

The Role of Islamic Work Ethics in Strengthening Halal Service Branding: A Study at Sharia Hotel X

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Abstract This study examines the determinants of behavioral intention toward halal tourism destinations by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Specifically, the research investigates the effects of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on tourists' behavioral intention in the context of halal tourism destinations in Lombok, Indonesia. A quantitative research design was employed, using a cross-sectional survey. Data were collected from Muslim and non-Muslim tourists who had visited or intended to visit halal tourism destinations and were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The measurement model assessment demonstrates satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity, as indicated by outer loading values exceeding the recommended threshold, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50, and strong internal consistency reflected by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values. The structural model results indicate that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control have positive, significant effects on behavioral intention. The R-square value indicates a substantial explanatory power of the model, while the f-square analysis confirms the varying effect sizes of each antecedent on behavioral intention. These findings highlight the importance of psychological and social factors in shaping tourists' intentions toward halal tourism destinations. Practically, the results provide insights for destination managers and policymakers to design effective marketing strategies by strengthening positive attitudes, leveraging social influence, and enhancing tourists' perceived control through accessible facilities and halal-friendly services. This study contributes to the growing body of halal tourism literature by empirically validating the TPB framework in a multi-group tourism context.

Keywords: Halal Tourism; Theory of Planned Behavior; Attitude; Subjective Norm; Perceived Behavioral Control; Behavioral Intention.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the global halal industry has significantly transformed the hospitality sector, particularly through the emergence of Sharia-compliant hotels. These hotels operate based on Islamic principles that govern not only physical facilities but also service processes, employee behavior, and organizational values. In operating their services, halal or Sharia hotels integrate Islamic teachings by promoting ethical behavior, trustworthiness, and compliance with established halal standards. As a result, halal service branding has become a critical strategic tool for differentiating Sharia hotels in an increasingly competitive tourism market (Wandari et al., 2025).

Halal service branding extends beyond the use of Islamic symbols or halal certification; it represents a holistic brand identity that reflects Islamic values in every aspect of service delivery. According to Nur Isnaini (2022), Islamic branding emphasizes values such as

honesty, transparency, and moral responsibility, which are essential in building customer trust and long-term brand credibility. In the hospitality industry, where service encounters are highly interactive, brand promises are largely communicated through employee behavior rather than marketing messages alone. Therefore, internal organizational practices play a vital role in shaping external brand perceptions.

One internal factor that is highly relevant to halal service branding is Islamic Work Ethics (IWE). Islamic work ethics refer to a set of moral principles derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah that guide individuals' attitudes and behavior in the workplace. Ali and Al-Owaihnan (2008) define Islamic work ethics as a value system that emphasizes diligence, honesty, accountability, and social responsibility as forms of worship. Employees who adhere to these ethical principles tend to view work as a moral obligation, which encourages ethical

service behavior and commitment to organizational goals.

In the context of Sharia hotels, Islamic work ethics are particularly important, as employees are expected to embody Islamic values while providing services to guests. Service employees act as representatives of the halal brand, and their ethical conduct directly influences customers' perceptions of brand authenticity. Previous studies suggest that when employees internalize Islamic ethical values, they demonstrate higher levels of service quality, responsibility, and consistency, which strengthens the credibility of halal service branding (Muhajir et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature on Islamic branding and halal tourism, most existing studies focus on customer perceptions, halal certification, or marketing communication strategies. Limited attention has been given to the role of internal ethical values, particularly Islamic work ethics, in shaping halal service branding from an organizational perspective. This gap highlights the need for empirical research examining how Islamic work ethics among employees strengthen halal service branding in Sharia hotels. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of Islamic work ethics in strengthening halal service branding at Sharia Hotel X..

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Islamic Work Ethics

Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) originate from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, emphasizing that work is not merely an economic activity but also a moral and spiritual obligation. Ali and Al-Owaidan (2008) conceptualize Islamic work ethics as a comprehensive value system that promotes honesty, accountability, justice, cooperation, and excellence (ihsan) in the workplace. These values encourage employees to perform their duties responsibly while maintaining ethical conduct in interpersonal and organizational relationships.

Several empirical studies have confirmed the positive organizational outcomes associated with Islamic work ethics. Yousef (2001) found that Islamic work ethics significantly enhance organizational commitment and job satisfaction among employees in Islamic organizations. Similarly, Rokhman (2010) demonstrated that Islamic work ethics positively influence

employee performance and work motivation, indicating that ethical values derived from Islamic teachings can serve as intrinsic motivators for employees.

In service-oriented industries, ethical values play a particularly important role because service quality largely depends on employee attitudes and behaviors. According to Ahmad et al. (2020), employees who internalize Islamic ethical values tend to demonstrate higher levels of responsibility, sincerity, and customer-oriented behavior. This is especially relevant in hospitality services, where frequent interactions between employees and customers shape service perceptions and experiences.

