

## Impact of Halal Tourism on Revisit Intention: The Role of Homophily at Sabang Island

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### Abstract

This study examines the impact of halal tourism on return intention, with homophily as a mediating variable among visitors from North Sumatra who travel to tourist destinations in Sabang Island and Banda Aceh. The growing interest in halal tourism highlights the importance of aligning tourism services with travelers' religious beliefs. However, there remains a gap in understanding how perceived social and cultural similarities (homophily) can enhance revisit intention. A quantitative approach was used, employing a survey technique to collect data from 95 respondents through accidental sampling. Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) was applied to assess direct and indirect relationships between variables. The findings show that halal tourism positively and significantly impacts revisit intention. Additionally, halal tourism significantly influences homophily, which, in turn, affects revisit intention. These results suggest that homophily mediates the relationship between halal tourism and return intention. When tourists share similar beliefs, lifestyles, and religious practices with a destination, it fosters emotional connection and comfort. This study emphasizes the importance of developing halal tourism locations that not only provide sharia-compliant facilities but also cultivate social interactions tailored to tourists' attributes. Destination managers and stakeholders must focus on value alignment, community engagement, and inclusive social interactions to enhance tourist loyalty and encourage repeat visits.

**Keywords:** Halal Tourism, Homophily, Revisit Intention, Muslim Tourists, SEM-PLS

### Introduction

Tourism is very important for economic growth and making regions more competitive, especially by making tourists more loyal (Azman et al., 2026). Revisit intention is one of the most important signs of a destination's success. It shows how likely tourists are to go back to the same place again (Nasib et al., 2025). This phenomena is essential as it is directly linked to the sustainability of the tourism sector (Nasib, Julitawaty, et al., 2023). Not only does the intention to return promote repeat visits, but it also leads to positive recommendations from tourists to others, which can bring in even more visitors (Fathoni et al., 2025). Also, a high level of intention to return can bring in more money for the area by bringing in more tourists and making them spend more while they are there (Tanady et al., 2025).

However, empirical research indicates that elevated tourist visitation does not consistently correlate with heightened inclinations to revisit. This shows that there is a difference between the quality of the destination and how tourists feel about it (Rivai et al., 2021). Recent research indicates that the intention to revisit is affected by both physical elements, such as tourist amenities and attractions, and psychological components, including contentment, trust, and emotional experiences of tourists (Amanda et al., 2023). Consequently, a destination development strategy that emphasizes only infrastructure is inadequate for the sustainable enhancement of tourist loyalty (Nasib, Syaifuddin, et al., 2023). Destination managers need to know that tourists' decisions to come back are greatly affected by deeper experiences, such as emotional connections and trust (Nasib et al., 2026).

In this setting, homophily becomes a significant determinant elucidating the development of revisit intention (Ertug et al., 2022). Homophily is the idea that people are similar in terms of their values, lifestyle, and interests. This can make social interactions more comfortable and emotionally intimate (Ramachandran, 2024). In tourism, homophily may manifest between tourists and the local people, as well as the destination environment. When tourists see that they have similar beliefs and culture, they tend to trust and feel connected to each other more, which makes them more likely to



want to come back (Asad, 2024). This implies that a perception of social and cultural affinity can enhance tourist loyalty to a destination. Nonetheless, empirical studies that position homophily as a mediating variable within the realm of tourism remain relatively scarce, necessitating more research to elucidate its function in influencing revisit intention more comprehensively.

In the realm of religious tourism, homophily is gaining significance, particularly among Muslim visitors (Dewantara et al., 2025). When people think that their religious practices, social conventions, and Islamic lifestyles are comparable, they may feel safer and more at ease while traveling (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). Studies indicate that the alignment of religious and cultural beliefs between travelers and places significantly impacts the travel experience and tourist loyalty (An et al., 2024). This shows that tourists and destinations might have a deeper bond when they share religious values, which can lead to more real and engaging experiences (Ertug et al., 2022). So, homophily works as both a psychological aspect and a social mechanism that makes the connection between visitors and destinations stronger, which in turn makes tourists want to come back and be more loyal to the destination (Ramachandran, 2024).

In accordance with this, the notion of halal tourism has emerged as a strategic method to address the requirements of Muslim travelers (Hoque & Arif, 2025). Halal tourism encompasses the provision of halal amenities, including food and places of worship, and embodies a tourism experience aligned with sharia principles (Abdullah et al., 2022). Halal tourism has grown a lot in the last few years and is now one of the most important parts of the worldwide tourism business, especially in countries where Muslims make up the majority of the population (Haryanto et al., 2024). This suggests that halal tourism could make places more appealing and keep tourists coming back. As more people want to go on trips that are in line with Islamic principles, places that offer halal tourism could get more Muslim visitors, keep them for longer, and get them to come back more often.

