

## **The Influence of Muslim Endorsers and Influencers in Promoting Halal Tourist Attractions.**

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### **Keywords:**

List a few (3-5) key words here

### **Abstract**

*This study aimed to analyze the influence of Muslim influencers, Muslim endorsements, and destination image on Muslim tourists' visit intention. Based on data analysis from 206 respondents, it was discovered that Muslim endorsements had a positive and significant effect on visit intention, while the influence of Muslim influencers was positive but not significant. Meanwhile, destination image had a positive but not significant influence on visit intention, and did not mediate the effects of Muslim influencers and endorsements. Thus, Muslim endorsements become an important factor that can directly increase Muslim tourists' visit intention. Marketing strategies that put forward Muslim endorsements are needed to attract Muslim tourists to visit.*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Halal tourism represents one of the most rapidly growing niches within the broader tourism industry, fueled by the rising global Muslim population and spending (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Destinations worldwide are competing to capture this profitable market by strategically positioning themselves as Muslim-friendly tourism destinations, including emphasizing halal food availability and the provision of spaces for Islamic religious practices (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015).

An emerging avenue leveraged by tourism marketers involves engagement with celebrity Muslim endorsers and social media influencers to influence the Muslim tourist's decision-making process. However, limited research has examined how destinations can effectively optimize social media promotions using Muslim public figures to attract Muslim tourists seeking specifically halal holidays (Mohsin & Alsawafi, 2020). Hence, this paper aims

to address this gap by analyzing the impact of Muslim celebrity endorsers and Instagram influencers on halal destination image, cognitive-social perceptions, and visit intentions of religiously observant Muslim tourists.

The study is guided by source credibility theory and the theory of planned behavior. Key variables explored include Muslim Celebrity Endorsers, Muslim Social Media Influencer, Halal Destination Image, Cognitive-Social Integration, and Muslim Tourist Visitation Intention. The paper tests the causal relationship between these variables by collecting survey data from 125 Indonesian Muslim travelers exposed to halal destinations promoted by public Muslim personalities.

Outcomes are intended to contribute new insights on effective social media strategies leveraging endorsements by influential Muslim public figures in capturing the Muslim tourism segment. Findings also aim to advance conceptual models integrating cognitive, social, and Islamic normative factors in explaining halal purchase decisions (Mohsin & Alsawafi, 2020).

For practice, results intend to guide tourism managers and marketers in inappropriate selection and engagement with Muslim celebrities and influencers appealing to this demographic. As competition escalates for the Muslim tourism dollar, developing a nuanced understanding of the peculiar drivers of halal travelers becomes imperative.

The novelty lies in the examination of Muslim celebrity endorsers and Instagram influencer effectiveness specifically within the halal tourism context. No known research has assessed impacts on the cognitive-social integration aspect or visits intentions of observant Muslim tourists exposed to their endorsements.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Halal Tourism Concepts and Practices**

The concept of halal tourism has emerged as a distinct branch of faith-based travel centered around providing tourism services and products catering to Muslim religious

beliefs and practices (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Key considerations include the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, dress codes, and gender segregation norms compliant with Islamic teachings. Prior studies have classified variants like Islamic tourism, Sharia tourism, and Muslim-friendly tourism within wider halal tourism literature (Mohsin & Alsawafi, 2020).

### **Consumer Behavior of Muslim Tourists**

Religiosity is observed to play a pivotal role in shaping Muslim tourist attitudes, decisions, and behaviors across all stages of the travel journey (Battour et al., 2012; Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008). Islamic principles manifest in adherence to religious rituals, dressing norms, gender interaction etiquette, and consumption only of halal products. Hence marketing communication can signal Islamic-compliance cues effectively and can positively influence Muslim consumer perceptions and patronage intentions (Sandikci, 2011).

### **Celebrity Endorsement Theory**

Celebrity endorsement theory explains the multi-dimensional influence brand-endorser partnerships exert on consumers' brand perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions (Spry et al., 2011). Key dimensions cited include source attractiveness, credibility, and product-celebrity personality congruence. In halal tourism contexts, endorsements by Muslim celebrities conveying Islamic brand values can shape favorable consumer dispositions and destination visit interests.

