME products and halal culinary is conceptualized through the halal culinary area program that has been initiated by the East Java provincial government. This tourist destination, which was inaugurated on October 3, 2024, is expected to be a driving force for higher-quality MSMEs, as well as a manifestation of the East Java Provincial Government's commitment to advancing the halal sector not only in the halal industry and halal tourism, but also in halal food (Dewanto, 2024). The concept of Halal Culinary Destinations, initiated by the East Java Provincial Government, is relatively new. Therefore, it is necessary to make efforts so that it can be known by many people and be able to get a good image from consumers. Thus, branding and the halal image of a tourist destination become important things that need to be considered and implemented. In addition, a study with a Sharia marketing perspective is also important in ensuring halal status, which is its main spirit.

METHOD, DATA, AND ANALYSIS

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships among variables. Quantitative research methods are based on scientific knowledge and principles, which focusing on a specific population or sample. The data in this study used secondary and primary data. Secondary data on matters relating to the East Java Halal Culinary area program was obtained from the internet. Primary data related to the demographic profile of respondents and their statements about halal branding and halal images obtained through questionnaires distributed using Google Forms media.

This approach involved systematic data collection and relied on numerical evidence to analyze the data compiled for hypothesis investigation. Participants in this study were consumers who purchased products in the East Java Halal Culinary Area, which until this study was conducted, the Halal Culinary Area in East Java was still in Tulungagung Regency. By utilizing accidental sampling as a method of selecting participants, the sample size was

determined following Ferdinand's (2014) recommendation, which suggests a range of 5 to 10 times the number of indicators, resulting in a total of 110 samples (11 indicators x 10). Data analysis combined descriptive statistical techniques, inferential statistical analysis, classical assumption tests, and hypothesis testing. All of them are carried out using the SPSS application. The research flow is illustrated in the following figure.

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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│    Problem      │ ───> │ Theoritical Basis│ ───> │   Hypothesis    │
│   Formulation   │      │                 │      │   Formulation   │
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│ Data Collection │ <─── │     Sample      │ <─── │   Population    │
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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│  Data Analysis  │ ───> │   Conclusion    │
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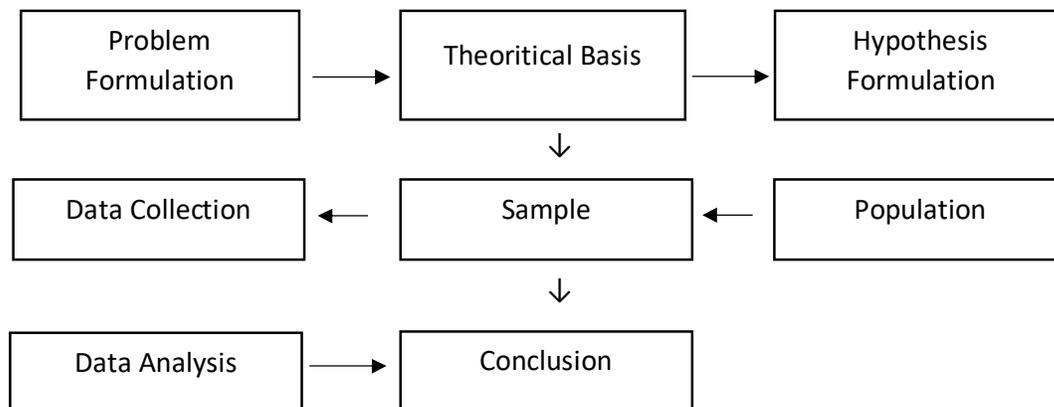
Figure 3. Research Flow

Source: Sugiyono, 2019

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This research was conducted in December 2024 at the location of the Halal Culinary Area of East Java in Tulungagung. Before being made a Halal Culinary area, the area had long been a culinary area of Tulungagung. The name Tulungagung Station was added because the area is located around Tulungagung Station and is also located on land and buildings owned by PT KAI (Indonesian Railways). So, the stalls of culinary traders in the area are mostly rented. In addition, 69 traders have been verified halal in December 2024.

