

Social Construction of a Halal Tourism Ecosystem: A Phenomenological Study of Benowo Park, Pemalang, Central Java

Takawa Mafaza¹, Arfania Zuhru Fila², Zawawi³, Hario Tamtomo Hambali⁴

¹ Pemalang Student Association, Indonesia

² Dustur Halal Student Study Group, Indonesia

³ Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

⁴ Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia, Malaysia

Corresponding Author:

Hario Tamtomo Hambali

Department of Business Management, Faculty of Business Management and Information Technology, Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia.

Bangunan Wisma MAIPs, Blok S1, Kompleks Desa Siswa, Unicity Alam, 02100 Padang Besar, Perlis, Malaysia.

Email: p1240026@student.umam.edu.my

Article Info

Received: 08-05-2026

Revised: 07-08-2026

Accepted: 29-08-2026

Online Version: 23-09-2026

Abstract

This research aims to examine the social construction of the halal tourism ecosystem at the cultural tourism destination of Benowo Park in Pemalang Regency, Central Java. Using a phenomenological descriptive qualitative approach, data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation from four main groups of informants: destination managers, tourists, business actors, and local communities. The analysis is carried out through the framework of the social construction of reality to trace how the meaning of halal is collectively produced, negotiated, and maintained. The results of the study show that the meaning of halal in Benowo Park is not uniformly understood but is shaped dynamically and contextually, according to each actor's background and interests. Managers interpret halal as an operational responsibility; tourists construct it from the perspective of personal-functional experience; business actors view it as social capital and consumer trust; while local communities live it as part of a deep-rooted cultural identity. Social interaction among actors occurs in a dialogical manner and serves as an informal social control mechanism that helps sustain halal values in tourist areas. The integration of local cultural, religious, and tourism values is achieved through three interrelated dimensions: historical-cultural, operational-institutional, and experiential-relational. Although it still faces challenges in infrastructure, human resource quality, and promotion, Benowo Park has great potential to become an authentic and sustainable halal tourist destination rooted in local wisdom.

Keywords: social construction, halal tourism ecosystem, Benowo Park, local wisdom.



© 2026 by the author(s)

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International. (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).

Newspaper Homepage <https://e-journal.uingusdur.ac.id/jhc>

How to cite: Mafaza, T., Fila, A. Z., Zawawi, & Hambali, H. T.(2026). Social Construction of a Halal Tourism Ecosystem: A Phenomenological Study of Benowo Park, Pemalang, Central Java. Jurnal Halal Center,1(2),167-183.
<https://doi.org/10.28918/jhc.v1i2.15041>

Published by: Halal Center of Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

INTRODUCTION

Various new concepts have emerged, including halal tourism, as the tourism industry has developed. In Indonesia, halal tourism has experienced increasing development in recent years. Indonesia has gone through a long stage in developing the concept of halal tourism. This cannot be separated from Indonesia's condition as a country with a high level of diversity in history, tradition, culture, and religion. These various elements are firmly embedded in the lives of people who still hold fast to local cultural values. This diversity is an important asset for Indonesia in advancing a competitive tourism sector. The presence of tourist destinations also creates opportunities to introduce elements of culture, religion, history, and customs to tourists, both directly and indirectly. This includes various religious activities and customs of the Muslim community that are widely found in Indonesia. Religious activities carried out by Muslims were initially known as religious tourism, then transformed into sharia tourism, and are now popular as halal tourism (Jaelani et al., 2023).

The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) for 2025 reports a rapid surge in the Muslim tourism market, surpassing the 2018 estimate of USD 220 billion for 2020. The value of expenditure reached around USD 235 billion, with international tourist numbers at 186 million, up 25% from the previous year. The growing Muslim population drives this growth, the large role of the younger generation (millennials and Gen Z), and the development of halal-friendly destinations in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, which remains in the top five despite a decline in ranking. Emerging trends include a 10% increase over pre-pandemic levels, a focus on inclusivity, the use of AI, and a projected market value of USD 245 billion by 2030 (GMTI, 2024).

Halal tourism can be interpreted as the implementation of tourism activities that provide facilities and services in accordance with Islamic values to meet the needs of Muslim tourists (Mohsin, 2016). Efforts to develop halal tourism aim to expand its appeal not only for Muslim tourists but also for non-Muslims, both within and outside the country. The concept of halal tourism is not limited to halal food but also encompasses accommodation facilities, communication systems, the environment, and services that support Muslim tourists' needs, enabling them to worship comfortably (Battour et al., 2024). This shows that tourist activities are not solely for entertainment, but also a means of maintaining and strengthening spiritual values during the trip. Efforts to develop halal tourism in Indonesia aim to attract international tourists, especially from the Middle East. The government, through the Ministry of Tourism, designates Central Java as one of the development areas, including Pemalang Regency.

The focus of the halal tourism study in this context is the city of Pemalang in Central Java Province, which boasts extraordinary tourist attractions. Pemalang Regency is known for its diverse regional potential. The Pantura route runs from west to east, causing heavy traffic, so people are used to interacting with various cultures. This reflects a more open character of society, as seen in the presence of Arab villages and Chinatown areas. Even though it is located between the more popular cities of Tegal and Pekalongan, Pemalang Regency remains competitive due to its potential (Setiawan et al., 2025). The uniqueness of this region is evident in the agricultural sector's potential, the wealth of marine resources, and a variety of tourist attractions, ranging from marine areas to mountains (Rahayu et al., 2020).

