

## Visual persuasion of halal tourism on social media: the elaboration likelihood model perspective

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The rise of tourism-destination content on social media has also encouraged the development of halal tourism, which promotes Muslim-friendly destinations. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) has been widely used to explain the persuasion process in marketing and tourism communication, yet research integrating elements of visual persuasion, halal identity, and message-processing mechanisms in halal tourism promotion on social media remains limited.

**Purpose:** This study aims to analyze the elements of visual communication that function as a persuasive mechanism in promoting halal tourism on social media from the perspective of ELM. **Methods:** This study employs a mixed-methods design with a sequential explanatory approach in two stages. The first stage is a content analysis. The second phase continued with a survey of social media users and was strengthened through semi-structured interviews with industry practitioners to integrate all findings. **Results:** The study shows that visual elements dominate halal tourism promotion on social media. Destination visuals appeared in 67.2% of content, followed by halal products or services (65.5%), influencers or tourist testimonials (63.8%), and religious symbols (62.1%). Meanwhile, halal certification only appears in 22.4% of content. The survey results showed that respondents highly recommended Islamic values in the promotion of halal tourism ( $M = 4.60$ ), sharia tourism education ( $M = 4.40$ ), Muslim cultural symbols ( $M = 4.38$ ), and visualization of halal facilities ( $M = 4.19$ ). **Conclusion:** Persuasion for halal tourism promotion on social media does not work effectively through central and peripheral channels separately. Visual elements, such as Islamic religious and cultural symbols, play a role in forming a Perceived Halal Identity that bridges the audience's initial attention to an in-depth evaluation of the destination's halal attributes. **Implications:** By proposing Perceived Halal Identity as a mediator between peripherals and central instructions, this study expands the ELM model in halal tourism communication.

**Keywords:** Halal tourism; visual communication; social media persuasion; elaboration likelihood model; perceived halal identity

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## INTRODUCTION

The halal tourism industry has become a significant and dynamic sector in the global tourism economy, driven by the growth of the Muslim population and the demand for Muslim-friendly and Islamic-compliant tourism (Supriyadi & Rahman, 2024). The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) reported that the number of international Muslim tourists is expected to reach approximately 230 million by 2028, with projected expenditure of approximately USD 300 billion (Sumaryadi et al., 2020; WiT, 2024). This growth indicates the importance of halal tourism, not only as a religious phenomenon but also as a strategic market segment.

Along with the digital transformation in the tourism industry, social media has become one of the main channels in marketing communication for tourist destinations. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enable fast, interactive, and visually based dissemination of information. In the context of digital marketing, visuals serve not only as an informational medium but also as a persuasive one that can shape the destination's image, evoke the audience's emotions, and encourage interest in visiting (Fong et al., 2025). Research shows that visual content disseminated on social media significantly influences travelers' perceptions of destinations and their travel decisions (Berhanu & Raj, 2020; Hudson et al., 2016). Visualization of destinations through photos, videos, and reviews can create a symbolic experience for potential travelers before they even travel in

person (Aliyah et al., 2025; Assiouras et al., 2024).

User-generated content on social media serves as a form of persuasive communication that can increase trust in the destination and intention to visit among potential tourists (Belén Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2024). These communication practices are critical because they enable destination managers to highlight Muslim-friendly attributes, such as halal food and worship facilities, that directly meet Muslim tourists' needs.

In addition, visual communication also has different characteristics in halal tourism promotion. In addition to highlighting the destination's attractiveness, promotional content must also reflect Islamic values, including the availability of halal food, worship facilities, and an environment that aligns with religious norms. Such visual representations build Muslim tourists' trust in the destinations promoted (Hernández, 2022; Triansyah, 2023). However, in practice, most promotional content for halal tourism on social media still relies on generic visuals. It shows that visual communication strategies in halal tourism promotion struggle to craft persuasive, relevant messages for Muslim audiences.