Table 2. 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

Respondent Characteristics		Frekuensi	Percentage (%)
	>25 years	43	39.1
	<1 million	42	38.1
Income	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

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

Based on Table 2, the respondents are predominantly female and over 25 years old. Based on the profession, the respondents are dominated by students and dominated by respondents with incomes of less than 1 million. There are also characteristics based on domicile; respondents from within the city or Tulungagung are very dominant. While based on the religion embraced by the respondents, it is dominated by respondents who are Muslim.

Table 3. Distribution of Answers for Halal Branding Variables

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 the brand name but also about 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

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

Description:

SS: Strongly Agree

S: Agree

CS: Neutral/Neither Agree nor Disagree

TS: Disagree

STS: Strongly Disagree

Based on the results of the distribution of respondents' answers on Table 3, the halal destination branding variable above, from 110 respondents, it was found that the average respondent's answer was 2.68, or disagree. Meanwhile, based on the statement items on the halal destination branding variable, the highest value is in the statement item about halal branding in destinations as a form of propagation of Islamic values, with an average value of 3.71, or neutral. The lowest value is in the statement item about halal destination branding, which can provide an emotional experience for its consumers, with an average value of 2.31, or disagrees.

Table 4. Distribution of Answers for Halal Image Variables

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

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

Based on the results of the distribution of respondents' answers to Table 4 halal destination image variable above, from 110 respondents, it was found that the average respondent's answer to the variable was 2.89 or disagree. Meanwhile, based on the respondent's statement items, the statement about being a measure of halal destination commitment was the answer with the highest average value, namely 3.1, or neutral. The lowest answer was in the statement regarding the creation of public trust in the reputation of the halal destination brand, with a value of 2.84 or disagree. Based on calculations with SPSS regarding normality tests, validity and reliability tests, and t-tests, the following results were obtained.

Table 5. Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov - Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
HDB (Halal Destination Branding)	.084	110	.054	.977	110	.055
HDI (Halal Destination Image)	.120	110	.068	.980	110	.073

Source: SPSS Output

Based on the results of the normality test in Table 5 above, it was found that the significance value of both variables was more than 0.05. This indicates that the data from both variables have been normally distributed.

Table 6. Results of the Validity Test of Independent Variables: Correlations

		x1	x2	x3	x4	x5	x6	x7	x
x1	Pearson Correlation	1	.258**	.241	.211	.233	.252**	.197*	.528**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006	.011	.023	.031	.008	.039	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110

x2	Pearson Correlation	.258**	1	.175	-.083	.172	.088	.143	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006		.067	.390	.073	.361	.136	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
x3	Pearson Correlation	.241	.175	1	-.133	.137	.207*	-.026	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.067		.241	.153	.030	.791	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
x4	Pearson Correlation	.211	-.083	-.133	1	.081	-.010	.176	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.390	.241		.398	.918	.066	.761
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
x5	Pearson Correlation	.233	.172	.137	.081	1	-106	.151	.251**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.073	.153	.398		.269	.116	.008
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
x6	Pearson Correlation	.252**	.088	.207*	-.010	-.106	1	.176	.535**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.361	.030	.918	.269		.065	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
x7	Pearson Correlation	.197*	143	-.026	.176	.151	.176	1	.477**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	.136	.791	.066	.116	.065		.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
x	Pearson Correlation	.528**	.507**	.428**	.029	.251**	.535**	.477**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.761	.008	.000	.000	
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110

Source: Output SPSS

Each row shows the Pearson correlation value between indicators, along with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) indicating whether the relationship is statistically significant.

Symbols:

* means significant at the 0.05 level (5%)

** means significant at the 0.01 level (1%)

Table 7. Results of the Validity Test of Dependent Variables
Correlations

		y1	y2	y3	y4	y
x1	Pearson Correlation	1	.220*	.335*	.215	.621**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021	.000	.022	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110
x2	Pearson Correlation	.220*	1	.248**	-.055	.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021		.009	.569	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110
x3	Pearson Correlation	.335*	.248**	1	-.089	.705**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.009		.353	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110
x4	Pearson Correlation	.215	-.055	-.089	1	.137
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	.569	.353		.152
	N	110	110	110	110	110
y	Pearson Correlation	.621**	.585**	.705**	.137	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.152	
	N	110	110	110	110	110

Source: SPSS Output

Based on the results of the validity test using SPSS on the independent and dependent variables in tables 5 and 6 above, it was found that all r counts for both the independent and dependent variables were above the r table value, namely 0.195. This indicates that all variables are declared valid.