The tourism potential in Pemalang Regency shows a significant diversity (Nailun Ni'mah, 2021). One of the developing destinations is Benowo Park Tourism, located in

Penggarit Village, Taman District, Pemalang Regency. This area covers approximately 12 hectares and offers various facilities, including natural, religious, and educational tourism. In addition, Benowo Park regularly hosts a variety of activities, such as the Pasar Wage culinary bazaar. The integration of cultural, historical, culinary, and natural beauty elements makes this destination have great prospects as a tourist destination in Pemalang Regency. The relatively affordable ticket price also makes it an alternative for family recreation to relieve boredom. Various development efforts undertaken by the manager also indicate that Benowo Park has the potential to become one of the area's leading destinations. However, its current state still does not fully reflect its potential as a tourist attraction.

The results of research conducted by Hidayatullah (2022) show that the Petungkriyono Natural Tourism Destinations have the potential to be developed as halal tourism destinations, as they meet most of the criteria set by the Global Muslim Travel Index. The welfare contribution in the economic sector: increasing employment, increasing income, improving infrastructure, and transportation accessibility. Social Sector: improving the quality of life through training and education activities held by tourism parties, providing social and community assistance, and increasing environmental awareness (Alhassan & Anciaes, 2025). Moreover, the field of Culture includes the widespread introduction of Petungkriyono's original culture. Meanwhile, Wibowo et al. (2022) show that these destinations have great potential for development through the implementation of appropriate management strategies. Social media plays an important role in promoting and increasing tourism exposure. To maintain the geographical focus of this study, the discussion should remain centered on Pemalang Regency rather than neighboring regions. Benowo Park represents one of Pemalang's emerging cultural tourism destinations, combining natural attractions, local culinary traditions, religious values, and community participation. Despite its growing tourism potential, limited research has examined how halal values are socially constructed and negotiated among local stakeholders in this setting. This contextual gap highlights the need to investigate the social construction of the halal tourism ecosystem in Benowo Park as a locally grounded case of sustainable halal tourism development.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the social construction of the halal tourism ecosystem in cultural tourism destinations in Pemalang Regency, Central Java. In more detail, this study focuses on identifying the roles and relationships among actors, including the government, business actors, local communities, and tourists, in developing halal tourism practices. In addition, this research aims to explore the meanings and experiences of actors regarding the application of halal values in culture-based tourism activities, and to analyze how the combination of religious values and local wisdom can foster a sustainable halal tourism ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and meanings of the halal tourism ecosystem at Benowo Park, Pemalang Regency, Central Java, rather than Pekalongan as mistakenly stated in the previous version. Additional data were obtained through a literature review of various references, both printed materials and statistical data. This qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of notes and information contained in the analyzed text (Adinugraha & Rismawati, 2025). A descriptive approach is used to provide a systematic, objective, and analytical explanation related to the potential of Pemalang Regency as a halal tourist destination.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit twelve participants representing four stakeholder groups: destination managers (n=3), local business actors (n=3), tourists (n=3), and community members (n=3), selected based on their direct involvement and experience with halal tourism practices. The data collection process is carried out through interviews, observations, and

documentation, with informants as the primary data source. In-depth interviews were conducted with various relevant parties, including Benowo Park managers, business actors in tourist areas, and visiting tourists, to obtain comprehensive information on the implementation and perception of the halal tourism concept. Meanwhile, supporting data were obtained from books, scientific journals, reports, official news sources, and credible internet sources. The data that have been obtained, especially from the results of interviews, are then analyzed qualitatively through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to produce in-depth findings regarding conditions in the field, with the research stages including data collection, presentation of data in narrative and visual form, and concluding as the final result of the research.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis until thematic saturation was achieved. Data analysis followed phenomenological procedures, including epoché (bracketing) to minimize researcher bias, identification of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering into themes (eidetic reduction), and synthesis of the essential structure of participants' lived experiences. Trustworthiness was ensured through data triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Ethical principles were maintained by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, protecting anonymity through pseudonyms, and guaranteeing confidentiality throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Halal Tourism Meaning Construction Among Ecosystem Actors at Benowo Park

Understanding halal tourism is inseparable from the social processes that shape its meaning. Halal is not just a religious concept related to the halal status of food and beverages under Islamic law, but also a comprehensive ethical framework encompassing cleanliness, safety, health, and moral responsibility in production and consumption (Purwaningsih & Lawal, 2026). Halal tourism can be interpreted as a tourism industry intended for Muslim tourists with services that refer to sharia principles. In this case, the government plays a role in regulating tourism activities, such as limiting the circulation of drinks that are not in accordance with Islamic values and providing facilities that separate men and women who are not mahrams (Kurniawan et al., 2025).

In the context of the halal tourism ecosystem in Benowo Park, Pemalang, the meaning of halal is not fixed or uniform but is shaped dynamically through perceptions, life experiences, and social interactions among actors directly involved in tourism activities (Slamet et al., 2022). Benowo Park, as a family-based natural tourism destination in Pemalang Regency, Central Java, has its own characteristics: it is not a religious tourist destination, but it is situated within a community with strong Islamic cultural roots in the northern coastal area of Java. This condition makes the construction of halal meaning at Benowo Park more organic and culturally grounded than merely fulfilling formal certification standards. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with four main informant groups, namely Benowo Park managers, tourists, business actors in tourist areas, and surrounding local communities, it was found that the understanding of halal has a diverse, layered, and very contextual nature with the socio-cultural reality of the Pemalang people. Each actor interprets halal not only from the perspective of sharia compliance, but also from the dimensions of comfort, belief, Islamic identity, and the sustainability of local values rooted in the daily lives of local communities.