Previous research has shown that the level of religiosity influences Muslim travelers' destination preferences, with tourists tending to choose places that conveniently support worship activities (Nugroho et al., 2025). In this context, visual communication becomes a medium for building a destination's halal identity. Through

the representation of Islamic symbols, worship activities, and Muslim-friendly attributes, visual communication helps the audience recognize the destination's suitability with Islamic values and form an initial perception of its halal character (Abdul Razak, 2019; Sugandi et al., 2024).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), is one of the most influential frameworks for explaining how persuasive communication shapes individual attitudes and behaviors. This model explains that persuasion occurs through two information-processing pathways: the central and peripheral pathways. The central pathway involves an in-depth, critical, and argumentative evaluation of the message's quality and appropriateness, based on the evidence presented. Generally, it results in a stable and lasting change in attitude. In contrast, peripheral paths rely on simple cues, such as visual appeal, symbols, source credibility, celebrity endorsements, or message aesthetics, that influence attitudes without requiring critical effort to understand them (Kitchen et al., 2014; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Thi & Phuong, 2025). In contemporary digital communication, such as social media, these two cognitive pathways often operate simultaneously because users are exposed to a combination of informative content and engaging visual stimuli that shape their perceptions, beliefs, and behavioral intentions (Lam et al., 2022; Zhang & Lee, 2022).

In the halal tourism communication ecosystem on social media, these two channels of persuasion often interact simultaneously.

Factual information about halal certification, availability of worship facilities, and details of Muslim-friendly tourism services serve as cues for highly engaged audiences. Instead, visually appealing images of destinations, iconic religious symbols, and emotionally stirring narratives function as additional cues that instantly grab the audience's attention (Dwi et al., 2025; Michael Hall & Prayag, 2019). Therefore, the effectiveness of halal tourism promotion depends on the synergy between strong informational messages and compelling visual cues in encouraging tourists' interest in visiting halal destinations (Taufiqurrachman, 2020).

Previous research has proven that visual media and visual rhetoric effectively shape the image of digital tourism destinations. The literature on ELM regarding social media and digital marketing is also rapidly evolving to explain how consumers process persuasive messages through a combination of rational and emotional cues. However, such studies generally focus on general commercial advertising, such as live-broadcast commerce, virtual-reality advertising, influencer marketing, or electronic word-of-mouth products. The study also focuses on visual aesthetics, storytelling, or the appeal of destinations. It has not explicitly discussed the halal dimension or persuasion mechanism through central and peripheral channels (Polymeri et al., 2025; Prasetyawati et al., 2026). In other words, the application of ELM theory to halal tourism communication remains relatively limited.

On the other hand, research on halal tourism also focuses on the image of halal destinations, destination development strategies, and Muslim tourists' interest in visiting halal destinations (Marlina et al., 2024; Royanow et al., 2024). Research on halal communication on social media generally discusses halal branding, the use of halal logos, interest in buying halal products, and consumer perceptions of the halal industry (Khan et al., 2021). Therefore, a significant gap exists in digital tourism communication. To date, there has not been much research that combines three main aspects within a single framework: visual persuasion, halal tourism promotion on social media, and ELM perspectives.

Therefore, this research examines how visual elements on social media function as both central and peripheral channels in shaping audience responses to halal tourist destinations. This gap is relevant in the context of halal tourism, where religious symbols, visual representations, and halal-related information are often presented simultaneously in social media content. Therefore, this study explores how persuasive cues are built in the promotion of halal tourism on social media, as well as how the audience responds to these cues from the perspective of ELM. By integrating content analysis, survey data, and industry insights, this research develops the concept of ELM in the context of halal tourism communication.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This design allows researchers to integrate quantitative findings from social media content analysis with survey data from social media users to gain a comprehensive understanding of persuasion mechanisms in halal tourism promotion. The research was carried out in two successive stages: quantitative content analysis and social media user surveys.

Content analysis was carried out using a directed approach, based on an established theoretical framework. In this study, ELM was used to identify the characteristics of persuasive messages in halal tourism promotional content. This analysis did not aim to measure audience elaboration directly, but rather to identify elements of messages that theoretically could drive processing through central and peripheral channels.

The unit of analysis in this study is halal tourism promotional content published on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Sampling was carried out using purposive sampling techniques with the following criteria: (1) content promoting destinations, services, or products related to halal tourism; (2) contain keywords such as halal tourism, *halal living*, *Muslim friendly*, halal food, Sharia hotels, or other terms that show a connection with the needs of Muslim tourists; (3) be publicly accessible during the data collection period; and (4) contain relevant visual and narrative elements to be analyzed using the ELM framework.

