

STRATEGIES FOR HALAL TOURISM IN SOUTH KOREA TO ATTRACT MUSLIM TOURISTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ABSTRAK

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Tren gaya hidup halal semakin berkembang, dengan negara-negara non-Muslim mulai mempromosikan diri sebagai negara ramah Muslim, termasuk Korea Selatan. Namun, masih belum banyak penelitian yang membahas isu ini secara mendalam. Banyak penelitian baru hanya berfokus pada strategi untuk menarik wisatawan di negara-negara mayoritas Muslim. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis kolaborasi antara pemerintah, organisasi, dan diplomasi budaya sebagai strategi efektif untuk meningkatkan kunjungan wisatawan Muslim. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kolaborasi antara pemerintah, Organisasi Pariwisata Korea, Federasi Muslim Korea, dan diplomasi budaya secara signifikan meningkatkan minat wisatawan Muslim untuk berkunjung. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa kolaborasi antar berbagai pihak merupakan strategi yang secara signifikan memengaruhi minat wisatawan dan memperkuat posisi destinasi wisata halal di seluruh dunia.

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

The halal lifestyle trend is growing, with non-Muslim countries beginning to brand



themselves as Muslim-friendly countries, including South Korea. However, there are still not many studies that discuss this issue in depth. Many new studies focus solely on strategies to attract tourists in Muslim-majority countries. The purpose of this study is to analyze the collaboration between the government, organizations, and cultural diplomacy as effective strategies for increasing Muslim tourist visits. The research method used is a literature study. The results show that collaboration among the government, the Korea Tour Organization, the Korea Muslim Federation, and cultural diplomacy significantly increases Muslim tourists' interest in visiting. This study also demonstrates that collaboration among various parties is a strategy that significantly influences tourist interest and strengthens the position of halal tourism destinations worldwide.

Introduction

The term halal tourism refers to when a country can meet the criteria for halal tourism in accordance with Islamic teachings and standards (Syah Putra & Tucunan, 2021). Over time, the development of halal tourism has not only occurred in countries with a Muslim majority but also in non-Muslim countries. Countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea have begun to improve their Muslim-friendly facilities to meet the needs of tourists (Nasution et al., 2023). For example, South Korea is improving its Muslim facilities but is also known for its racism against Muslims. There are journals that state that there are acts of discrimination against Muslims in South Korea, triggered by a lack of understanding of Islam (Sakinah & Kurniawati, 2024). This issue casts doubt on South Korea's reputation as a Muslim-friendly country. Therefore, what strategies can South Korea implement to prove that it can meet the needs of Muslims so that more

Muslims are interested in visiting South Korea.

According to travel consultants Crescentrating Halal Friendly Travel (Singapore) and Dinar Standard (United States), which rank Muslim tourism, the purchasing power of the Muslim majority is growing rapidly, surpassing that of American, Chinese, and French tourists. Report from Gateway (2019) SGIE in 2012, global Muslim spending on halal lifestyles and food was recorded at US\$1.62 trillion. Report from Shafaki (2022) SGIE in 2019 US\$2.02 trillion on halal lifestyles and food. This could be an indication that majority non-Muslim countries such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and others are seeing opportunities to attract more Muslim tourists to their countries. However, it should be noted that in order to increase Muslim tourists, they need access to halal information. This is because access to halal information is an important requirement for the safety and satisfaction of Muslim tourists (Abdullah & Mustafa, 2018).

Currently, the halal lifestyle is becoming a global trend, involving not only Muslims in Muslim-majority countries but also in Muslim-minority countries (Sidik, 2025). The increasing trend of halal lifestyle and Muslim-friendly tourism is interesting to study more deeply, especially in non-Muslim countries such as South Korea. Such as how to promote and what strategies can be implemented by countries with a non-Muslim majority to improve Muslim-friendly services. To improve strategies, digital marketing can be utilized through social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. This is because the impact of social media can influence the younger generation to choose halal tourist destinations (Ilham et al., 2024). Social media plays a role in various aspects, including *branding, Posting, Sharing, Promotion, and Marketing*. The characteristic of this marketing incorporates several instruments, namely, Psychological, Humanistic, Anthropological,

and Technological (Setyanugraha & Ulya, 2022). Digital marketing is one of the most important strategies in marketing. By using social media, it will cover a wider market and also make it easier to share information that is relevant to the interests and attention of consumers (Akmal, 2023).