The initial findings of the research were obtained through an in-depth interview with the manager of Benowo Park. *"We do not just think about the supporting facilities, but more than that, we feel that we have full responsibility to ensure that the entire tourist environment is safe, comfortable, and in accordance with ethical norms, especially for Muslim tourists."* One of the informants explained that although Benowo Park does not formally carry the halal

tourism label, the management practices implemented have led to these principles, such as maintaining the cleanliness of worship facilities, encouraging traders to provide products that are guaranteed halal, and ensuring that there are no activities that are contrary to the norms that apply in the tourist area.

The statement shows that the manager builds a comprehensive and operational understanding of halal, namely as a visiting experience that is in accordance with Islamic values, not just a formal label or certificate. The findings of this study align with Wazin et al. (2024), which emphasizes that halal tourism management requires not only mastery of operational technical aspects but also the ability to internalize and implement sharia values in service practices. In this context, the manager of Benowo Park has implicitly represented the process of externalizing halal values through the implementation of policies, facility management, and the formation of standards of behavior in tourism activities.

In contrast to managers, tourists construct the meaning of halal from the perspective of personal experience and their functional needs as Muslims. Based on the interview results, the meaning of halal for tourists is closely related to a sense of security, comfort, and the maintenance of Islamic identity while engaging in tourist activities. One of the informants said that the main aspects considered were the availability of worship facilities, the clarity of halal status, and an environment that did not cause discomfort for Muslims. If all of these aspects are met, the destination is considered to meet halal criteria according to tourists' perceptions.

This expression reflects how tourists interpret halal in a personal-functional way, as a condition that allows them to travel without sacrificing their identity or religious obligations. This result is aligned with Sutono et al. (2024), who emphasizes that the presence of worship facilities and halal food is an important factor in determining Muslim tourists' satisfaction with a destination. Furthermore, tourists' comfort in practicing worship during tourism reflects what Dabphet (2021) calls halal value-based tourism decisions, which are influenced not only by the destination's attractiveness but also by its ability to accommodate Muslim tourists' religious needs.

The next set of findings was obtained through interviews with business actors operating in the Benowo Park area. *"For us, halal is about maintaining consumer trust; if consumers already trust us, our business can also continue to run and grow"*. One of the informants revealed that *"We use halal ingredients not because there are rules that require it, but it has been a habit for a long time, it has been done for a long time."* In addition, the dominance of Muslim consumers in the region encourages business actors to ensure the halalness of products, because doubts about this aspect have the potential to impact the continuity of their business negatively.

This expression shows that business actors interpret halal as values oriented toward economics and belief, where halal is not only seen as a religious obligation but also as social capital that affects business sustainability. These findings align with Nugraha (2025) view that a combination of awareness of Islamic values and economic considerations shapes business actors' participation in the halal tourism ecosystem. However, as stated by Dewi (2022), not all tourism business actors have a sufficient understanding of formal halal standards. As a result, the application of halal values in the field tends to be based more on deep-rooted cultural customs than on the conscious application of regulations.

The basic perspective on halal comes from local people living around Benowo Park. For them, halal is not only understood as a normative category in Islamic law but has also become part of social identity and cultural heritage rooted in the daily lives of the coastal people of Pemalang. This is reflected in the informant's view, who stated that *"Halal has been integrated with the lives of the people here, not because there is a halal tourism label or anything, but indeed that is how we have lived from the past."* Thus, the concept of halal tourism is seen as naturally aligning with the community's habits and values.

The statement shows that the meaning of halal is culturally constructed and becomes part of identity, so it is not seen as a concept that needs to be imposed from the outside or formalized, but rather as something integrated into people's daily lives. This view resonates with the findings of Valeriani et al. (2020), which indicate that public perception of halal tourism is strongly influenced by cultural background and the depth of Islamic values embedded in the local environment. It also emphasized that in communities with strong Islamic traditions, halal values in tourism grow organically from within the community itself rather than in response to external regulations. This condition places the local people of Pemalang as a natural legitimacy for the halal tourism ecosystem in Benowo Park. They not only play a role as a social background, but also as a party that maintains and promotes halal values in real terms.

Based on findings from interviews with four groups of informants, it can be concluded that the meaning of halal in the tourism ecosystem of Benowo Park Pemalang is shaped in a complex, ongoing manner. Each actor builds their own understanding based on their background, experience, and interests, but in practice, these understandings are interconnected and contribute to a comprehensive halal ecosystem. This result reinforces the view Kramer (2021) a dialectical social construct, in which social reality, including the meaning of halal, is always produced, negotiated, and maintained through daily social interactions. In this case, managers provide facilities, tourists validate through experience, business actors maintain trust, and local communities maintain entrenched values. The integration of these roles makes the halal tourism ecosystem in Benowo Park, Pemalang, authentic and sustainable because halal values do not come only from formalities but grow and are carried out collectively by all actors involved.