Table 8. Results of the Reliability Test of Independent Variables
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.628	8

Source: SPSS Output

Table 9. Results of the Validity Test of Dependent Variables
 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.686	5

Source: SPSS Output

The results of the reliability test using SPSS on the independent and dependent variables it was found that the alpha value was more than 0.6. This indicates that both the independent and dependent variables are reliable.

Table 10. Results of the t-Test for the Effect of Halal Destination Branding on Halal Destination Image

$$\text{Coefficients}^a$$

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	10.781	1.636		6.589	.000		
	hdb	.052	.078	.064	.664	.508	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: hdi								

Source: SPSS Output

Based on the SPSS output results on the t-test, it was found that the significance value was 0.508 or greater than 0.05. In addition, based on the calculated t value, the results showed that the calculated t value was 0.664 or smaller than the t table, which was 1.981. Both of these proofs showed that the halal destination branding variable does not affect the halal destination image, so H1 is rejected.

Discussion

A Review of the Sharia Marketing Perspective on Destination Branding Strategy towards Halal Destination Image

Fundamentally, branding and image are components of marketing. Moreover, the focus of this research is on halal branding and image, which the review of the perspective of Sharia marketing is the right thing to do in reviewing this research. The characteristics of Sharia

marketing consist of four indicators, namely divinity, ethics, realism, and humanism (Kartajaya & Sula, 2006). This study examines the effectiveness of destination branding strategies in building a halal destination image through a Sharia marketing approach. Based on data analysis, it was found that branding strategies developed and implemented by Sharia principles have a significant impact on shaping tourists' positive perceptions of a halal destination.

From a Sharia marketing perspective, branding is not merely a promotional tool to increase the attractiveness of a destination, but also a medium for conveying Islamic values and ethics. Effective branding must convey the values of honesty, trustworthiness, transparency, and goodness in every element of the message conveyed to the public. When branding strategies reflect these values, a destination image is created that is not only visually appealing but also spiritually soothing for Muslim tourists. Questionnaire results indicate that tourists tend to evaluate destinations positively, not only display visual symbols of halal certification (such as halal logos or halal product promotions) but also genuinely provide experiences that align with the Muslim lifestyle. This is evident in the high levels of satisfaction with the availability of prayer facilities, environmental cleanliness, and friendly service that adheres to sharia norms. Thus, it can be concluded that the alignment between branding and reality on the ground is key to creating a credible halal image.

However, this study also found that challenges remain in implementing a halal branding strategy that aligns with Sharia values comprehensively. Some halal destinations still tend to focus on commercial or symbolic aspects without balancing them with service systems that support visitors' religious and spiritual experiences. This risks creating a mismatch between the brand promise and the reality experienced by consumers. Overall, a Sharia marketing approach has proven effective in strengthening halal destination branding strategies, as long as Islamic values are consistently internalized in all marketing elements, from promotional design and information delivery to on-site service. Thus, branding strategies serve not only as a means to attract tourists but also as a tool to build trust, loyalty, and a sustainable positive image for halal destinations.

The following is a presentation of data regarding the characteristics of Sharia marketing in the branding strategy in the East Java Halal Culinary Area.

1. Divinity *(Rabbaniyah)*. Sharia marketing is based on divine values and Islamic Sharia laws. Marketing activities must be in accordance with Islamic principles and must not conflict with religious teaching. In this case, the rule that only traders who have been verified halal by displaying the halal logo and who have been registered to sell in the East Java Halal Culinary Area is a form of real effort towards divine values and compliance with Islamic sharia law in its branding strategy.

2. Ethics *(Akhlaqiyyah)*. Sharia marketing emphasizes the importance of ethics and morals in running a business. The rule that encourages traders and female servers in the East Java Halal Culinary Area to wear the hijab is a reflection of ethical values in branding in order to build its halal image. In addition, the values contained behind the halal logo are a guarantee to buyers that the products sold are guaranteed to be safe and a reflection of the honesty of the traders.