**Table 1 Content Analysis Coding Categorization**

Dimensions	Category
Central Cues	Worship facilities
Central Cues	Halal products or services
Central Cues	Halal certification
Central Cues	Muslim-friendly service
Peripheral Cues	Visual destination
Peripheral Cues	Religious symbols
Peripheral Cues	Halal food visuals
Peripheral Cues	Influencers/Testimonials
Peripheral Cues	Emotional narrative and visual aesthetics

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Based on these criteria, 58 pieces of content qualified as a research sample, consisting of 42 from TikTok (72.4%), 8 from Instagram (13.8%), and 8 from YouTube (13.8%). The content was chosen because it included elements of halal tourism promotion relevant to Muslim tourists' needs and could be analyzed under the category of persuasive instructions within the framework of ELM. Data were collected by documenting the content link, uploading metadata, and recording the content description and visual characteristics displayed. The unit of research analysis is a social media content, while the coding unit is the persuasive message element within each content item. Because a single content can contain more than one category, the number of categories can exceed the amount of content analyzed.

The coding categories are developed deductively from the concepts of central and peripheral hints in ELM, as presented in Table 1. The central clue is operationalized as a message element that provides substantive information

about the destination's halal attributes. This category includes information on worship facilities, halal restaurants, halal certification, Muslim-friendly services, and other details that explain the destination's halal characteristics.

Peripheral cues are operationalized as visual and symbolic elements that serve to attract the audience's attention without an in-depth, substantive explanation of halal attributes. Coding guidelines include operational definitions, indicators, and examples of how each category is observed to help coders identify it consistently. Each category is recorded based on its presence in the content, through both visual and narrative elements in halal tourism promotional materials. This category includes destination visuals, religious symbols, halal food visuals, influencer use, visual aesthetics, and emotional narrative elements that appear in promotional content.

The coding process was carried out by three coders with different backgrounds relevant to the research topic. The first coder

was a lecturer with expertise in tourism communication; the second coder was a halal tourism actor and a social media manager for tourism promotion; and the third coder was the main researcher. Before the coding process began, all coders received coding guidelines that included operational definitions, indicators, and examples for each analysis category. Furthermore, each coder independently coded 58 halal tourism promotional contents that served as the research sample. Each piece of content was analyzed using a coding sheet that recorded each category. A single piece of content could contain more than one indicator on both *the central lead* dimension and *the peripheral lead*. The coding results were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to identify the dominant pattern of persuasion strategies used in halal tourism promotion.

To ensure consistency in the encoding results, inter-coder reliability was assessed using Krippendorff's Alpha, appropriate for nominal categorical data. Testing was conducted on nine coding categories used in the study. The test results showed that the entire category had a Krippendorff's Alpha value above 0.99, with a range of 0.994 to 0.999 and an average of 0.997. These results showed a very high level of agreement among coders, indicating that the encoding data was sufficiently reliable for subsequent analysis.

**Social Media User Survey:** The second stage of the study used surveys to examine how social media users responded to the persuasion

strategies identified in the content analysis stage. The research population was social media users who had accessed or been exposed to halal tourism promotional content. Sampling was carried out using the snowball sampling technique. The questionnaire was distributed online across various social media platforms, yielding 141 respondents who met the inclusion criteria. The research instrument used a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' perception of visual communication elements in halal tourism promotion, including the representation of Islamic values, Muslim cultural symbols, Sharia tourism education, visualization of halal facilities, and the influence of visual communication on interest in visiting halal tourist destinations. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means. The mean value was used to describe respondents' approval of each statement.

Based on the data, female respondents numbered 73 (51.8%), while male respondents numbered 67 (47.5%). This composition showed a relatively balanced distribution of male and female respondents, enabling the collection of diverse perspectives on halal tourism promotion on social media. Based on age group, respondents were dominated by 70 people (49.6%) over 40 years old, followed by 39 people (27.7%) in the 31-40 age group, 21-30 years old (14.9%), and 10 people under 21 years old (7.1%). This composition shows that most respondents are adults, who generally have broader experience with digital media and access

to tourism-related information. The diversity of respondents' characteristics provides a fairly representative picture of social media users' perception of visual communication in halal tourism promotion.

**Halal Tourism Industry Interview:** To enrich the interpretation of the content analysis and survey results, this study also conducted semi-structured interviews with one key informant from the halal tourism industry, a representative of ESQ Tours Travel. The interview was conducted online via Zoom on June 17, 2025, and lasted about 112 minutes. The informant was purposively selected because ESQ Tours Travel was one of the travel organizers that consistently promoted Islamic-based tourism services through various digital platforms.

The interviews focused on visual communication strategies, the use of social media, the representation of Islamic values in promotional materials, and practitioners' views on the effectiveness of visual elements and halal information in attracting Muslim tourists. The interview data were not used as the primary data source but rather as explanatory qualitative evidence to help interpret the findings from content analysis and surveys. The analysis was carried out thematically, identifying patterns relevant to the concepts of central and peripheral clues in the ELM.