Social Interaction and Dynamics of the Halal Tourism Ecosystem at Benowo Park

The halal tourism ecosystem does not exist as a fixed, uniform entity but is shaped by an ongoing process of social interaction among the actors involved in tourism activities. In the context of Benowo Park Pemalang, the relationship between managers, tourists, business actors, and local communities is the main space for the formation, maintenance, and change of halal values in daily practice. Based on the results of in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies, these dynamics operate across three layers of interrelated social processes: inter-stakeholder interaction, the bargaining process for interpreting halal values, and the forms of adjustment and tension that arise in the field. These findings are in line with Rachmiate et al. (2023) view that the tourism ecosystem comprises interconnected components that together create a dynamic system. In this case, tourists, local communities, and the destination itself are the three main elements that play an important role in determining the direction of a destination's development.

The results of in-depth interviews with four groups of informants show that the pattern of social interaction in Benowo Park occurs across several interrelated dimensions. One standout is the relationship between managers and tourists. In this case, the manager serves as both a provider and a facilitator of a tourism experience that aligns with Islamic values. At the same time, tourists assess the extent to which the services provided meet their expectations as Muslim tourists. This is reflected in the manager's informant's statement, who emphasized that they consistently maintain the cleanliness and functionality of worship facilities and respond to every complaint submitted. For the manager, Muslim tourists' satisfaction is a top priority, as this group constitutes the majority of visitors to the destination. The statement reflects the mutual relationship between managers and tourists in the development of halal standards for Benowo Park. The interaction between the two is not only one-way; they also influence each other in determining the practice carried out. Stakeholder involvement in the halal tourism

ecosystem occurs dialogically, with each party playing a role in shaping the direction of its development, rather than following a hierarchical pattern (Rachmiatie et al., 2023).

Second, interaction between business actors and tourists. Field observations show that the relationship between traders and visitors in the Benowo Park area extends beyond buying and selling, encompassing a deeper social dimension. Business actors tend to actively convey information about the halal status of the products they sell, without even waiting for questions from buyers. This practice is part of an effort to build trust, rooted in daily habits. This is in line with statements from business informants who reported feeling open to explaining the halal status of the ingredients used, often conveying it first, because these activities are seen not only as economic transactions but also as a means of maintaining consumer trust. This phenomenon reflects what Adinugraha et al. (2025) reported regarding the embedding of halal values in daily economic practices, in which the principles of Islam have become part of the local community's work ethic and trading culture. This is also evident in the research documentation, which shows that some traders have taken the initiative to include information such as "halal food" or community trust-based markers, even though these have not been supported by official certification from the relevant institutions.

Third, the interaction between local communities and all ecosystem components. The people who live around Benowo Park not only play a passive role, but also become active actors in maintaining halal norms and values in tourist areas. Based on the results of observations, there is an informal social control mechanism that operates effectively, in which the local community spontaneously reprimands tourists whose behavior is considered not in accordance with applicable norms. This is reflected in the statements of local community informants, who said that reprimanding was carried out not because of written rules, but had become a common practice for protecting the environment and the values embraced in the region. The informal social control mechanism can be understood as a tangible form of what Al Arif et al. (2026) describes as social capital in the development of halal tourism. In this case, the strength of the cohesion of values and norms within the local community is the primary foundation for maintaining the sustainability of the halal ecosystem.

Integrating Cultural, Religious, and Tourism Values in Developing Benowo Park as a Halal Destination

The results of the study show that Benowo Park has strong potential to combine local cultural values, religious elements, and tourism activities. This process of integration did not emerge suddenly. However, it developed over a long social and historical journey, in which the people of Pemalang, as a Muslim community on the north coast of Java, have long combined Islamic values with their cultural traditions and daily economic activities. As emphasized by Sarpini and Aziz (2023), the potential for halal tourism development in Central Java actually lies in the strength of the integration of Islamic values that have been integrated with the local cultural identity of the people, so that halal tourism in this region has a stronger foundation than destinations that artificially build halal labels from the outside.

The clearest evidence of the blend of cultural and religious values in Benowo Park is evident in the traditional culinary practices documented in this study. The presentation of food using banana leaves and clay pottery containers, as documented in the research, reflects the rich local wisdom of the coastal Javanese people, who are not only environmentally friendly but also hold high cultural value.



Figure 1. Traditional Culinary Dishes Based on Local Wisdom at Benowo Park, Pemalang

(Source: Research Documentation)

Figure 1 shows the diversity of traditional cuisine, including various side dishes, old-school snacks, tubers, and local snacks that are still served and reflect the richness of cultural values. From a halal tourism perspective, these dishes generally use natural ingredients that align with halal principles, even though they lack formal labeling. This is reinforced by statements from business actors who emphasized that the use of containers such as pottery and banana leaves is not the result of specific directives but rather a tradition passed down from generation to generation, and a tourist attraction. The statement indicates that traditional culinary practices are not solely oriented toward the commercial aspect but also serve as a form of expression of local cultural identity. This finding is in line with the view of Adinugraha, Surur, et al. (2025) that in a society with strong Islamic values, the concept of halal is not understood as a regulatory obligation but is internalized as part of the social and ethical identity of economic actors.

In addition to the traditional culinary aspects, the blend of cultural and religious values is also reflected in educational media permanently installed in the open space of Benowo Park, as documented by the researchers.