In general, a strategy is a scheme used to achieve a target or goal (Efendi & Paluala, 2024). In the era of digitalization, we can determine strategies even if we do not go directly to the location. In this era, we can evaluate all strategies by exploring various relevant information about which countries we will target as strategic goals. Of course, this is not spared from multiple data sources and also public information provided by relevant countries or institutions.

The factor of technological globalization is mandatory to support marketing strategies that are in accordance with the times, particularly in relation to the development of tourism features. The theory Kotler (1998) posits that marketing is a managerial process through which an individual or group satisfies their needs and wants by offering products and services to other individuals and groups. Indeed, in reality, a group of individuals must provide something that suits their desired needs for them to achieve what they are targeting. It is the same with South Korea, which targets Southeast Asia as a target for halal tourism marketing. Southeast Asia is home to the majority of Muslims in the world, with the most significant percentage (Ari et al., 2024). According to the data obtained, Southeast Asia is the ideal region for implementing a halal tourism marketing strategy.

Halal tourism, according to Battour & Ismail (2016), refers to any aspect of the tourism industry that prioritizes Islamic teachings in its guidelines. In theory, Battour & Ismail (2016) also state that every service or product that meets Sharia standards is characteristic of halal tourism.

According to Nurohman (2018) , the halal market is classified into three categories: food, lifestyle, and services. This classification explains that the concept of halal tourism encompasses all forms of services offered while prioritizing Islamic principles. The relationship between marketing strategy theory and halal tourism lies in how marketing strategies create a strategy that is relevant to halal tourism, which requires a specific market segment.

Previous studies such as Mustaqim et al. (2025) and Somadi (2024) focused on the provision of Muslim-friendly services by the South Korean government and its provision as well as the role of KMF and KTO, but did not discuss how the three play a role together as a strategy. Similarly, the study by Khotimah (2023), which only discusses Muslim-friendly programs as public diplomacy to build international relations, has not examined how Muslim-friendly tourism can be a means to increase the interest of Muslim communities in tourism. Samsudin (2022) discusses public diplomacy but does not discuss the role of KMF in depth because it only focuses on building the image of Muslim countries. Previous studies discussing halal tourism have been limited to promoting tourism in Muslim countries (Chantarungsri et al., 2024).

However, research that discusses in depth the relevant promotional methods for halal tourism in Southeast Asia targeting South Korea as a non-Muslim country is still limited. Therefore, this study fills the gap by discussing how the government, the Korean Muslim Federation, the Korean Tour Organization, and gastrodiploamacy are working together to promote Muslim-friendly tourism in Southeast Asia as a relevant strategy to attract more Muslim tourists to visit.

This study aims to analyze South Korea's strategy in increasing Muslim tourist visits through halal tourism and to identify whether the strategy

implemented by South Korea is relevant to Southeast Asia, as well as to analyze the contribution of the South Korean government in the development of the halal food industry. This is also interesting to study because it can be a reference for anyone who wants to travel to South Korea.

Research Methods

This research employs a literature study method, which involves understanding theories from various relevant literature sources. This study uses previous research as relevant data to the discussion. The types and sources of data come from scientific articles, journals, and literature books that are critically and in-depth analysed to answer and support research (Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020).

Some of the procedures in conducting literature studies include: 1) exploring general ideas about research, 2) looking for information that supports the research topic, 3) emphasizing the object of research and choosing appropriate materials, 4) looking for relevant data sources such as articles and journals, 5) reorganizing records from data sources, 6) reviewing the readings that have been analyzed to answer the formulation of the problem, 7) multiplying relevant data sources, 8) compiling research results (Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020).