**Data Integration:** The results of the quantitative method stage were then integrated with the interview results at the interpretation stage to explain visual communication strategies in halal tourism promotion that operated

through the path of persuasion, as described in the ELM model. The findings of the content analysis were used to identify the dominant visual communication strategies in halal tourism promotion, while the survey results were used to explain how the audience received and evaluated these strategies. Thus, integrating the two stages enabled the study to elucidate the relationship between the characteristics of halal tourism promotional messages and social media users' responses from an ELM perspective.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Characteristics of Persuasive Cues in Halal Tourism Promotion Content.** Table 2 presents the distribution of persuasive cues found in the 58 halal tourism promotional contents. The coding category was developed based on the concept of central and peripheral cues in ELM. Because a single piece of content can contain more than one category, the reported frequency is not the same as the number of research samples.

Table 2 shows that the most dominant category is destination visuals, which appear in 39 contents (67.2%). Other categories also often found are halal products or services (65.5%), influencers or tourist testimonials (63.8%), and religious symbols (62.1%). In contrast, halal certification appeared in only 13 contents (22.4%), making it the category with the lowest frequency among all indicators analyzed. These findings show that halal tourism promotion on social media tends to combine visual and informational elements, although visual elements remain more prominent as a strategy

**Table 2 Distribution of Persuasive Cues in Halal Tourism Promotion Content**

Dimensions	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Central Cues	Worship facilities	23	39,7
	Halal products or services	38	65,5
	Halal certification	13	22,4
	Muslim-friendly service	19	32,8
Peripheral Cues	Visual destination	39	67,2
	Religious symbols	36	62,1
	Halal food visuals	24	41,4
	Influencers/Testimonials	37	63,8
	Emotional narrative and visual aesthetics	26	44,8

Note: A single piece of content can contain more than one category so the total frequency may exceed the number of content items analyzed

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

to attract audience attention in the early stages of message exposure.

Table 3 shows the variation in the use of persuasive routes on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. On TikTok, the categories that appear most often are influencers or tourist testimonials

(28 contents), destination visuals (27 contents), halal products or services (26 contents), and religious symbols (25 contents). On Instagram, the relatively dominant categories are halal products or services, influencers or testimonials, and halal food visuals.

**Table 3 Distribution of Persuasive Routes Based on Social Media Platforms**

Category	TikTok (n=42)	Instagram (n=8)	YouTube (n=8)
Worship facilities	16	0	6
Halal products or services	26	5	4
Halal certification	8	3	1
Muslim-friendly service	14	1	4
Visual destination	27	3	6
Religious symbols	25	2	8
Halal food visuals	16	4	3
Influencers/Testimonials	28	5	6
Emotional narrative and visual aesthetics	18	0	2

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Meanwhile, on YouTube, religious symbols appear in all analyzed content, followed by destination visuals and influencer or traveler testimonials. To test whether the difference was statistically significant, Chi-Square tests were performed on all coding categories. The test results showed that only the visual category of the destination had a significant difference in distribution between platforms ( $\chi^2 = 15.115$ ;  $p = 0.0047$  after Holm correction; Cramer's  $V = 0.510$ ), whereas the other categories showed no significant difference.

In general, halal tourism promotion on social media combines visual and informational elements. The findings show that destination visuals are the most dominant category, followed by halal products or services, influencers or tourist testimonials, and religious symbols. This pattern shows that the persuasion strategy in halal tourism promotion not only relies on visual appeal but is also supported by information that addresses Muslim tourists' needs. Nonetheless, the categories included in peripheral cues, such as destination visuals, religious symbols, halal food visuals, and visual aesthetic elements, still occupy prominent positions in the content analyzed. These findings indicate that halal tourism promotion on social media tends to use visual and symbolic appeals to build initial audience interest, while more substantive information about the halal attributes of destinations strengthens the evaluation process for the promoted destination. This pattern aligns with the characteristics of social media, which prioritize visuals as the primary element

for attracting users' attention and building engagement with the message.

From ELM's perspective, these findings suggest that halal tourism promotion tends to use peripheral cues as an entry point to capture audience attention yet is nonetheless supported by relatively strong central cues. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), individuals with low engagement or a lack of motivation to process information tend to rely on simple cues, such as visual appeal, symbols, or emotions, when forming judgments about a message. In the context of social media, characterized by the rapid flow of information and high competition for attention, this kind of strategy becomes relevant for increasing the likelihood that content will be noticed by the audience.