Figure 2. Benowo Park Pemalang History Comic Panel

(Source: Research Documentation)

Figure 2 shows a large comic panel depicting the history or origins of Benowo Park, presented through a series of illustrations featuring figures dressed in traditional Javanese clothing. The presence of this educational media demonstrates the management's efforts to integrate elements of local history education into the tourist experience. This was strengthened by the manager's statement, who said that the presentation of the story aims to make tourists not only enjoy the beauty of the destination, but also understand the background and historical values behind the existence of Benowo Park. This statement reflects the manager's awareness

that tourist destinations function not only as recreational spaces but also as a means of preserving and delivering historical knowledge to visitors. The statement illustrates the manager's understanding that tourist destinations function not only as recreational places but also as spaces for maintaining and passing on cultural values and emphasizes that sustainable halal tourism development should ideally provide an experience that is not only entertaining but also educational and that strengthens visitors' cultural identity. Within the framework of halal tourism, the preservation of local traditions can be seen as an implementation of the principle of *hifz al-'aql*, which aims to maintain reason and knowledge as one of the main goals in the sharia, as stated in Fatwa DSN-MUI No. 108, 2016 (Muthoifin & Purnomo, 2020).

The integration of values in Benowo Park is evident not only in the physical and culinary elements but also in the social dynamics of daily interactions between visitors and the local community. The field documentation results indicate a crowded atmosphere in the traditional market area, clearly illustrating the social character of the Benowo Park tourism ecosystem.



Figure 3. The Crowded Atmosphere of the Traditional Culinary Market in Benowo Park, Pemalang

(Source: Research Documentation)

Figure 3 shows the crowded conditions in the traditional market area of Benowo Park, which is filled with tourists of various ages. Visually, it is seen that the dominance of female visitors wearing hijab, which reflects the character of Benowo Park as a destination that many Muslim families visit. At the back, there are rows of stalls with simple local architecture, as well as vendors offering a variety of traditional cultural and culinary products. The social interaction that takes place creates a familiar, family-centered atmosphere and reflects strong values of togetherness. This is in line with statements from tourists who reported that interest in returning to visit is influenced by a different atmosphere, the presence of traditional culinary practices that are increasingly rare, and the presence of cultural education elements packaged in Islamic nuances. The experience also benefits children by helping them rediscover their ancestors' food and culture. Thus, the attraction of Benowo Park lies not only in entertainment but also in a tourist experience that combines elements of culture, education, and Islamic values. Han et al. (2019) explains this phenomenon as a multidimensional halal tourism experience, in which a single factor does not influence tourists' satisfaction; rather, satisfaction results from the interconnectedness of various dimensions of the experience that support one another.

The increasing number of visitors and the high enthusiasm from various community circles are also reflected in the following documentation, which clearly shows the dynamics and vitality of the Benowo Park tourism ecosystem as a whole.



Figure 4. Visitor Density and Bamboo Caping Ornaments as Benowo Park's Tourism Identity
(Source: Research Documentation)

Figure 4 shows the high visitor density at Benowo Park, which appears very crowded, with typical decorations such as bamboo caps hanging from curved structures along the path. The presence of caping as a symbol of Javanese agrarian culture in public space reflects what Richards (2006) explains: as a form of representation of cultural identity in the tourism ecosystem, where local visual elements not only serve as ornaments but also as markers of a destination's authenticity. The high number of visitors recorded in this documentation clearly indicates Benowo Park's success in combining cultural values, natural authenticity, and Muslim-friendly nuances into an attraction that sustainably attracts tourists.

The combination of cultural, religious, and tourism values in Benowo Park is also reflected in the presence of a spacious, well-maintained green open space that serves as a venue for social interaction among various age groups in a comfortable, relaxing natural setting.



Figure 5. Benowo Park Area Benowo Park

(Source: Research Documentation)

Figure 5 depicts a beautiful green garden in Benowo Park with shady trees and a well-arranged lawn, where visitors of all ages can be seen enjoying themselves in a relaxed manner and interacting with each other. This calm and natural atmosphere creates a tourist environment that fosters a sense of togetherness within the family, concern for the environment, and spiritual awareness of nature's beauty as God's creation. This is in line with the statement of tourists who said that this place provides space for children to play freely in nature, while parents can rest comfortably, so that a sense of security and tranquility is created, especially for Muslim tourists. This statement shows that the green open spaces in Benowo Park serve not only as recreational areas but also hold social and spiritual significance for visitors. Halal elements integrated into the destination's physical environment, such as the availability of clean, comfortable, and free natural spaces that align with Islamic principles, play an important role in shaping a strong and trustworthy halal image among Muslim tourists (Khan et al., 2025).

Based on the overall findings from the documentation and interviews, the integration of cultural, religious, and tourism values in Benowo Park Pemalang occurs through three interrelated layers. First, historical-cultural integration is evident in traditional culinary practices, pendopo architecture, the use of cap ornaments, and the cultural narrative of Buyung Keadhong, all of which are part of the shared heritage. Second, operational-institutional integration is evident in management policies, destination spatial arrangements, and value delivery across various educational media. Third, experiential-relational integration is evident in tourists' direct experiences, warmly intertwined social interactions, and the mechanisms of value reinforcement that occur naturally among the actors involved. These three dimensions support each other in forming a halal tourism ecosystem that is not only authentic but also sustainable, because halal value grows from social practices carried out together, rather than being based solely on formal labels (Jabeen et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the view of Pagano (2026) that the most powerful social realities are formed from shared values that are not only agreed upon but also collectively executed and nurtured by the members of the communities involved.