Results

Korean Muslim Federation (KMF)

Korea Muslim Federation (KMF) is an official Islamic organization and has full authority from the Korean government. At the beginning of its formation, this organization was called the Korean Islamic Association, formed and run by the first generation of Korean Muslims namely Yoon

Doo-young, Kim Jin gyu, Kim Yu do, and two Turkish soldiers named Abdul Ghofur and Zubair Kochi who assisted in the initial Islamization in Korea and founded this Association on September 15, 1955 (Paradays, 2022). Currently, South Korea is focusing on continuing to aggressively market tourism in Korea. One of the regions they are targeting is the predominantly Muslim Southeast Asian region. KMF's role is to provide convenience that seasonal people on vacation in Korea can truly appreciate. The South Korean government does not issue a specific law for halal labelling of its food, but the MAFRA ministry in South Korea contributes to promoting the Korean food industry.

The activities carried out by KMF include the religious field, in addition to serving as a means of worship for Muslims in Korea; this is also one of the strategies to increase the Muslim population in Korea. By building global and local networks to spread Islam and strengthen Muslim minorities (Paradays, 2022). KMF has been involved in Halal food labelling since 1994, the institution collaborates with domestic companies to facilitate export activities to Islamic countries and supports Korean Muslims in obtaining halal food in accordance with Islamic rules.

Islamic culture is growing rapidly in Itaewon, and they welcome immigrants from conflict-ridden countries such as Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan (Paradays, 2022). There stands a mosque called Seoul Central Masjid, which was designed in the 1970s (Cho & Choi, 2020). Report from Laura C (2020) the first floor of the mosque is used as the KMF office and meeting room. Some of the programs carried out by KMF serve as a bridge between Muslim minority groups in South Korea and Muslims globally (Paradays, 2022).

A report from GMTI, released by Mastercard (2018), states that in 2017, Korea welcomed 131 million Muslim tourists, representing a 10 million

increase from the previous year. Another effort made by the South Korean government is to expand halal restaurants in every tourist destination in South Korea so that Muslim tourists can enjoy a comfortable dining experience when traveling to South Korea. 150 Korean food companies are labelled Halal, and the development of South Korean technology can promote its tourism, which is quite prominent among the Muslim Community. Halal restaurants in South Korea have halal certificates, so Muslim tourists don't need to worry about finding halal options. This halal restaurant certificate is divided into four categories, namely "Halal certified, Muslim friendly, Self certified and Pork free." In addition, South Korea has introduced a Muslim-friendly application, namely "Halal Korea," which shares various features such as Qibla direction, community travel, scans, halal restaurants, and others (Chanifah et al., 2022).

Korea Tour Organization

KTO is a Korean government organisation in the field of tourism, and was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism. With the boom of the Korean wave, KTO takes advantage of this situation to increase tourism in Korea (Aristyani & Yuniasih, 2018). One of the KTO centres established in Southeast Asian countries is in Indonesia. Since 1973, Korea and Indonesia have had diplomatic relations that are indeed more active in the field of tourism. In 2001, South Korea and Indonesia initiated diplomatic relations through tourism, with each country showcasing its unique islands as tourist attractions: Bali in Indonesia and Jeju Island in South Korea. KTO has also established its branch office in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2011. South Korea's diplomatic strategy in Indonesia is not spared from the role of KTO, with which South Korea indeed partners to become one of the actors in Diplomacy.

One of the public Diplomacy activities that KTO conducts is by holding festivals such as the Visa to South Korea Group, Hallyu Star, Muslim Friendly Korea, Korean Travel Guide E-Book, and Korea Culture and Korean Festival (Suzila & Pusvitasary, 2017). KTO also has several other branch offices in Southeast Asia, as reported on KTO's official website. These branch offices are located in Bangkok (Thailand), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Singapore, the Philippines, and Vietnam. With the increasing number of social media networks, KTO utilises platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook to facilitate its digital marketing efforts. In addition, social media facilitates direct interaction between the public and KTO, allowing them to ask questions about Korean tourism. One of Korea's strategies is to provide #AkudanKorea hashtags, which are one of the attractions that they sell to the public to be interested in going on a trip to South Korea (Aristyani & Yuniasih, 2018).