Nevertheless, central guidelines build the credibility of halal tourism promotion. Information about worship facilities, Muslim-friendly services, and halal products shows that some content, besides seeking to attract the audience's attention, provides information that can be used to evaluate the destination's suitability for Muslim tourists' needs. Therefore, halal tourism promotion on social media does not rely solely on peripheral channels but combines informative and visual elements with varying levels of emphasis.

Visual Destination as the Main Representation of Halal Tourism. Based on the results of content analysis, destination visuals are the most dominant element in halal tourism promotion on social media. The significance of destination visual categories across platforms

shows that visual elements are at the core of the communication strategy. In the context of visual content-oriented social media, representations of landscapes, architecture, and tourist experiences serve as peripheral cues that most readily capture the audience's attention in the early stages of message exposure. These findings are consistent with research by Fong et al. (2025) and Assiouras et al. (2024), that destination visuals strongly influence travel imagination, destination perception, and tourists' intention to visit. The findings also strengthen the argument that visual imagery influences tourists' decision-making (Matos et al., 2015; Mehta, 2024). The visual dominance of destinations suggests that halal identity is often introduced through engaging visual experiences before audiences evaluate substantive halal attributes, such as worship facilities, Muslim-friendly services, or halal certification.

The cross-tabulation results showed that destination visuals appeared consistently across social media platforms, albeit at varying frequencies. On TikTok, destination visuals appeared in 27 of the 42 pieces of content analyzed, while on YouTube, this category appeared in 6 of the 8 pieces of content. On the other hand, on Instagram, destination visuals are used less frequently than in other categories, such as halal products or services and influencers. This pattern helps explain why destination visuals are the only category showing significant differences in distribution across platforms. The findings show that destination visuals are the most adaptive persuasive element to each

platform's characteristics and are the main entry point for building the audience's initial attention to and perception of halal tourist destinations.

The findings show that destination visuals are the most dominant category in halal tourism promotion. Most of the content features natural panoramas, tourist landscapes, architectural buildings, and destination atmospheres designed to arouse the audience's interest in the tourist experience on offer. Interestingly, halal identity in much of the content is not always communicated through explicit verbal explanations, but through visual associations that form the perception that the destination is friendly to Muslim tourists.

This condition shows that the concept of halal tourism on social media is represented not only as a set of religious rules or standards but also as a tourist experience that is interesting, comfortable, and aesthetically valuable. Thus, the halal element is not presented as the sole attraction but is instead integrated into the broader narrative of the tourist experience. This kind of strategy allows halal tourism promotion to reach a more diverse audience, including tourists who are not specifically seeking a faith-based destination but are interested in the experience it offers.

These findings also show a shift in how halal tourism communicates, from an approach that previously emphasized adherence to sharia principles to a more experience-oriented one. In the context of social media, the destination's visual appeal serves to build a positive perception before the audience evaluates its

halal attributes.

Religious Symbols and the Construction of Halal Identity. In addition to destination visuals, religious symbols are a fairly dominant category in the research sample. The symbol appears in various forms, including mosques, worship practices, Muslim clothing, calligraphy, and other expressions of Islamic culture. The presence of these symbols serves as an identity marker that lets the audience recognize that a destination or tourist service is connected to Islamic values.

In contrast to halal certification information, which is formal and requires further explanation, religious symbols work through a relatively fast recognition process. The audience does not need to read the information in depth to understand the message they want to convey because the symbol already has a socially and culturally known meaning, such as tourists wearing hijab. The use of religious symbols in social media, with its short attention spans, is an effective strategy for building a halal identity as it is quickly and easily understood. These findings suggest that religious symbols function as both peripheral routes and identity markers with cognitive significance for Muslim tourists.

However, the dominance of religious symbols also suggests that halal identities are often built through visual representations. This is evident in the lower prevalence of halal certification compared to religious symbols, which are easier to display in visual content. In other words, perceptions of halal towards a destination are heavily built through symbols

and imagery.

Low Emergence of Halal Certification. An interesting finding is the low number of halal certification categories compared. Of all the content analyzed, only a small portion explicitly displayed halal certificates or mentioned the certification status of tourism products and services. This indicates that formal information about halal has not yet become the focus of communication strategies by destination managers and content creators.

The low use of halal certification can be understood in light of the characteristics of social media, which emphasize short, easy-to-understand visual communication. Information about halal certification generally requires a detailed explanation and is considered less interesting than destination or culinary visuals. As a result, such formal information is often regarded as complementary.