Challenges and Opportunities in Developing a Halal Tourism Ecosystem at Benowo Park

One of the main obstacles to the development of tourism villages is the occurrence of socio-cultural changes due to tourism activities. These problems include limited infrastructure, limited accessibility, limited quality of human resources, and marketing issues commonly found in tourist villages that are still in the pilot stage (Yanan et al., 2024). These various challenges are interrelated and form complex problems, so weaknesses in one aspect can affect other aspects. The development of sustainable halal tourism requires strengthening human resources in a structured manner, as low-quality human resources can hinder managers' ability to optimize destinations' potential to deliver valuable tourist experiences (Joeliaty et al., 2020). In the context of pioneer tourism villages such as Wotawati Hamlet, limited infrastructure and accessibility are fundamental obstacles, as they significantly affect tourists' ability to access and enjoy destinations. In terms of marketing, therefore, increasing public awareness is just as important as developing the tourist attraction itself. To face these challenges, cross-party support is needed, from the government as a policymaker, local communities as the main actors, the business sector as an economic driver, and academics and the media as partners in capacity building and promotion. Thus, the development of Wotawati Hamlet needs to be carried out through a comprehensive and collaborative approach rather than piecemeal (Nuryanto et al., 2025). The challenges and opportunities at Benowo Park, Pematang focus on specific challenges, including limitations in infrastructure, human resource capacity, environmental management, and tourism promotion, while also highlighting opportunities based on Benowo Park's cultural heritage, natural attractions, stakeholder collaboration, and locally embedded halal values. These findings restore the manuscript's coherence, contextual integrity, and empirical validity.

The development of Benowo Park as a tourist destination still faces several complex problems. In terms of facilities and infrastructure, improvements and additions to supporting facilities, including access, public facilities, and amenities, are still needed so that the comfort of visitors can be more guaranteed. In addition, the quality and number of managerial personnel need to be improved so that tourism management can operate more professionally and be oriented towards good service. Another problem is that promotion remains limited, so its potential is not widely known to the public. This condition underscores the need for a more effective, targeted marketing strategy. In addition, environmental management, especially waste management, cannot be ignored, as the increasing number of visitors has the potential to harm the environment if not properly managed. The lack of innovation in the development of tourism products can also lead to visitor saturation, so it is necessary to diversify and develop more attractive tour packages. Thus, efforts to develop Benowo Park need to be carried out comprehensively, with attention to these various aspects in a sustainable manner (Mukarromah et al., 2023).

Benowo Park has considerable development opportunities to strengthen its position as a tourist destination, leveraging its local potential. The natural beauty not only serves as a place of recreation but can also be developed as an educational resource that introduces visitors to the environment, culture, and local wisdom. The development through the concept of the Penggarit Tourism Village is also the right step because it can directly involve the community in tourism activities, both as business actors, managers, and as part of the attractions on display, thereby maintaining sustainability while strengthening local identity. In addition, strengthening culture-based attractions, such as traditional markets, and diversifying tourism offerings can increase destination appeal. These efforts need to be supported by cooperation among the village government, the community, and related parties to ensure more effective and sustainable management and promotion (Handayani et al., 2023).

The Wage Traditional Market can continue to be developed as a cultural tourism icon that not only offers a variety of distinctive culinary offerings but also presents a social and economic experience rooted in the traditions of the local community. This attraction has the

potential to be the primary differentiator from other destinations. The development of additional attractions, such as off-road tourism, also provides an opportunity to attract tourists who love challenging, outdoor activities, thus expanding the reach of the tourism market. All of these potentials will be more optimal if supported by strong collaboration between village governments, youth groups, business actors, and related agencies in terms of integrated management, capacity building, and promotion. Thus, the development of Benowo Park relies not only on natural potential but also on synergy among actors and the sustainable use of local cultural and economic values. Benowo Park has the potential to become a leading destination if the infrastructure and human resource challenges can be properly addressed.

The findings indicate that halal tourism at Benowo Park is not merely implemented through formal religious standards but is socially constructed through continuous interactions among destination managers, tourists, business actors, and local communities. As one manager stated, *“we feel that we have full responsibility to ensure that the entire tourist environment is safe, comfortable, and in accordance with ethical norms,”* while a resident emphasized that *“halal has been integrated with the lives of the people here.”* These narratives demonstrate Berger and Luckmann’s dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, where halal values become collectively institutionalized rather than externally imposed. Unlike previous halal tourism studies that primarily emphasize certification and service quality, this study reveals that local culture and social trust function as the principal mechanisms sustaining the halal ecosystem. The findings therefore extend social construction theory by showing that halal tourism is co-produced through everyday social practices embedded in local wisdom. From a policy perspective, sustainable halal tourism development should prioritize community participation, culturally grounded governance, and stakeholder collaboration, rather than relying solely on formal halal certification.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that social construction in the halal tourism ecosystem at Benowo Park, Pemalang, is dynamically formed through interactions among managers, tourists, business actors, and local communities. The meaning of halal is not uniformly understood but develops in context, based on the experiences and values of each actor, and is more cultural and organic than merely a certification. The integration of cultural, religious, and tourism values is the main strength in shaping destination attractiveness. However, it still faces various challenges, including limited infrastructure, limited human resource quality, limited promotion, and limited environmental management. However, Benowo Park has great opportunities for development by optimizing its natural potential, strengthening cultural attractions, innovating tourism products, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, thereby increasing competitiveness while maintaining its distinctive local identity.