In 2018, EXO, a South Korean boy band, was appointed as an ambassador for the Korea Tour Organisation. This move is part of their strategy to attract more tourists by promoting Hallyu culture. According to the author, by 2025, the influence of Hallyu is expected to be very significant, driven by the emergence of Korean idols from Southeast Asia. This development has the potential to increase tourist numbers to South Korea by attracting more fans from the idols' home countries. With the increasing number of K-pop music fans, the number of tourists visiting South Korea will also increase indirectly (Kim et al., 2023).

Carmen from Indonesia, who resides in Bali, is in the spotlight for her successful debut at SM Entertainment, a well-known agency, as part of the *Girl Group* Hearts2Hearts. By leveraging the popularity of Hallyu to attract more tourists to South Korea, particularly in Southeast Asia, which has a

predominantly Muslim population, the following data was reported by Statistics ASEAN Korea from 2021 to 2023 (ASEAN Korea Centre, 2023).

Table 1. Table of Southeast Asian tourist visits to South Korea from 2021 to 2023

Country	Tourist Flow		
	2021	2022	2023
Brunei Darussalam	0	0	0
Cambodia	6.074	64.040	170.171
Indonesia	9.497	121.273	347.185
Laos	0	0	0
Malaysia	3.028	146.384	400.853
Philippines	6.456	428.014	1.450.860
Singapore	7.126	217.529	570.660
Thailand	12.077	538.766	1.660.040
Vietnam	32.500	769.167	3.595.060
Myanmar	1.080	6.854	0

Source: ASEAN Korea Centre, 2025.

Based on figure 1, the Southeast Asian tourist visit rate from 2021 to 2023 is represented by the colours blue, red, and green, which correspond to the levels of tourists in 2021, 2022, and 2023, respectively. The table above shows that tourists from Vietnam dominate, with 3.595.060, followed by Thailand with 1,660.040 tourists. Singapore holds the third position. Indonesia ranks 6th in Southeast Asia, with 347.185 tourist presentations in 2023. Meanwhile, visit data from Brunei Darussalam and Laos occupy the final position with a presentation of "Zero" in the table above. The number of tourist visits listed shows a variety of vacation destinations. The many factors that affect interest in vacationing are inseparable from the influence of South Korean soft Diplomacy, such as the Korean Wave, Hallyu, and beauty treatments.

The Korean wave is a form of *Soft diplomacy* from South Korea, namely by introducing South Korean culture, lifestyle, fashion, and music. Many tourists visit South Korea to experience the Korean Wave through various

tourism activities, such as visiting drama sets (Khalifah, 2021). In 2019, Twitter announced a list of countries that tweeted the most about K-pop idols. Indonesia was ranked 3rd, after Thailand and South Korea (Yuel et al., 2023). As discussed above, Hallyu is a significant factor in Korea's success in expanding its tourism market. The interest of the younger generation in Hallyu is particularly important, given KTO's goal of increasing tourism visits through Hallyu. Hallyu itself consists of fashion, K-pop, culture, and K-drama.

KTO also always holds Halal Restaurant events, which is also a strategy owned by KTO to attract Asian and Pacific visitors, especially those who are Muslims (Aristyani & Yuniasih, 2018). KTO offers a digital book that provides updated information on halal food in South Korea, updated annually. Besides that, the Korean Friendly Restaurant was developed through KTO's contribution (Samsudin, 2022). With KTO always holding Halal Restaurant festivals, this creates the image that South Korea is open to Muslims who want to visit South Korea.