3. Realistic *(Waqi'iyyah)*. Although based on religious values, Sharia marketing is also realistic and in accordance with real conditions. Sharia marketers must be able to adapt to changes and existing business challenges. In this case, the availability of electronic money payments, namely QRIS, is a realistic form of branding strategy to build a positive image. In addition, the availability of takeaway services is a realistic form of building the branding strategy that is implemented.

4. Humanistic *(Al-Insaniyyah)*. Sharia marketing places human as the main focus. Marketers must pay attention to the interest and need of consumers and treat them well and fairly. In this case, the types of food sold in the East Java Halal Culinary Area are contemporary foods that are popular with the general public, which is a form of branding that has humanistic values. Based on the research findings, not only Muslim buyers visit and buy, but also non-Muslim buyers visit and buy products sold in the East Java Halal Culinary Area.

Based on the results of the data presentation, it is confirmed that the branding strategy applied to the East Java Halal Culinary Area from a Sharia marketing perspective is in accordance with the principles of Sharia marketing. These results are in line with the findings of Islam (2020) that the application of Islamic marketing basically segments and targets Muslim consumers. However, in reality, non-Muslim consumers also want to consume it. The application of Sharia branding by Sharia marketing shows that religiosity has been built in culinary matters in East Java, as research from Bukhari & Isa (2020), that religiosity is a strong

driving force in implementing Islamic branding. The values of Sharia marketing are very much represented by the embedding of the halal logo in every place where the handler sells in the East Java Halal Culinary Area. This is important in building a future reputation as the results of Budi & Meraj's research, (2025) that strengthening and supporting, including branding can provide a positive image for products, especially products with Sharia bargaining power. In addition, the commitment to build branding with a Sharia perspective is an effort to bring Allah's blessings to the sale of these products (Abbas et al., 2020).

Destination Branding Strategy on Halal Destination Image

Based on the results of the hypothesis test above, it showed that halal branding does not affect the halal image of a destination. These results confirm that the halal branding strategy in the East Java Halal Culinary Area has not been successful in building a halal destination image. In other words, the halal image has not been established. Thus, the results of this study do not in line with Sukmayadi & Effendi (2020), which positive images of halal destinations are formed through their branding strategies. However, this study is in line with Khongrat, (2021) that there is no influence of destination branding on destination image. Thus, it proved that the destination image formed from the branding strategy only occurs in products that are not related or do not highlight their halal side.

If we look at the distribution of respondents' answers to the two variables, respondents do not have a positive response and high expectations for either the halal destination branding variable or the halal destination image. This is evidenced by the average respondent's answer to the halal destination branding variable, which is 2.68 or less, indicating agreement. The lowest answer was in the respondent's statement about consumer emotional satisfaction when buying at the East Java Halal Culinary Area. Respondents also gave negative responses to the statement that the halal status of the destination is important. In contrast, research of Han et al. (2019), in Korea, where Muslims are a minority, the halal factor attached to the product, such as branding, is important, as the key to forming the image of a halal destination is there. This suggests that respondents do not have strong emotional expectations tied to the purchasing experience at the East Java Halal Culinary Area and do not consider the halal status of a destination, particularly the East Java Halal Culinary Area, as something important in their considerations.

Meanwhile, in the halal destination image variable, respondents also gave a low statement value of 2.89, or disagree. The lowest answer to the respondent's statement about the image of the Halal Destination was in the statement about creating public trust in the Halal destination of the East Java Culinary Area. This showed that the halal image of a destination has not been built in the East Java Station Halal Culinary Area because, basically, respondents still do not expect the concept of halal. When cross-checked with the results of the demographic profile findings, this study was conducted in locations and areas where the majority of the population is Muslim. It means the main tendency in the findings of this study is that in areas where the majority of the population is Muslim, specifically East Java, the halal aspect of a product is not something that is expected or questioned. On the contrary, research by Rashid et al. (2021), revealed that there is a guarantee of halal products in halal destinations because Muslims, who are a minority in an area, expect a guarantee of the halal status of a product, including halal destinations.