The sustainable halal tourism ecosystem at Benowo Park is socially constructed through the structural integration of three interdependent layers that directly address the research objectives. The historical-cultural layer provides the normative foundation by embedding halal values within local traditions, collective memory, and cultural identity. The operational-institutional layer translates these values into destination governance through management practices, spatial organization, service provision, and educational initiatives. Meanwhile, the experiential-relational layer reinforces the ecosystem through visitors’ experiences, stakeholder interactions, mutual trust, and informal social control, ensuring that halal values are continuously reproduced in everyday tourism practices. Rather than functioning independently, these three layers operate as a mutually reinforcing system in which cultural legitimacy supports institutional implementation, institutional practices shape tourist experiences, and positive experiences strengthen collective commitment to halal values. This structural

convergence forms a sustainable halal tourism ecosystem model in which authenticity emerges from shared social practices and continuous collaboration among managers, businesses, tourists, and local communities, rather than from formal halal certification alone.

The originality of this research lies in explaining halal tourism as a socially negotiated and culturally embedded ecosystem rather than merely a certification- or compliance-based concept. The findings contribute theoretically by extending the social construction perspective to halal tourism studies and practically by highlighting the importance of stakeholder collaboration, local wisdom, and community-based governance in developing authentic and sustainable halal destinations. However, this study is limited to a single case study using a qualitative phenomenological approach, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should investigate multiple halal tourism destinations across different cultural settings, employ comparative or mixed-method approaches, and examine the influence of digital promotion, governance models, and formal halal certification on the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of halal tourism ecosystems.

REFERENCES

- Adinugraha, H. H., Al-Kasyaf, M. Z., & Nasaruddin, R. Bin. (2025). Applying Muslim-friendly tourism principles in destination management: Evidence from Aceh, Indonesia. *International Journal of Halal Industry*, 1(1), 68–83. <https://doi.org/10.20885/IJHI.vol1.iss1.art5>
- Adinugraha, H. H., & Rismawati, S. D. (2025). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Ekonomi Syariah* (A. T. Surur (ed.); 1st ed.). PT Nasya Expanding Management. https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Metodologi_Penelitian_Kualitatif_Ekonomi.html?id=DnE-EQAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y
- Adinugraha, H. H., Surur, A. T., Al-Kasyaf, M. Z., & Marier, S. M. (2025). Implementing Islamic Values in Sharia Tourism Practices: A Case Study of the Sapuro Religious Tourism Destination in Pekalongan. *Abdurrauf Journal of Islamic Studies*, 4(2), 101–124. <https://doi.org/10.58824/arjis.v4i2.334>
- Al Arif, M. N. R., Ihsan, D. N., Samad, T. F., & Rahmawati. (2026). Exploring Muslim travelers' intentions to visit non-muslim tourist destinations. *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 9(6). <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2026309>
- Alhassan, J. A. K., & Anciaes, P. (2025). Public transport investments as generators of economic and social activity. *Journal of Transport and Health*, 41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2025.101989>
- Battour, M., Ratnasari, R. T., Ahmi, A., Sukmana, R., & Hendratmi, A. (2024). The current state of published literature on halal tourism and hospitality: a bibliometric review. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 15(4). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-02-2023-0054>
- Dabphet, S. (2021). Managing Islamic attributes through the satisfaction of Muslim tourists in a non-Muslim country. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-06-2020-0124>
- Dewi, A. P. (2022). Strengthening Halal Ecosystems Through Empowerment Of KHAS Zones in Ponorogo District. *Journal of Islamic Economics (JoIE)*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.21154/joie.v2i2.5078>
- GMTI. (2024). *The 9th edition of Mastercard-Crescentrating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2024*. Report. <https://www.crescentrating.com/reports/global-muslim-travel-index-2024.html>