In addition, KTO develops information facilities about tourism by launching the Visit Korea *website*, which provides information about tourism in Korea. One of its features is Digital Books, which contain travel guides and historical tourist attractions in Korea. In addition, the Visit Korea website offers various features, including lodging, accommodation, and ticket booking services. Reporting from the Visit Korea Committee website, which is part of the KTO, held a business presentation activity of the shopping culture tourism festival in Vietnam which contained the desire of the secretary general of the Visit Korea Committee to carry out diplomatic relations, namely by exchanging tourism between the two countries, this festival is carried out periodically, twice a year, besides that South Korea

introduces its innovation, namely the "Korean Tourist Card", transportation cards for foreigners only, and hands-free services introduced in Vietnam.

In Singapore, KTO also plays an active role in promoting tourism in South Korea, namely by holding the *Korean Travel Fair*. As reported on the official KTO website, KTO has implemented a strategy that involves delivering Singaporean influencers to South Korea for a fun trip. The condition is that each influencer must create an interesting travel video, captivating the people of Singapore with engaging content. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, there is a "VISA-Free Entry for Filipino Transit Tourists" program. According to the researcher, the differences in each activity organised by the KTO are related to the behaviour and motivation of each individual, as well as the persuasion strategy the KTO cultivates, which contributes to the image of the country with which they maintain diplomatic relations, highlighting each of their privileges. Since the 1960s, the tourism approach has been the subject of research by tourism academics as a useful approach to understanding travel needs and tourist behaviour. Additionally, satisfaction and marketing success influence destination decisions and return visits (Wibisono et al., 2023).

South Korea's Diplomacy Strategy Affects Tourists in Southeast Asia

The gastrodiploamacy strategy is one of South Korea's strategies to influence tourists by introducing their local food to other countries, persuading them to visit Korea to taste the dish firsthand (Juniarti, 2021). In other words, gastrodiploamacy is a cultural diplomacy effort that South Korea applies as one of the strategies to introduce its food in the international arena. According to the State of the Global Halal Industry Report (2023), Indonesia is the country with the highest consumption of halal food, totalling USD 169.7 billion in 2016. Consequently, South Korea is targeting Indonesia as a

potential country for gastrodiplomacy (Prameswari et al., 2022).

Dooki is one of the Korean restaurants established in Indonesia and registered with the Korean Restaurants Association in Indonesia. It was uploaded from Instagram by *Korean Argo Fisheries and Food Trade Corporation* (Mutiarra Fidela Hanifah & Hesti Rosdiana, 2024). The Korean government continues to develop the halal food industry, which aims to increase Korean food exports to Muslim countries through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) (Park, 2017).

Cultural Diplomacy is no less soaring; South Korea has also improved its relations with the United States, notably through the provision of scholarships and the exchange of journalists (Fayza et al., 2023). Cultural Diplomacy encompasses Drama, Fashion, and Hallyu, aiming to enhance the competitiveness and quality of South Korean culture, thereby increasing the attractiveness of foreign tourists. A study conducted Jiang (2024) shows that the quality of Movies and TV Dramas in South Korea has improved dramatically. Movies and TV dramas have rich storylines, amazing effects, music, costumes, and stylish designs that reflect the unique ideas and values of Korean culture.

The improvement in the quality of K-pop, Movies, TV Dramas, Hallyu, and other aspects of Korean culture is believed to attract more tourists. A study conducted by Bae et al. (2017) shows that Hallyu (Korean wave) is one of the important factors to attract tourists to visit South Korea. A similar study was conducted in Bangkok with 610 respondents departing from Suvarnabhumi Airport for various destinations. The results of this study show that the higher the frequency of watching Korean movies, the higher the preference for Korea and the intention to visit Korea (Rewtrakunphaiboon, 2017). Further research conducted by Saad et al.

(2022a) with a survey of 150 tourists from Malaysia shows that K-dramas have been very successful in attracting the interest of the younger generation to come back to South Korea.

Discussion

Contribution of the Korean Muslim Federation

The findings indicate that South Korea combines contributions from various parties, such as the government, tourism agencies, and cultural institutions. The strategy used by South Korea to provide facilities that can be enjoyed by Muslim tourists, such as halal food labeling by KMF, which has been in place since 1994, indicates that South Korea has been targeting the Muslim market for a long time. According to research conducted by Firstantin & Hasanah (2021) It is reported that the South Korean government began actively improving Muslim-friendly facilities such as restaurants and halal food applications in 2010. In early 2010, there was also a surge in Muslim tourists from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East (Han et al., 2019).