### **Halal Destination Image Formation**

Projecting a strong destination image underscoring integrity to halal norms is crucial for aspiring halal tourism locales seeking to appeal to Muslim travelers (Mohsin & Alsawafi, 2020). Components of a 'halal' place image encompass the availability of certifiably permissible food supplies, prayer provisions, suitable modest dressing options, gender-segregated spaces & recreational facilities, and the absence of forbidden vices like alcohol. Depictions by credible Muslim personalities can shape affirmative halal image associations that providers can harness to heighten purchasing interest.

### **Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Influencer Marketing**

Growing digitalization has elevated user-generated content as a pivotal information source guiding purchase decisions (Litvin et al., 2008). In tourism, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is observed as highly influential due to the intangible nature of the industry with travelers relying extensively on reviews and experiences shared online (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Thus endorsements by credible, popular social media influencers are noted to affect followers' brand and product beliefs, attitudes, and buying behaviors (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

### Conceptual framework

Based on the description of the relationship between variables and the formulation of the hypothesis that has been put forward, an image of the conceptual framework for this research can be presented as follows:

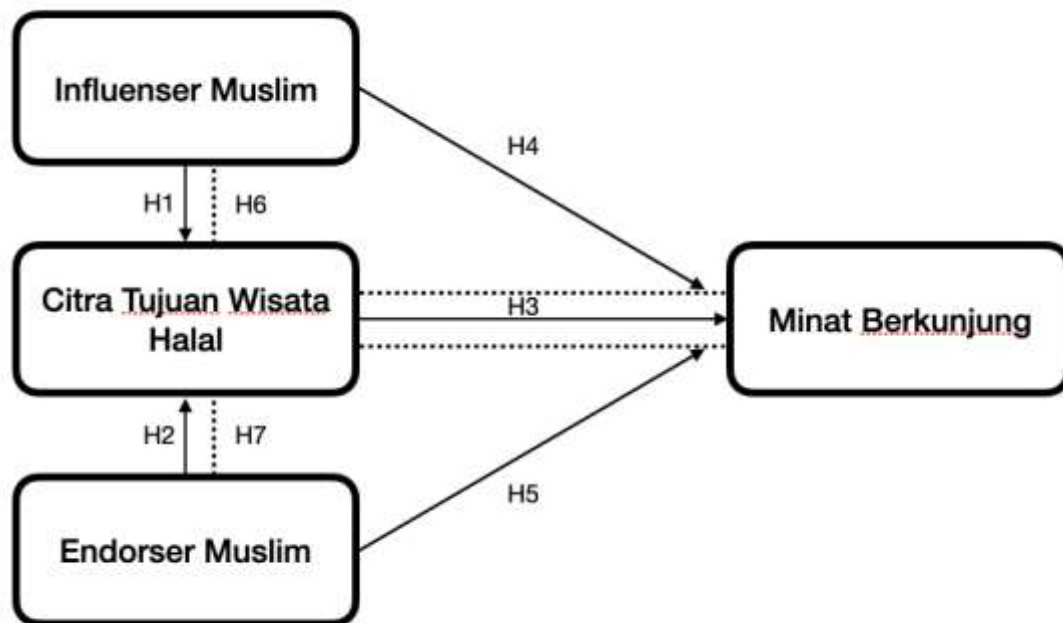


Figure 1. Research Framework

## C. METHOD

This research uses a comparative causal method with a quantitative approach. This research uses a questionnaire distributed to respondents deemed to meet the specified criteria. The questionnaire uses a Likert scale of 1 to 5 with categories: Strongly Agree has a score of 5; Agree has a score of 4; Undecided has a score of 3; Disagreement has a score of 2; Strongly Disagree has a score of 1. The population in this study are tourists in West Kalimantan. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, namely a technique for determining samples with certain considerations. The sample criteria are as follows: 1) Muslim, 2) Have accessed halal tourism content on social media created by Muslim influencers, 3) Have ever taken a halal tourist trip in Indonesia. Questionnaires via Google Forms are distributed via social media Instagram and WhatsApp. The number of samples in this research was 206 respondents. The data analysis technique used is the SEM method with the help of the SmartPLS application.