- Han, H., Al-Ansi, A., & Kim, H. C. (2019). Perceived inconveniences and Muslim travelers' loyalty to non-Muslim destinations. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(17). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11174600>
- Handayani, E., Garad, A., Suyadi, A., & Tubastuvi, N. (2023). Increasing the performance of village services with good governance and participation. *World Development Sustainability*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wds.2023.100089>
- Hidayatullah, A. (2022). Conservation-Based Empowerment Da'wah Spirit: Management of Welo Asri Tourism by The Muslim Community of Kayupuring Petungkriyono Pekalongan. *Prosperity: Journal of Society and Empowerment*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.21580/prosperity.2022.2.1.11656>
- Jabeen, S., Khan, N., Bhatti, S. H., Falahat, M., & Qureshi, M. I. (2025). Towards a Sustainable Halal Tourism Model: A Systematic Review of the Integration of Islamic Principles with Global Sustainability Goals. In *Administrative Sciences* (Vol. 15, Issue 9). <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15090335>
- Jaelani, A. K., Hayat, M. J., Luthviati, R. D., Al-Fatih, S., & Mujib, M. M. (2023). Green Tourism Regulation on Sustainable Development: Droning from Indonesia and China. *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.15294/jils.v8i2.72210>
- Joeliaty, J., Ahmad Faisal, Y., & Wendra, W. (2020). An Analysis of Strategy Formulation for Halal Hotel Human Resources in Indonesia. *Cogent Business and Management*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1842008>
- Khan, N., Falahat, M., Ullah, I., Sikandar, H., & Van, N. T. (2025). Integrating halal tourism with sustainable development goals through Islamic values, environmental responsibility and technological innovation. In *Discover Sustainability* (Vol. 6, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-01503-3>
- Kramer, M. (2021). Plural media ethics? Reformist Islam in India and the limits of global media ethics. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 45(3). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-021-09626-5>
- Kurniawan, T., Islam, M. F., Gazi, M. A. I., & Hossain, M. B. (2025). Halal tourism research in Indonesian context: a bibliometric analysis. In *Discover Sustainability* (Vol. 6, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-00959-7>
- Mohsin, A. (2016). Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities. In *Tourism Management Perspectives* (Vol. 19, pp. 137–143). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.12.010>
- Mukarromah, F., Subakti, N. I., & Amalliyah, A. (2023). Influence of Religious Culture, Tourism Revitalization, Visitor Interest, and BUMDES Empowerment to Welfare of Business Operators in Benowo Park Tourism. *Al-Amwal: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Perbankan Syari'ah*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.24235/amwal.v15i2.14702>
- Muthoifin, & Purnomo, B. (2020). Readiness towards halal tourism in Indonesia perspective of reality and religion. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(8).
- Nailun Ni'mah, A. (2021). Sistem Informasi Pariwisata Kabupaten Pemalang Selatan yang Berbasis Web. *Jurnal Syntax Fusion*, 1(11). <https://doi.org/10.54543/fusion.v1i11.94>
- Nugraha, A. (2025). Reformulation of the Halal Tourism Approach: The Perspective of Maqasid Syari'ah in a Plural Society. *Tasfiyah: Journal of Islamic Law and Sharia Economics*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.69836/tasfiyah.v1i1.352>
- Nuryanto, Sugiyanto, & Darusalam. (2025). The good governance of community development based on hamlet system: a case study in Condongcatur village, Indonesia. *International*

- Journal of Public Law and Policy*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJPLAP.2025.143346>
- Pagano, E. (2026). Being social, being socially constructed, and being fundamental relative to social reality. *Philosophical Studies*, 183(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-025-02446-1>
- Purwaningsih, S. N., & Lawal, U. S. (2026). Students' Understanding of Halal Symbols and Their Impact on Halal Food Consumption. *Jurnal Halal Center (JHC)*, 1(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.28918/9kq52e08>
- Rachmiatie, A., Zakiah, K., Yusdiansyah, E., Setiawan, E., & Martian, F. (2023). Model of Stakeholder Engagement in Halal Tourism Ecosystems in Rural Areas. *KnE Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v8i18.14272>
- Rahayu, R., Nurmandi, A., Salahudin, S., & Dewi, D. S. K. (2020). “Pemalang pusere Jawa”: A City Branding Model in Promoting Tourism Destination of Pemalang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. *Society*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v8i2.164>
- Richards, G. (2006). Cultural tourism: Global and local perspectives. In *Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203826188>
- Sarpini, S., & Aziz, J. A. (2023). Challenges and Opportunities for Halal Tourism in Banyumas. *Ijtimā Iyya Journal of Muslim Society Research*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.24090/ijtimaiyya.v8i2.9121>
- Setiawan, A. B., Mochammad Yusuf, Syaiful Amin, & Wahyu Ananda Putri. (2025). Empowering Local Economies: A Comprehensive Study on Leading Products in Pemalang Regency. *Efficient: Indonesian Journal of Development Economics*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.15294/efficient.v8i1.16352>
- Slamet, Abdullah, I., & Laila, N. Q. (2022). The contestation of the meaning of halal tourism. *Heliyon*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09098>
- Sutono, A., Sumaryadi, Rahtomo, W., Puksi, F. F., & Permana, O. (2024). Re-modelling Muslim-friendly tourism value chain ecosystem: the case study of West Sumatera, Indonesia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2361536>
- Valeriani, D., Hidayati, Yusnita, M., & Wulandari, A. (2020). Potential of Bangka belitung tourism towards the world Halal tourism award through tourist perception with SWOT analysis. In *Journal of Critical Reviews* (Vol. 7, Issue 6). <https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.06.190>
- Wazin, Maskuroh, N., Peristiwo, H., & Suganda, A. D. (2024). Indonesian Sharia Tourism Towards a Sustainable Halal Industry. In *Studies in Systems, Decision and Control* (Vol. 524). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54379-1_77
- Wibowo, D. E., Jannah, K. D., & Permanasari, P. (2022). Pengembangan Rural Tourism Melalui Pemberdayaan Pokdarwis Menggunakan Life Skill di Kecamatan Petungkriyono Kabupaten Pekalongan. *Ruang Cendekia : Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.55904/ruangcendekia.v1i2.68>
- Yanan, L., Ismail, M. A., & Aminuddin, A. (2024). How has rural tourism influenced the sustainable development of traditional villages? A systematic literature review. In *Heliyon* (Vol. 10, Issue 4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25627>