Therefore, the GMTI report released by Mastercard-Crescent Rating showing an increase of 10 million Muslim tourists in 2017 is the result of South Korea's strategy and efforts to improve its Muslim-friendly facilities since 2010, which has seen a positive increase in the interest of Muslim communities in tourism. The South Korean government's role in continuously improving Muslim-friendly facilities, such as labeling restaurants and providing special laws for the export of halal food, is a sign of its seriousness towards Muslim tourists. Since 2010, according to reports, Southeast Asians' interest in visiting South Korea has been growing, as Southeast Asia is home to the majority of the world's Muslim population. It is therefore not surprising that the South Korean government's focus on

improving halal tourism facilities will certainly be highly regarded. This demonstrates that the South Korean government's contribution is not merely a matter of concern but a relevant strategic tool targeting the Muslim tourist market. Ultimately, the government's provision of Muslim-friendly services will influence Muslim tourists' decisions to visit (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019).

Contribution Korea Tour Organization

In addition, KTO's aggressive diplomacy towards each target country, as well as offering deals that suit the desires and needs of Muslim tourists (Marlinda et al., 2023). Such as providing Muslim tourist e-books, holding halal food festivals, and seasoning each offer with hallyu, which is popular with tourists, can increase the number of tourists visiting South Korea. Referring to research conducted by Lee & How (2022) which states that hallyu has been proven to attract Asian tourists to visit South Korea.

This supports research conducted by Sodawan & Hsu (2022) which states that hallyu and the improvement of Muslim-friendly facilities both work together to increase the interest of Muslim tourists to visit. While KTO is a *front-line institution* tasked with building South Korea's image through tourism promotion activities (Jarlis et al., 2022). The combination of hallyu and diplomacy that KTO is pursuing by offering Muslim-friendly tourism packages is a powerful force. Hallyu contributes to improving the image of Muslim-friendly countries, which in turn influences the preferences of Muslim tourists. This means that the KTO's role in conducting diplomacy in destination countries using the hallyu strategy can increase the interest of Muslim-majority tourists, such as those from Indonesia (Suzila & Pusvitasary, 2017). Considering the diversity of religions in the world, Korea's offer of attractive packages to Muslim tourists makes KTO's diplomatic strategy

highly relevant. Without such an institution, promotional efforts would be less structured, which would lead to a decline in tourist interest in visiting South Korea.

Active KTOs on social media often promote tourism using social media tools. For example, the Feel the Rhythm of Korea campaign used social media as its main platform, which showed positive results in increasing the interest of Indonesians in traveling to South Korea (Jarlis et al., 2022). The discovery of *#AkudanKorea* is also part of South Korea's strategy through Instagram. The use of social media such as Instagram is indeed a strategic tool used for digital tourism marketing (Yoo & Kang, 2025). The active use of social media by KTO is not only a complement to the services provided, but also a means of increasing the interest of digital-based tourists. Thus, using alternative digital marketing can help introduce halal tourism to the international arena (Nurmaizar & Widodo, 2024).

Contribution Gastrodiplomacy

Similar to South Korea's halal food gastrodiplomacy efforts, they use the popularity of their K-dramas to persuade international tourists to visit South Korea, in line with research Saad et al. (2022b) which states that the influence of K-Dramas can increase the interest of the younger generation to visit South Korea. The popularity of the K-drama Lunch Box, which presents Korean culture spiced with halal food themes, can be a relevant strategy. This is because the Korean government is working to improve Muslim-friendly facilities, such as providing information on halal food services and places of worship, which has been done since 2014 when the Muslim Friendly Korea program was launched (Putri, 2025). Thus, South Korea is branding itself as a Muslim-friendly country, but it is not merely engaging in marketing gimmicks; rather, it is realizing this through its offering strategy and

translating it into action. This study expands the study of gastrodiploamacy as one of the diplomatic strategies to attract Muslim tourists. In line with the research Herningtyas (2019), which states that the K-drama Lunch Box is part of culinary diplomacy to provide an overview of South Korea's halal standards to an international audience.