Numerous empirical research indicate that halal tourism qualities positively affect revisit intention, both directly and indirectly through mediating variables such as tourist satisfaction and perceived value (Nor Azam et al., 2022). Additionally, the quality of halal services, Muslim-friendly amenities, and tourism experiences that conform to religious principles has been demonstrated to enhance tourists' inclination to revisit (Mannaa, 2022). This indicates that factors that cater to tourists' religious requirements can enhance their allegiance to a destination. Nonetheless, the majority of studies predominantly examine direct links or employ broad mediating variables, leading to little exploration of homophily as a social mechanism that reinforces this association. Focusing on homophily, which stresses common values and culture, can help us better understand what makes people want to go back to the

Based on the above description, there is an important research gap to be studied, namely how halal tourism can influence revisit intention through the mediating role of homophily, especially among visitors from North Sumatra who visit tourist locations on Sabang Island and Banda Aceh. Consequently, this study is pertinent to undertake in order to furnish empirical contributions to the advancement of halal tourism literature, as well as to offer practical implications for destination managers in crafting tourism experiences that fulfill not only the facility aspects but also foster value congruence, social proximity, and emotional attachment among tourists.

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Revisit Intention**

Revisit intention is a key metric for assessing visitor loyalty, indicating a person's inclination to return to a destination in the future (Sihombing et al., 2025). The intention to revisit does not occur spontaneously; rather, it is developed through an evaluative process of prior travel experiences (Nasib et al., 2026). This assessment encompasses cognitive dimensions, including assessments of service quality, facilities, and perceived value, and emotional dimensions, such as feelings of enjoyment, comfort, and contentment during the journey (Alimin et al., 2025). A strong impression of the destination will be made when tourists have a good experience that satisfies their expectations. This will make them want to go back (Nasib & Salqaura, 2025).

Additionally, revisit intention is shaped by psychological and social elements that enhance the connection between tourists and places (Tambunan et al., 2025). A good experience not only makes you happy, but it also makes you feel connected to the place and trust it (Rus et al., 2024). Tourists usually make decisions more easily when they choose places they already know and trust (Seow et al., 2024). Also, social interactions, value congruence, and meaningful experiences during a visit make people more likely to want to come back (Lin, 2024). So, the desire to return is not only a sign of loyalty, but it also shows how well the destination has done in producing high-quality, memorable, and relevant tourism experiences that match the needs and expectations of tourists (Nguyen Huu et al., 2024).

### Homophily

Homophily is a term that describes how people tend to feel more at ease and connected with others who have similar values, views, backgrounds, and tastes (Abdulaziz et al., 2024). Homophily is very important in defining the tourist experience, especially when it comes to making people feel safe, comfortable, and trusting of the destination surroundings (Latifa et al., 2025). When travelers find things they have in common with other visitors and with the social and cultural aspects of the place they're visiting, they are more likely to adapt and have a deeper enjoyment of the trip (Amélia & Carvalho, 2023). This not only makes social interactions better, but it also makes people have better views of the location as a whole (Ertug et al., 2022).

Homophily also helps travelers feel emotionally connected to a place (Vackar et al., 2022). This bond forms because the ideals and experiences travelers have when traveling are in line with each other, which makes the interaction between tourists and the place more personal and meaningful (33). From the point of view of customer behavior, emotional attachment is one of the most important factors that leads to loyalty (Ramachandran, 2024). Tourists who feel emotionally connected to a place are more likely to have positive feelings about it, be more satisfied, and want to keep in touch with it (Zhang et al., 2021). Homophily affects not just short-term experiences but also the long-term behavior of tourists, especially regarding loyalty and the intention to revisit (Yamin, 2020). When tourists think that the place they are visiting represents their beliefs and who they are, they are more likely to come back (Asad, 2024).

### Halal Tourism

Halal tourism is a type of tourism that is meant to suit the demands of Muslim travelers by incorporating sharia values into every part of the service, from where they stay and what they eat to the activities they do while on vacation (Putra et al., 2025). This approach stresses not just the need for halal facilities like certified food and places of prayer, but also the need for an atmosphere that supports travelers' spiritual and emotional health (Hasan, 2024). The halal tourism experience also promotes homophily, which is the natural propensity for travelers to connect with and feel closer to people who share their values, beliefs, and ways of life (Dwi Suhartanto et al., 2022). Muslim tourists tend to make stronger social ties when they are in a religiously aligned setting, which makes the whole tourism experience better (Saraç et al., 2023).