On the other hand, these findings also show a gap between the marketing and verification aspects of halal tourism communication. Although halal identity is typically displayed through specific symbols, foods, and facilities, formal evidence of halal is rarely presented to audiences. This condition could affect tourists' trust in halal claims in digital promotions.

Audience Perception of Visual Communication Elements in Halal Tourism Promotion. The survey of 141 respondents showed that the audience paid close attention to visual communication elements related to Islamic identity and values. Table 4 shows that respondents expressed strong approval

**Table 4 Respondents' Perception of Visual Communication in Halal Tourism Promotion**

Statement	Mean
Visual communication in halal tourism promotion must pay attention to Islamic values	4,60
Education about sharia tourism ethics needs to be included in halal tourism promotion	4,40
Halal tourism promotion content needs to use symbols that are in accordance with Muslim culture	4,38
Visualization of halal facilities needs to be displayed explicitly	4,19
Visual communication affects interest in visiting halal tourist destinations	4,08

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

of visual communication elements related to Islamic identity and values in promoting halal tourism. The highest average score was found in the statement that visual communication in halal tourism promotion must pay attention to Islamic values (mean = 4.60), followed by education on Sharia tourism ethics (mean = 4.40) and the use of symbols in accordance with Muslim culture (mean = 4.38). These findings show that audiences expect visually appealing content and a clear representation of Islamic identity in halal tourism promotion.

Respondents also showed strong approval of explicit visualization of halal facilities (mean = 4.19). This finding indicates that information about facilities that support Muslim tourists' needs remains important in the decision-making process. Therefore, visual appeal alone is insufficient without information demonstrating the destination's appropriateness for Muslim tourists' needs.

Integration with Content Analysis Findings. Compared to the content analysis results, this research found an interesting pattern. Halal tourism promotional content is dominated

by destination visuals, religious symbols, and halal food visuals, which fall under the category of peripheral instructions. At the same time, respondents gave high ratings for the representation of Islamic values, religious symbols, and halal facilities, which are closer to the function of the central directive. This finding suggests that halal tourism promotion on social media tends to use visual elements to attract audiences' attention, but the effectiveness of its persuasion is dependent on the information relevant to Muslim tourists' needs.

From the ELM perspective, the pattern shows that the visual communication strategy of halal tourism not only relies on peripheral paths through visual attractions but also requires informative cues that enable the audience to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the promoted destination. Therefore, effective halal tourism promotion needs to combine compelling visuals with information that reinforces the credibility and relevance of the message to Muslim audiences.

Industry Perspectives on Halal Tourism  
Visual Communication

The findings from the content analysis and survey were strengthened by the results of interviews with representatives of ESQ Tours Travel, a halal tourism industry player in West Java. The resource person explained that the digital promotion strategy they use makes visual elements the main component to attract the audience's attention, especially on Instagram, YouTube, and other visual-based platforms. According to the resource person, the most effective content is that which showcases destinations relevant to Islamic values, the atmosphere of worship, halal restaurants, and spiritual experiences that can be obtained during the trip. These findings are in line with the research of Assiouras et al. (2024), Fong et al. (2025), and Matos et al. (2015), which shows that visual representation of destinations has an important role in building the image of destinations, attracting audience attention, and influencing tourists' intention to visit.

Interestingly, the representative emphasized that the main purpose of halal tourism visual communication is not just to display destinations but to build the emotional and spiritual experience of prospective tourists. Therefore, the visuals used tend to show a peaceful, inspiring, and close atmosphere to Muslim religious life. In addition, the use of religious symbols is important because it helps the audience quickly recognize a tourist product's halal identity. These findings support the research by Battour and Ismail (2016) and Abror et al. (2020), who show that spiritual experience and the fulfillment of religious needs

are important components distinguishing halal tourism from other forms of tourism.

The results of the interview also show that promoting halal tourism is not sufficient if it relies solely on attractive visuals. The resource person explained that all promotional materials must undergo internal review to remain in accordance with Islamic principles and build the trust of prospective Muslim tourists. This finding is in line with the results of a survey showing that respondents paid close attention to the representation of Islamic values and the presence of halal facilities in the promotion of halal tourism.

Thus, the perspective of industry practitioners shows that the visual element and halal information are not seen as two separate components. The two are designed to complement each other in building attention, identity, and trust for the promoted halal tourist destinations.