Therefore, if the marketing strategy does not match the desires and needs of the target market, namely Muslim tourists, and the government's role is weak, it is certain that the significant increase in 2017 as reported by GMTI will not be achieved. According to research Marlinda et al. (2021), which states that the number of tourists visiting South Korea in 2012 was 541,500, while in 2017 it reached 1.2 million visitors, this shows the market's response to Korea's relevant strategy. The significant growth in Muslim tourists is the result of a strategy that is relevant to the target.

Contributions from Korean tour organizations, the Korean Muslim Federation, Gastro Diplomacy, and The Role of The Government Collectively

There has been an increase in interest among Muslim tourists to visit South Korea, which also supports Kotler's marketing theory. Since South Korea's target is Muslim tourists, the strategies used are very relevant by offering proportional offers, namely by offering Muslim-friendly tourism by the KTO, the role of KMf in certifying halal food and restaurants, and the contribution of the South Korean government as a reinforcer and driver of every promotion and improvement of Muslim-friendly facilities.

Because of the implications of the simultaneous involvement of several parties, strategies to increase Muslim tourists are generally balanced and successful. This is in line with research conducted by Qaedi Aqsa & Nugroho

(2023), which states that cross-sector cooperation between the government, private sector, and organizations helps to produce and deliver public services effectively. Generally, every effort made to increase Muslim tourists by introducing Muslim-friendly tourism and halal food labeling supports the criteria for halal tourism by Batour and Ismail, standard sharia services by offering halal tourism listed in the Visit Korea E-book under the auspices of the KTO, and the role of KMF in providing labeling services for halal food products in South Korea.

This shows that halal food labeling in South Korea is not only a routine activity carried out by KMF but also has a positive impact and indicates that labeling is part of South Korea's service to Muslim tourists. These findings are in line with the view that Fahira et al. (2025), which states that halal destination attributes, such as halal food, facilities, and places of worship, affect the quality of experience and satisfaction of Muslim tourists. The Southeast Asian market targeted by South Korea, with its Muslim majority, has also been successfully conquered and can attract more Muslim tourists to South Korea, as can be seen in Figure 1, where there is an increase in the share of Southeast Asians vacationing in South Korea due to marketing strategies that are in line with the needs of Southeast Asian tourists. This supports the research conducted by Jarlis et al. (2022) which states that community needs are one of the foundations of strategic planning, which is relevant and consistent with research Nisa et al. (2017) which states that South Korea has successfully positioned itself as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination through an Islamic branding strategy that includes halal products and services, such as halal food, halal hotels, and digital guides.

It can be said that the cooperation between the South Korean government in increasing halal food exports through MAFRA, the

improvement of Muslim-friendly facilities carried out by KMF, namely halal food and restaurant labeling, and aggressive marketing strategies by KTO, namely by providing offers that suit market needs, can increase interest and visits by Muslim tourists in Southeast Asia.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that the increase in Muslim tourists is not only due to the Muslim-friendly country campaign, but also the readiness of facilities and the role of various sectors in expanding the understanding of Muslim tourists that South Korea is a country that is truly ready to welcome Muslim tourists. Therefore, this study is useful in broadening the understanding that the simultaneous movement of each sector, such as the role of the government, KMF, and KTO, is one of the strategies to increase the chances of achieving the specified targets.

This study can be used as a reference for strategies by combining the authentication of each country with the target market of Muslim tourists. The government, as the driving force of a country, needs to contribute significantly and evaluate performance so that every step towards the goal is in line with the predetermined strategy.

Thus, this study not only explains that increasing Muslim tourists is not only through branding a Muslim-friendly country, but also how each element, such as the government, KMF, and KTO, as well as the role of gastrodiplomacy, collaborate with each other to produce good performance and strengthen the position of competitive halal tourism destinations in the global arena.

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