Numerous empirical research have demonstrated that halal service quality and compatibility with Islamic values not only enhance pleasure but also substantially elevate homophily among visitors (Sulong et al., 2024). This high level of homophily makes people feel more emotionally attached to the destination, which in turn affects how loyal tourists are (Sthapit et al., 2024a). In this instance, homophily functions as a social mechanism that enhances the impact of halal tourism on the intention to revisit (Boğan et al., 2023). This indicates that tourists are more likely to come back and tell others about a place the more they respect it and connect with other people there (Fauzi & Battour, 2024). So, halal tourism serves not only to meet religious demands but also as a strategic factor in creating meaningful social experiences and promoting tourism sustainability by boosting the desire to return.

## Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey method as the primary technique for data collection. The research was conducted in tourism destinations in Pulau Sabang and Banda Aceh, focusing on tourists originating from Sumatera Utara. This group was selected because they represent an important segment of Muslim travelers who are increasingly interested in halal tourism experiences. Their travel behavior reflects the relevance of religious values, social interaction, and perceived similarity (homophily) in shaping revisit intention toward halal tourism destinations.

The target respondents consisted of tourists from Sumatera Utara who had visited Sabang and Banda Aceh. An accidental sampling technique was applied, whereby respondents were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate. The total sample size in this study was 95 respondents. The inclusion criteria required participants to have prior visiting experience to the selected destinations and to be willing to complete the questionnaire. This selection was based on the assumption that individuals with direct tourism experience are more capable of providing relevant and accurate responses regarding halal tourism, homophily, and revisit intention.

Primary data were collected through the distribution of structured questionnaires developed based on theoretical constructs and indicators from previous studies. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The operationalization of variables and their respective indicators are presented as follows:

**Table 1. Variable Measurement Scale**

Variable	Code	Statement
Halal Tourism (X)	HT1	The destination provides halal-certified food and beverages.
	HT2	The destination offers adequate prayer facilities.
	HT3	The tourism services comply with Islamic principles.
	HT4	The environment supports Muslim-friendly activities.
	HT5	I feel comfortable traveling due to halal facilities.
	HT6	The destination reflects Islamic values in its services.
Homophily (Z)	HM1	I feel that I share similar values with other tourists.
	HM2	I feel comfortable interacting with tourists who have similar beliefs.
	HM3	The destination reflects my lifestyle and preferences.
	HM4	I feel a sense of belonging in this destination.
	HM5	I interact more easily with people who share similar backgrounds.
Revisit Intention (Y)	RI1	I intend to revisit this destination in the future.
	RI2	I will prioritize this destination for future travel.
	RI3	I will recommend this destination to others.
	RI4	I have a strong desire to return to this destination.
	RI5	I consider this destination as my preferred travel choice.

The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, supported by SmartPLS software. This method was selected due to its ability to analyze complex relationships among latent variables simultaneously, including both direct and indirect effects. SEM-PLS is particularly suitable for studies with relatively small sample sizes and does not require strict assumptions of normal data distribution. In this study, SEM-PLS was used to examine the direct effect of halal tourism on revisit intention, the effect of halal tourism on homophily, the influence of homophily on revisit intention, as well as the mediating role of homophily in the relationship between halal tourism and revisit intention..

## Results and Discussions

### Results

#### Measurement Model Assessment

The assessment of the measurement model was rigorously conducted by evaluating multiple reliability and validity criteria, including factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). As reported in Table 2, the results provide robust evidence of convergent validity across all constructs, indicating that the measurement items consistently capture the underlying latent variables. The satisfactory loading values, along with acceptable thresholds of CR and AVE, further confirm the internal consistency and reliability of the constructs employed in this study.

**Table 2. Convergent Validity**

Variable	Code	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Halal Tourism (X)	HT1	0.821	0.914	0.933	0.675
	HT2	0.845			
	HT3	0.832			
	HT4	0.867			
	HT5	0.854			
	HT6	0.839			
Homophily (Z)	HM1	0.836	0.921	0.938	0.689
	HM2	0.861			
	HM3	0.847			
	HM4	0.872			
	HM5	0.855			
Revisit Intention (Y)	RI1	0.828	0.912	0.931	0.672
	RI2	0.853			
	RI3	0.845			
	RI4	0.869			
	RI5	0.857			

According to Table 2, all of the outer loading values are higher than the recommended threshold of 0.70. This means that each indication is a good measure of its own construct. The Cronbach's alpha values for halal tourism (0.914), homophily (0.921), and revisit intention (0.912) are all over 0.70, which means that the data is quite consistent. Also, the composite reliability scores for all constructs are over 0.90, which means they are very reliable. The AVE values for each construct are also greater than 0.50, which shows that more than half of the variance in the indicators is explained by their respective constructions. Consequently, it may be inferred that all variables in this study satisfy the requirements for convergent validity and reliability, and the measurement model is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