Reinterpreting ELM in Halal Tourism Promotion. The results show that the persuasion mechanism underlying the promotion of halal tourism on social media does not fully adhere to the strict separation between the central and peripheral routes as described in the initial formulation of ELM. Content analysis showed that halal tourism promotion combines peripheral and central indicators, although certain peripheral categories, such as destination visuals and religious symbols, appear more prominently than others. At the same time, the survey results show that audiences not only respond to these visual elements as

aesthetic attractions but also interpret them as representations of Islamic values and as indicators of a destination's halal status. The findings are in line with those of research by Abdul Razak (2019), Sugandi et al. (2024), and Hoque and Arif (2025), that Islamic symbols serve as identity markers, helping Muslim tourists assess a destination's suitability for their religious needs and values.

These findings suggest that in the context of halal tourism, some peripheral instructions have more complex functions than those described in the classic ELM. Religious symbols, visuals of worship activities, Muslim clothing, and representations of Islamic culture serve as visual elements that attract the audience's attention. But more than that, these elements also form the initial perception of a destination's halal identity. Audiences see the symbol as a visual cue to assess whether a destination fits their needs, values, and beliefs as Muslim travelers.

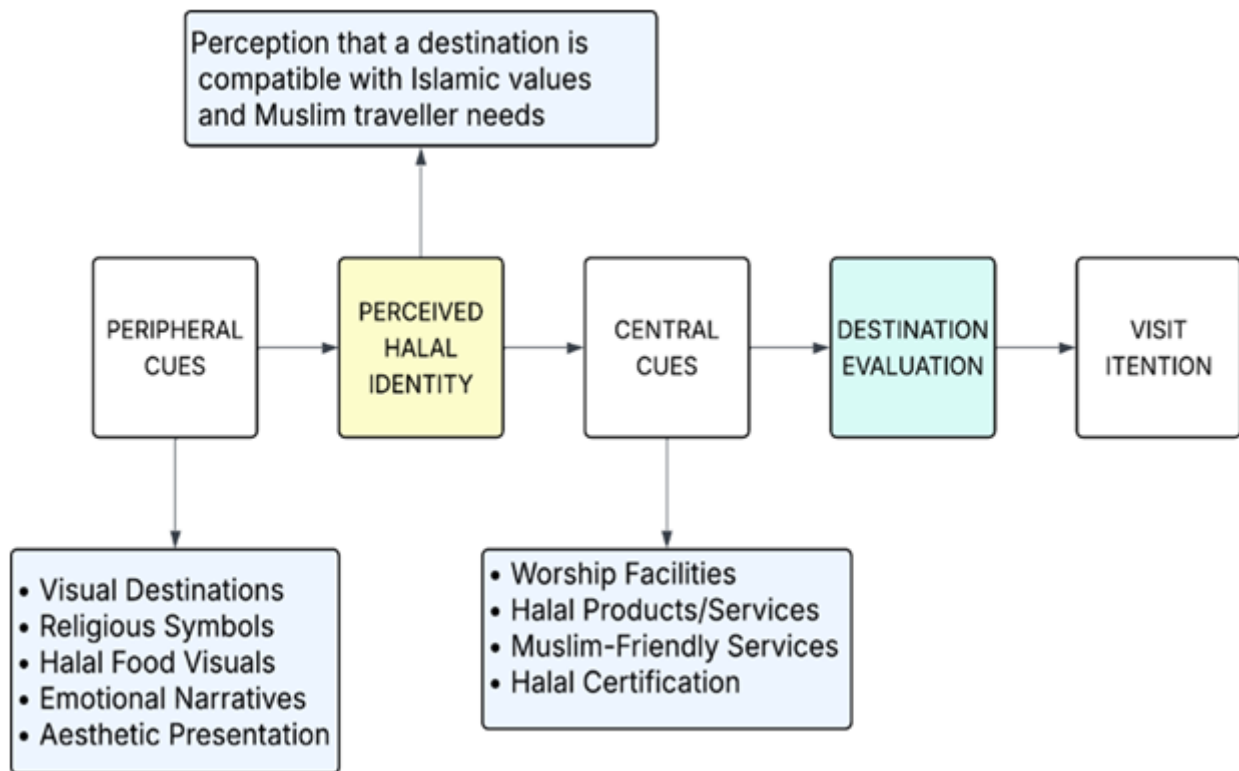
This interpretation is strengthened by the results of interviews with practitioners in the halal tourism industry. The resource person explained that the visual communication strategy aims to foster spiritual experiences and Islamic identity through mosque visuals, worship activities, religious atmospheres, and inspirational messages that resonate with Muslim life. For practitioners, these symbols are the most effective way to help the audience recognize a destination's halal status before they obtain more detailed information about the available services and facilities. These findings suggest that halal identities are first constructed

through visual representations before being reinforced by more substantive information about the destination's halal attributes.

