

## **Sustainable Halal Tourism: Integrating Education and Gastronomy to Promote Cultural Diversity in Malaysia**

Siti Syahirah Saffinee, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia  
Wan Nazri Che Mat Safiee, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia  
Norfarhana Ahmad Ghafar, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia

The Asian Conference on the Social Sciences 2025  
Official Conference Proceedings

### **Abstract**

Malaysia views gastronomy as a powerful agent for understanding cultures and sustainable tourism development. The present study is a critical look at halal tourism in Malaysia and highlights how Maqasid Shariah values are being practiced, particularly through the application of Halal EduGastronomy, which is the integration of education and halal local cuisines. It aims at fostering appreciation for culture while enhancing the ability of the local street food sellers. The general aim of this research is to assess how the application of the concept of Halalan-Toyyiban enhances the halal food experience in tourist destinations in Malaysia. Qualitative case study design was employed, wherein participant observation and in-depth interviewing were utilized. The method provides rich information about strengths and weaknesses of Maqasid Shariah implementation in the halal tourism practice. Findings show that Shariah-compliant practices improve food quality, reinforce ties between tourists and local halal food vendors, and reduce health, safety, and ethical concerns. All these findings combined collectively increase respect for Malaysia's multicultural heritage, which aligns with national tourism goals. Based on these outcomes, the study recommends the Halal EduGastronomy Tourism (HEGTo) model, a Shariah-integrated system that supports cultural preservation and economic sustainability through ethical tourism. By combining education, heritage, and cuisine, this structure offers a strategic direction to upscale Malaysia's position as an excellent Muslim-friendly tourism destination. The study offers significant implications for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and resource persons along with a reference point in setting sustainable halal tourism practices for Malaysia.

*Keywords:* halal tourism, Maqasid Shariah, education gastronomy, cultural diversity, sustainable tourism

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## Introduction

Malaysia is now a global leader in Halal tourism and has led the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) year after year due to the well-established Halal ecosystem. Key agencies such as JAKIM and the Halal Development Corporation (HDC) are key players in certifying and promoting Muslim-compliant tourism products such as Halal-certified food, prayer facilities, and Muslim-friendly accommodations (Saffinee et. al., 2017; Yahya et al., 2025). The integration of Maqasid Shariah, defending religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property, makes tourism moral and inclusive. Malaysia implements these principles through the use of Halal-certified products and secure, family-friendly environments. EduGastronomy promotes cultural learning and empower Halal food business entrepreneurs. This is Malaysia's unique strength in offering experiential and sustainable Halal tourism experience. This study determines the integration of Maqasid Shariah, the objectives of Islamic law, in framing Halal tourism practices that are sustainable in Malaysia. It discovers EduGastronomy (Saffinee et al., 2025), a blend of education and culinary study (Behnke, 2023), as a tool for tourists to learn about Muslim local cultures through food. Locations like Kelantan demonstrate how indigenous foods are able to produce engaging, halal tourism experiences.

Maqasid Shariah-based halal tourism ensures that tourism activities conform to Islamic teachings as well as ethical and sustainable principles. It aims to protect five necessities: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Protection of religion enables tourists to fulfill their religious duties. This includes the provision of halal food, prayer facilities, and Muslim-friendly services. These amenities attract Muslim tourists and promote inclusivity. Protection of life focuses on health, safety, hygiene, and morality, empathizing with the halalan toyyiban concept of clean and wholesome services. Protection of intellect focuses on avoiding harmful drugs like alcohol, protecting mental health and facilitating sound judgment. Lineage protection focuses on respect for family values, as indicated in gender-separate facilities and modest environments. It helps maintain moral and social integrity while on the move. Protection of property involves patronizing ethical enterprise, maintaining local products, and supporting halal-certified entrepreneurship that promotes fair trade and economic growth.

In addition, EduGastronomy merges gastronomy and education, offering travelers a deeper cultural experience using the local halal food. Through cooking classes, food tours, and excursions to local suppliers, tourists are able to explore traditional food while appreciating community identity. It facilitates cultural exchange and provides sustainable income for the locals. However, halal tourism faces challenges such as unclear global halal standards, limited supplier awareness, and limited facilities in non-Muslim nations. In spite of rising Muslim travel demands offer opportunities for economic growth, jobs, and cultural understanding. Destinations can build trust, attract more visitors, and develop socially responsible tourism that benefits all societies by resolving these issues and investing in halal-friendly services. This paper aims to explore how Maqasid Shariah, employed by EduGastronomy, enhances local food vendors and stimulates cultural diversity.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach (Hollstein, 2011) to explore the role of Halal EduGastronomy Tourism (HEGTo) in promoting sustainable tourism and cultural diversity in Malaysia. A literature review was conducted to identify educational strategies relevant to the Halal tourism sector. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were held with eight local food providers actively engaged in Halal food services across various regions in Malaysia. The

interviews explored key themes such as cultural preservation, education through gastronomy, and the economic impact of Halal tourism. This method was chosen to gain rich, context-specific insights into how traditional dishes and local culinary practices contribute to halal tourism. Informants were selected based on their experience in preparing signature local dishes, as summarized below:

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of Malaysian Informants*

Type of Food Premise (FP)	Country	Signature Dish
FP 1	Malaysia	Budu dan ulam-ulaman
FP 2	Malaysia	Nasi Kerabu
FP 3	Malaysia	Nasi Ayam
FP 4	Malaysia	Nasi Ulam
FP 5	Malaysia	Nasi Ayam
FP 6	Malaysia	Laksa Kedah
FP 7	Malaysia	Rendang
FP 8	Malaysia	Masak Lemak

## Finding and Discussion

### Passing on Traditional Culinary Knowledge

The interviews revealed that Malaysian traditional food knowledge is largely passed down from one generation to the next, in line with the family role in culinary heritage maintenance. FP1 stated learning from parents and friends, whereas FP4 emphasized the royal Malay-Indonesian recipe lineage, echoing food as a carrier of cultural identity. Whereas informal learning was the experience of some providers, others such as FP5 acquired recipes through the process of experiment and cultural sharing, for instance, Chinese cooking methods. Locally, acceptance also became a factor; FP1 indicated that the acceptability by communities affirmed the authenticity of the Kelantanese food. These outcomes are in agreement with the role of Halal EduGastronomy (HEGTo) in transmitting the heritage through food, stories, and lived practice.

### Sourcing of Raw Ingredients

Most informants highlighted locality and freshness, opting for Muslim vendors of their trust rather than official Halal certification. FP2 and FP6 highlighted the importance of freshness as a quality and taste determinant, with FP4 elucidating purchases directly from morning markets and Malay villagers. Although formal certification was absent, trust assurance prevailed. However, FP8 pointed toward supply consistency as a problem, suggesting the need for stronger supply chain control in Halal gastronomy due to tourism demands.

## **Food Premises Hygiene Procedures**

Procedures ranged from proper routine to simple daily disinfecting. FP1 employed staff to plan orderly cleaning schedules, while FP5 employed SOPs based on corporate best practices. FP6 did less. These variations offer opportunities for improved hygiene practices. Implementing Japan's digital hygiene systems (Shannon, 2024) would support Malaysian Halal food premises in upholding greater compliance and tourist trust .

## **Sharing Culinary Knowledge to Achieve Halal EduGastronomy**

Malaysian food providers employed varied means of sharing traditional knowledge, including cooking demonstrations, visual aids, and social media. FP1 and FP4 gave demonstrations; FP2 employed infographics to educate customers about Kelantanese culture. Others (e.g., FP8) created content on online platforms like TikTok and Facebook to reach more people. Some providers blended experiential elements like traditional environments (FP5), native clothes (FP4), and outdoor spaces (FP6). These experiential approaches supplement the traditional HEGTo framework, enhancing cultural stories and sustainable involvement in Halal tourism.

## **Conclusion**

This study reaffirms the significance of Halal EduGastronomy Tourism (HEGTo) as a Shariah-compliant framework that synergizes cultural conservation, sustainable tourism, and business viability. Malaysian food operators are actively preserving culinary heritage through cookery classes, storytelling, and themed restaurants (Shahrin et al., 2025), which provide value addition to the tourist experience. Among these strengths, issues of concern are Halal certification procedures, standardization of hygiene, and online presence. In order to be the world leader in Halal tourism, Malaysia must institutionalize HEGTo programs like: Certified traditional cooking classes; Themed Halal food tours and Digital storytelling applications; EduGastronomy tour packages with set itineraries. These projects will not only preserve Malaysia's rich gastronomic heritage but also elevate its global positioning as a world-class Shariah-compliant cultural tourism destination, appealing to Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author thanks the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and the Ministry of Education Malaysia for funding the research under the scheme (Ref: FRGS/1/2023/SSI06/USIM/02/1).

## **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

This manuscript was prepared with the assistance of ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-4.5 model). The AI tool was used to support the structuring, language refinement, and proofreading of the text. The authors provided all original content, data, and findings based on primary research. The AI was not used to generate research ideas, collect or analyze data, or draw conclusions. All content was critically reviewed and approved by the authors to ensure academic integrity and accuracy.

## References

- Behnke, C. (2023). Blended learning in the culinary arts: tradition meets technology. In *Blended Learning* (pp. 13–30). Routledge.
- Hollstein, B. (2011). Qualitative approaches. *The SAGE handbook of social network analysis*, 1(01), 404–416.
- Saffinee, S. S., Has-Yun Hashim, K. S., Mahamod, L. H., Jamaludin, M. A., Muflih, B. K., & Othman, R. (2017). The standard elements for Muslim friendly accommodation premises. *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies*, 3(2), 121–134.
- Saffinee, S. S., Safiee, W. N. C. M., Salleh, M. M. M., & Noor, K. M. (2025). Stories in Every Bite: Can traditional dishes drive halal edugastronomy tourism in Kelantan?. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 10(SI24), 241–246. <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v10iSI24.6524>
- Shahrin, N., Hussin, H., & Shahrin, R. (2025). Malay Heritage Food Competitiveness and Sustainability in Kuala Lumpur. *Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing*, 37(2), 249–269.
- Shannon, K. (2024). The Early Thought of Gotō Shimpei and the Origins of State Hygiene in Japan, 1879–1890. *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine*, 56(2), 279–309.
- Yahya, N. Y., Hamid, M. A., & Hanafiah, M. H. M. (2025). Reviewing The Potential of Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR) Branding.

**Contact email:** syahirah.saffinee@usim.edu.my