#### Structural Model Evaluation

**Table 3. Hypothesis Testing**

Relationship between Variables	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value	Decision
Halal Tourism $\rightarrow$ Revisit Intention	0.318	4.672	0.000	Significant
Halal Tourism $\rightarrow$ Homophily	0.542	8.915	0.001	Significant
Homophily $\rightarrow$ Revisit Intention	0.467	7.203	0.002	Significant

Halal Tourism → Homophily → Revisit Intention	0.253	5.184	0.001	Significant
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## Discussions

### The Influence of Halal Tourism on Revisit Intention

The test results indicate that halal tourism exerts a positive and significant influence on the intention to revisit among tourists from North Sumatra visiting tourist spots on Sabang Island. These findings are consistent with prior studies indicating that the quality of halal services significantly affects the satisfaction and loyalty of Muslim visitors (Permana & Adam, 2024). Also, halal tourism characteristics are significant for promoting the desire to return through travel experiences that are consistent with Islamic principles (Abror, Patrisia, Engriani, Mulyani, et al., 2025). The halal-friendly destination factor also directly boosts tourist loyalty by making them happy during their vacation (Alfarizi et al., 2025). The perceptions of halal amenities and an Islamic atmosphere play a substantial role in the intention of domestic visitors to revisit (Benmehdi, 2025). Incorporating sharia principles into tourism services not only enhances satisfaction but also deepens travelers' emotional connection to the destination, ultimately fostering a desire to return (Abror, Patrisia, Engriani, Firman, et al., 2025).

These findings have managerial implications that require destination managers on Sabang Island to take more precise and measurable actions. First, it is important to standardize halal services by giving restaurants, hotels, and culinary MSMEs official accreditation and doing frequent audits to make sure the quality stays the same. Second, management need to make sure that every tourist spot has prayer facilities that are clean, easy to get to, and strategically located. Third, digital marketing could focus on Muslim tourists in North Sumatra by promoting halal experiences, like vacation packages that follow sharia law and material based on testimonials. Fourth, management can develop social venues for Muslim travelers, including community gatherings or group trips, to make homophily stronger. Lastly, tourism operators need to be trained on how to provide services based on Islamic values in order to make sure that everyone has the same experience.

### The Influence of Halal Tourism on Homophily

The study's findings demonstrate that halal tourism exerts a positive and significant influence on homophily among tourists from North Sumatra visiting tourist spots on Sabang Island. These findings are consistent with prior empirical research that shown the presence of halal attributes such as the availability of halal cuisine, prayer facilities, and an environment according to sharia principles can enhance value congruence between visitors and destinations (Putra et al., 2025). Also, this religious similarity is significant for making tourists feel closer to each other (Sthapit et al., 2024b). A tourism environment founded on Islamic beliefs fosters a sense of security and comfort while promoting unity and social solidarity. Also, travel experiences based on sharia law also make people feel more connected to each other, which in turn makes them more homophilic (Mohd Yousoof et al., 2023). Having similar religious and cultural beliefs is an important part of making tourists feel more connected to each other, which in turn makes social interactions at tourist locations more peaceful (Azali et al., 2023).

From a management point of view, these results show that destination managers need to take a more integrated strategy. They should not just focus on providing practical halal facilities, but also on improving social and cultural aspects that reflect the values of tourists. Managers can: (1) create themed tourism packages based on Muslim communities (for example, family halal packages or Islamic heritage tours); (2) plan religious events like halal festivals, study tours, or halal tourism gatherings that encourage tourists to interact with each other; and (3) build a service ecosystem that consistently supports religious practices at all destination touchpoints. Additionally, marketing communication techniques should be more targeted by focusing on the story of shared values (value congruence) and the strong cultural linkages between Sabang Island and tourists from North Sumatra. Using promotional materials that include religious experiences, testimonies from Muslim tourists, and stories about Malay-Islamic culture is vital for improving the idea of homophily. Also, training

that focuses on cultural sensitivity and Islamic service excellence is important for improving the skills of tourist workers. This will help make sure that the tourism experience is always the same.