#### D. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

**Table 1 Value of Standardized Loading Factor, Construct Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) in Overall Model Fit**

Variable	Items	SLF	CR	AVE
	<i>EM1</i>	,949	0.80	0.88
	<i>EM2</i>	,926		
	<i>EM3</i>	,941		
	IM1	,953	0.82	0.90
	IM2	,952		
	IM3	,950		
	CT1	,962	0.83	0.90
	CT2	,954		
	CT3	,942		

	MB1	,933	0.81	0.89
	MB2	,952		
	MB3	,958		

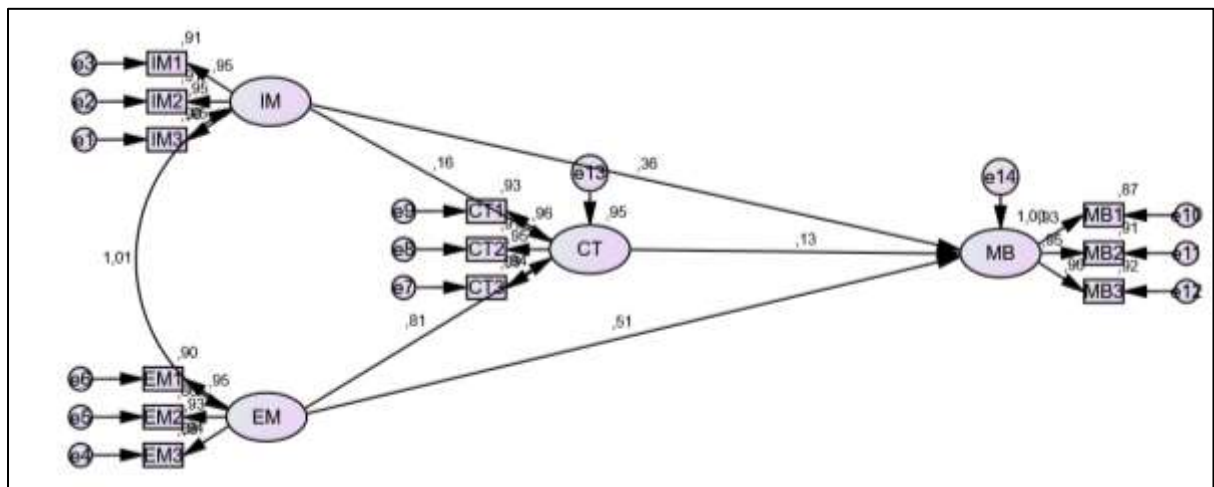
Based on Table 1, the results of the validity and reliability tests show that the indicators of the model built meet the valid and reliable criteria. Existing indicators have standard load factor (SLF) values above 0.50. This shows that all metrics are valid and adequate to measure the overall composition of the resulting model. The Construction Reliability (CR) test score exceeds 0.70. This indicates that all instruments are reliable and can consistently measure structure throughout the models built.

**Table 2 Goodness of Fit Index**

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut off Value	Results
$\chi^2$	Expected to be low	263,860
Df		48
$\chi^2$ - Significance Probability	$\geq 0.05$	0,000
CMIN/DF	$\leq 3.00$	5,497
RMSEA	$\leq 0.08$	0.148

RMR	< 0.05	0.026
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.946
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.956
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.939
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.956

The model suitability test (goodness of fit) shown in Table 4.2 shows that the model suitability requirements are accepted. Three measurements showed good agreement. If there are 3-4 measurements with a good level of agreement or above the limit value, the study model configuration can be declared adequate and accepted (Hair *et al*, 2014: 583).



**Figure 2. Model Fit Test Results**

**Table 4. Hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Conclusion
H <sub>1</sub>	CT ←---IM	0.155	.204	.762	.446	No Significant

H <sub>2</sub>	<i>CT</i> <--- <i>EM</i>	0	.850	.225	,772	.0001	<i>Significant</i>
H <sub>3</sub>	<i>MB</i> <--- <i>CT</i>	0	.140	.114	,228	.219	<i>No Significant</i>
H <sub>4</sub>	<i>MB</i> <--- <i>IM</i>	0	.355	.147	,412	.016	<i>Significant</i>
H <sub>5</sub>	<i>MB</i> <--- <i>EM</i>	0	.560	.140	,003	.0001	<i>Significant</i>

From the results of hypothesis testing shown in Table 4, it is known that the influence of the Muslim Influencer variable on Tourist Destination Image is positive but weak and not statistically significant. This is indicated by a CR value of 0.762 below 1.96 and a P value of 0.446 above 0.05. Meanwhile, the Muslim Endorsement variable is proven to have a positive and significant effect on the Image of the Tourist Destination. This is proven by a CR value of 3.772 above 1.96 and a P value of less than 0.05.