Based on these findings, this study proposes the concept of Perceived Halal Identity as a mechanism that bridges the relationship between peripheral and central directions in halal tourism promotion on social media. Perceived Halal Identity refers to the audience's initial perception that a destination has characteristics that align with Islamic values and the needs of Muslim tourists. This perception is shaped by exposure to religious symbols, visually appealing destinations with Islamic nuances, halal culinary representations, and emotional narratives that highlight spiritual experiences.

Once the halal identity is formed, audiences tend to evaluate substantive information, such as worship facilities, Muslim-friendly services, halal products, and halal certification. At this stage, central leads could effectively strengthen the audience's trust and confidence in the destination. Thus, the persuasion process in halal tourism occurs through a complementary relationship among visual elements, the formation of halal identity, and rational evaluation of information.

These findings expand the application of ELM in halal tourism communication. If classical ELM treats central and peripheral leads as two distinct processing pathways, this study shows that, in promoting halal tourism, an identity-formation stage serves as a link between them. Therefore, the effectiveness of halal tourism communication is determined



Source: Data Analysis, 2025

**Figure 1 Proposed ELM Model for Halal Tourism Promotion on Social Media**

not only by the quality of the halal information conveyed and the visual appeal used but also by the content’s ability to build a Perceived Halal Identity relevant to Muslim audiences.

Figure 1 presents the ELM model of halal tourism communication developed in this study. It shows that the process of halal tourism promotion on social media occurs in three main stages. The first stage is the display of peripheral clues that capture the audience’s attention through destination visuals, religious symbols, and emotional narratives. The second stage is the formation of a halal identity, which is an initial perception of the destination’s suitability with Islamic values. The third stage is evaluation through central cues, including worship facilities, Muslim-friendly services,

halal products, and halal certification, which ultimately strengthen trust and interest in visiting the destination. Though central cues are available early on in promotional content, they tend to be evaluated after the audience has formed an initial perception of the destination’s halal identity. Thus, this study offers a conceptual development of ELM better suited to explaining the persuasion mechanism in halal tourism communication on social media.

## CONCLUSION

This study analyzes how visual communication in halal tourism promotion on social media functions as a persuasion mechanism through an ELM perspective. Based on content analysis of 58 halal tourism

promotional materials, a survey of social media users, and interviews with halal tourism industry practitioners, this study shows that halal tourism promotion on social media combines elements of central and peripheral guidance simultaneously. Destination visuals are the category that appears most often in promotional content, followed by information about halal products and services, influencers or traveler testimonials, and religious symbols. Meanwhile, formal information, such as halal certification, is displayed less frequently. Also, visual element does not function independently of substantive halal information. Various visual representations, such as destination landscapes, religious symbols, tourist activities, and tourist experiences, shape the initial perception of a destination's halal character. This perception becomes the basis for the audience to evaluate information about the facilities, services, and halal attributes offered. Also, the persuasion process in halal tourism promotion does not occur solely through central and peripheral channels as described in the initial formulation of ELM but also involves forming a halal identity that connects the two channels.

Based on the integration of content analysis findings, surveys, and interviews, this study proposes the concept of *Perceived Halal Identity* as a mechanism that bridges the relationship between *visual symbols in peripheral instructions* and *information in central instructions* in halal tourism promotion on social media. This concept explains that the audience first forms a perception of the

destination's suitability with Islamic values through various visual representations before conducting a rational evaluation of the available halal attributes. Thus, this study expands the application of ELM within halal tourism communication and visual-based digital communication.

In practice, an effective halal tourism promotion strategy cannot rely solely on visual attractions or halal information. Destination managers and tourism industry players need to integrate appealing destination visuals with credible information about halal services and facilities so that the destination's halal identity is clearly perceived by the audience. This approach could increase trust, strengthen the destination's image, and encourage Muslim tourists to visit.

This study has limitations in the amount of content analyzed, its focus on specific social media platforms, and its reliance on a single industry informant during the interview stage. In addition, the proposed *Perceived Halal Identity* model is conceptual and has not been tested as a causal model. Therefore, further research can examine the relationships among *Perceived Halal Identity*, trust in destinations, destination evaluation, and intention to visit using more complex quantitative approaches, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), in particular destinations and diverse groups of travelers.

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