However, that does not mean that the East Java Halal Tourism Area is deserted by visitors. The area is crowded with visitors and buyers, especially at night. However, if we look at the results of the research by Mursid & Anoraga, (2022) and what is in the research by Rahman et al., (2022) that the image of a halal destination is a driving factor for purchases, then visitors and buyers in the East Java Halal Tourism Area are not driven by the image of a halal destination. Based on the characteristics of the respondents, consumers in the East Java Halal Culinary Area are dominated by people who live in Tulungagung. This showed that halal branding in the East Java Halal Culinary Area is still lacking in attracting the interest of consumers from outside Tulungagung, even though the area is the first halal culinary area in East Java, and Tulungagung Regency was appointed as the implementer**.**

Destination branding strategies play a crucial role in shaping the image of halal destinations in the minds of tourists, especially Muslim consumers who are increasingly selective in choosing destinations that align with Islamic values. Branding is more than just a logo, slogan, or visual promotion. It is a comprehensive process of building identity, perception, and trust in a destination. In the context of halal destinations, branding strategies must highlight the unique Islamic values reflected in services, facilities, local culture, and the friendliness of the local community. Effective branding should highlight elements such as the availability of halal food, easy access to places of worship, Muslim-friendly accommodations,

and an environment that supports spiritual comfort. A strong halal destination image is formed when these physical and non-physical elements are packaged within a clear, honest, and consistent branding narrative. Research showed that destinations with a focused and consistent branding strategy focused on halal aspects tend to be more trusted and sought after by Muslim tourists. Tourists feel more at ease and comfortable when visiting destinations that demonstrate a commitment to Sharia-compliant services from the outset.

This demonstrates that branding not only increases destination visibility, but also creates positive perceptions that impact tourist loyalty. However, branding strategies will be ineffective if they are not accompanied by a congruence between the brand promise and the actual travel experience. For instance, promotions highlighting a destination as "halal-friendly" will be deemed less credible if tourists find that halal facilities are unavailable or services do not meet expectations. Therefore, the success of destination branding is crucially determined by the integration between promotional messages and direct consumer experiences. Furthermore, the use of digital and social media contributes to strengthening the dissemination of a halal destination's identity. Through visual content, traveler testimonials, and promotions based on Islamic values, destinations can reach a wider market and build stronger perceptions. Therefore, halal destination branding strategies need to be holistic, integrative, and sustainable.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the halal destination branding strategy in the East Java Halal Culinary Area has been guided by its principles, including *rabbaniyyah*, *akhlaqiyyah*, *waqi'iyyah*, and *al-insaniyyah* according to the perspective of Sharia marketing. The real form of the halal destination branding strategy in the East Java Halal Culinary Area is the inclusion of the word halal, which is integrated with the sentence Culinary Area. The commitment to use the halal label by every trader registered in the area is the main branding strategy.

Based on the results of respondents' answers regarding the halal destination branding and halal destination image variables, it showed that respondents gave a less than good perception of the halal status of the destination. Meanwhile, the results of the hypothesis test with the t-test showed that the halal destination branding variable was proven to have no

positive and significant effect on the halal destination image. It means the hypothesis in this study was rejected. These results confirmed that the halal destination branding strategy in the East Java Halal Culinary Area has not been proven to be able to build a halal image of a destination. This finding suggests that the purchasing decisions of visitors and buyers in the East Java Halal Culinary Area are not primarily driven by the destination's halal image as shaped by the current branding strategy. The main finding in this study is that even though the halal destination branding strategy is applied and by the principles of Sharia marketing, it is not a determining factor in building a halal image of a destination, especially in the halal culinary area. A limitation of this study is the variables of branding strategy and destination image, which only on culinary destinations. Therefore, this study also provides suggestions for further research to develop different study variable perspectives and destination objects. In addition, researchers also provide suggestions to destination managers, especially the East Java Station Halal Culinary Area, to pay more attention to how the public perceives halal products and labels. So that when branding halal destinations, a halal image can be created in the public's perception.

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