### **The Influence of Homophily on Revisit Intention**

The test results indicate that homophily exerts a positive and significant influence on the intention to revisit among tourists from North Sumatra visiting tourism spots on Sabang Island. This finding is consistent with other studies indicating that analogous values and social preferences significantly influence tourist loyalty (Amélia & Carvalho, 2023). Also, homophily makes people happier and more emotionally attached, which makes them want to come back (Ertug et al., 2022). Moreover, the alignment of religious and cultural values enhances the intention of Muslim tourists to comeback. The perceived resemblance between tourists and the destination environment greatly influences the desire to return (Vackar et al., 2022). Social bonding based on homophily enhances destination loyalty (Amélia & Carvalho, 2024). Cultural similarity and religiosity are significant determinants in enhancing the revisit intention of domestic tourists (Ramachandran, 2024). Shared identity cultivated in Islamic value-oriented sites can markedly enhance the propensity to revisit (Latifa et al., 2025).

Managerial implications indicate that tourism destination managers on Sabang Island must strategically enhance homophily via a values-driven strategy and the segmentation of Muslim tourists, especially those originating from North Sumatra. This can be done by creating halal tourist packages for groups like families, religious study groups, or religious organizations that include worship activities, halal food, and socializing. Also, halal festivals and religious tourism should be focused on building interactive environments that bring people closer together. Marketing communication techniques should also highlight the common Malay-Islamic culture and religious values that tourists and the local community share. Also, training staff in Islamic hospitality and cultural awareness is important for making sure that everyone has the same experience.

### **The Influence of Halal Tourism on Revisit Intention Through Homophily**

The analytical results indicate that homophily significantly influences the mediation of halal tourism on the revisit intention of tourists from North Sumatra visiting Sabang Island's tourist spots. This conclusion corroborates with studies indicating that halal tourism experiences can enhance happiness and loyalty by aligning Islamic beliefs (Yaghi & Yaghi, 2025). Halal tourism characteristics enhance social connections, subsequently influencing the intention to return (Rus et al., 2024). Moreover, the congruence of cultural and religious values serves as a mediating factor in influencing the allegiance of Muslim tourists (Harini et al., 2025). Perceived resemblance (homophily) serves as a mediator in the correlation between tourism experiences and destination loyalty (Sodawan & Hsu, 2026). Social bonds based on similar values can enhance the connection between service quality and the intention to return.

Managerial implications stress that tourism destination managers must do more than just provide halal facilities; they must also intentionally create social encounters that enhance homophily. Managers can create Muslim community-based tourism packages, including religious group tours, that include worship events, halal food, and group social activities. They can also set up events like Islamic gatherings, study tours, and halal festivals that bring together travelers who share the same religious beliefs. Marketing tactics can focus on value-based positioning by using digital material, testimonials, and stories of tourist experiences to show how Malay and Islamic cultures are similar, how the halal lifestyle works, and how it may bring spiritual comfort. Also, the quality of service should be better by training employees in Islamic service excellence and cultural sensitivity. This way, all touchpoints at the destination will always show Islamic principles

### **Conclusions**

This study finds that halal tourism positively and significantly influences revisit intention, both directly and indirectly, with homophily serving as a mediating variable. This research corroborates that the alignment of religious, cultural, and lifestyle values between visitors and locations (value

congruence) is a vital factor in influencing emotional connection and comfort. The mediating function of homophily indicates that social encounters congruent with visitors' identities can enhance inclinations for repeat visits in a more enduring manner. So, halal tourism development should be seen as more than just building sharia-compliant buildings. It should also be seen as creating communal experiences based on shared values.

The practical consequences of this research motivate destination managers and tourism stakeholders to adopt values- and community-oriented strategies. Creating Muslim community-based tourism packages, planning religious activities, and making marketing stories that focus on cultural and religious identity are all smart ways to boost homophily. Also, to make sure that tourists have a consistent experience, it is important to improve service quality by training staff in Islamic hospitality and cultural awareness. Local governments are also expected to improve the policies and branding of socially-based halal tourism to get tourists to come back and stay longer.

There are a number of problems with this study that need to be thought about. First, the use of accidental sampling with a small sample size may make the results less useful for other situations. Second, the study's concentration on travelers solely from North Sumatra does not adequately capture the larger array of tourist characteristics. Third, the quantitative approach utilizing SEM-PLS was inadequate in thoroughly examining the subjective experiences of tourists in influencing homophily. The research model was confined to particular variables, hence neglecting other pertinent considerations.

It is suggested that future study employ probability sampling methods with a greater number of respondents to enhance external validity. Additionally, broadening the research focus to encompass diverse halal tourism locations and incorporating both domestic and international travelers will enhance the empirical results. It is also suggested to use a mixed methods approach to combine quantitative and qualitative study in order to have a better understanding of how homophily works. To make the model clearer in predicting revisit intention, you might add factors like destination picture, perceived value, and emotional experience.

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