Furthermore, the influence of Tourist Destination Image on Interest in Visiting is also positive but not statistically significant because it has a CR value of 1.228 below 1.96 and a P value of 0.219 above 0.05. On the other hand, both the Muslim Influencer and Muslim Endorse variables were proven to have a positive and significant effect on tourists' visiting interest. Muslim Influencers have a CR value of 2.412 and P 0.016, while Muslim Endorsers have the highest CR value, namely 4.003 with a P value of less than 0.05.

In conclusion, Muslim endorsement is the strongest and most significant predictor of increasing tourist interest in visiting. Meanwhile, the direct influence of the image of a tourist destination is still considered weak and unable to mediate the influence of Muslim influencers or Muslim endorsers.

**Table 5. Sobel Test Results – Indirect Effect**

Hypothesis	Sobel Test	
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	t-stat	p-value	Conclusion
$IM \rightarrow CT \rightarrow MB$	0.645	0.518	No significant
$EM \rightarrow CT \rightarrow MB$	1.167	0.242	No significant

Table 5 displays the results of the Sobel test to test the indirect effect of the Muslim Influencer and Muslim Endorser variables on Visiting Interest through Tourist Destination Image as a mediating variable. The hypothesis proposed is that tourist destination image can mediate the influence of Muslim influencers and Muslim endorsements on visiting interest.

The results of the Sobel test show that the statistical t value of the indirect influence of Muslim Influencers on Visiting Interest through Tourist Destination Image is 0.645 with a significance value of 0.518. These two values are smaller than the critical value, namely 1.96 for the t statistic and 0.05 for the significance value. The same thing is shown by the results of the indirect test of the Muslim Endorse variable which has a statistical t value of 1.167 and a significance of 0.242.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Image of the Tourist Destination has not been proven to be able to mediate the influence of either Muslim Influencers or Muslim Endorsers on Visiting Interest. There is no significant indirect effect of these two independent variables on interest in visiting through the image of the tourist destination. So the sixth hypothesis which states that the image of the tourist destination is a mediator of the influence of Muslim influencers and Muslim endorsements is rejected.

## E. Conclusion

1. The model built is valid and reliable based on the CFA test results. All indicator items have loading factor, construct reliability, and average variance extracted values that meet the requirements.
2. Overall, the model has a good level of goodness of fit based on several measures such as CMIN/DF, RMSEA, NFI, TLI, and CFI even though the chi-square value does not meet the requirements.
3. The influence of Muslim influencers on the image of tourist destinations is positive but weak and not statistically significant.
4. The influence of Muslim endorsement on interest in visiting is positive and significant.
5. The influence of tourist destination image on interest in visiting is positive but not significant.
6. The image of the tourist destination does not mediate (becomes an intermediary variable) the influence of Muslim influencers and Muslim endorsements on interest in visiting. This is indicated by the Sobel test results which are not significant.

In conclusion, Muslim endorsements have a direct effect on tourists' interest in visiting, while Muslim influencers do not have a significant effect on interest in visiting either directly or through the image of the tourist destination as a mediating variable.

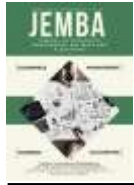
**Suggestion :**

1. Further research needs to be carried out regarding factors that can strengthen the influence of Muslim influencers on the image of tourist destinations and tourist interest in visiting.
2. You can segment Muslim tourists based on demographic characteristics to see whether there are differences in the influence of Muslim influencers in each segment.
3. It is better to utilize Muslim endorsements as a marketing strategy to increase interest in visiting Muslim tourists because it has been proven to have a significant effect.

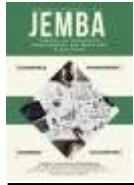
4. There is a need to improve the image of tourist destinations as a whole to form stronger intentions to visit, not just rely on Muslim endorsements.
5. Similar research can be carried out at different locations or tourist attractions or with larger and more diverse samples so that the research results can be more generalized.
6. The research model can be developed by adding other relevant variables, such as marketing promotions, service quality, tourist trust, and so on.

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