Within the context of Sharia-compliant hotels, Islamic work ethics function as an internal control mechanism that ensures employee behavior aligns with Islamic principles. Employees guided by Islamic work ethics are more likely to deliver services with integrity, fairness, and empathy, thereby reinforcing the moral foundation of halal services. Empirical evidence from the halal food and hospitality sectors shows that Islamic work ethics positively affect organizational commitment and service performance, which are critical for maintaining consistent service standards (Muhajir et al., 2023; Zaman et al., 2022).

Halal Service Branding

Halal service branding is the process of building a brand identity that reflects Islamic values and complies with Sharia principles across all service elements. Wilson and Liu (2011) argue that halal branding extends beyond halal certification to include ethical practices, value-based communication, and consistent service delivery. In the hospitality sector, halal service branding is closely linked to trust, authenticity, and perceived service quality.

According to Battour and Ismail (2016), Muslim tourists place strong emphasis on the consistency between Islamic values and service delivery when choosing halal-friendly hotels. This suggests that halal service branding is effective only when the brand promise is supported by genuine ethical practices within the organization. Moreover, halal branding has

been found to significantly influence customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in Islamic hospitality contexts (Han et al., 2019).

Islamic branding literature highlights that halal brands must reflect Islamic moral values such as honesty, cleanliness, transparency, and social responsibility (Nur Isnaini, 2022). Inconsistency between branding claims and actual service behavior may weaken brand credibility and reduce customer trust. Therefore, halal service branding requires strong internal alignment between organizational values and employee conduct.

In the hotel industry, employees act as frontline brand representatives whose behavior communicates brand values directly to guests. King and Grace (2010) emphasize that internal branding practices are essential for ensuring that employees understand and deliver the brand promise consistently. In the context of halal hospitality, this internal branding process must be rooted in Islamic ethical values to maintain brand authenticity.

Islamic Work Ethics and Halal Service Branding

The relationship between Islamic work ethics and halal service branding can be explained through internal branding theory and service-dominant logic, which emphasize the role of employees in value co-creation. Vargo and Lusch (2008) argue that value in services is co-created through interactions between employees and customers. When employees embody Islamic ethical values, they contribute to service experiences that reflect the ethical promise of halal branding.

Previous studies suggest that ethical employee behavior positively influences brand credibility and customer trust. Burmann et al. (2009) assert that employees who internalize organizational values act as brand ambassadors, strengthening brand identity through consistent service behavior. In halal service contexts, Islamic work ethics serve as a foundational value system that shapes employee attitudes and reinforces halal brand positioning.

Empirical evidence supports this relationship. Research in halal restaurants and Islamic financial institutions shows that Islamic work ethics positively affect employee

performance, organizational commitment, and service quality (Rokhman, 2010; Zaman et al., 2022). These factors are essential for delivering reliable, authentic halal services, thereby strengthening halal service branding.

Furthermore, studies in Islamic hospitality indicate that customer trust and satisfaction are strongly influenced by ethical service behavior and perceived compliance with Islamic principles (Battour et al., 2018; Han et al., 2019). This suggests that Islamic work ethics indirectly contribute to halal service branding by ensuring consistency between ethical values and service delivery.

Based on the literature reviewed, Islamic work ethics can be considered a critical antecedent of halal service branding. When employees internalize Islamic ethical values, they enhance service authenticity, strengthen brand credibility, and reinforce customer trust in halal services.

Hypothesis Development

Drawing on Islamic work ethics theory, internal branding theory, and prior empirical findings, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Islamic Work Ethics has a positive and significant effect on Halal Service Branding at Sharia Hotel X.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the role of Islamic Work Ethics in strengthening Halal Service Branding at Sharia Hotel X. A quantitative approach is appropriate for this study because it enables the testing of hypothesized relationships among latent variables using statistical analysis and allows for objective measurement of perceptions and attitudes through structured questionnaires (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research focuses on explaining causal relationships between variables rather than exploring phenomena qualitatively. Therefore, hypothesis testing is conducted to determine the significance and magnitude of Islamic Work Ethics' influence on Halal Service Branding within the context of Sharia-compliant

hospitality services.

Population and Sample

The study population consists of employees of Sharia Hotel X who are directly involved in service delivery and operational activities. Employees are considered appropriate respondents because they act as frontline service providers and internal brand ambassadors who embody the hotel's halal service values. This study uses a purposive random sampling technique, selecting respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The sampling criteria include:

1. Employees who have worked at Sharia Hotel X for at least six months,
2. Employees involved in customer-facing or service-related roles, and
3. Employees who understand and implement Sharia-based service standards.

Purposive sampling is suitable for this study because it ensures that respondents possess adequate knowledge and experience related to Islamic work ethics and halal service implementation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The total sample size in this study is 85 respondents. This number meets the minimum sample size requirements for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which recommends a sample size of at least 10 times the maximum number of structural paths directed at any latent construct (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, a sample of 85 respondents is considered sufficient to produce reliable and valid results.

Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed directly to selected employees of Sharia Hotel X. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The Likert scale is widely used in behavioral and organizational research due to its effectiveness in capturing respondents' attitudes and perceptions (Hair et al., 2017).

Measurement of Variables

This study comprises two main latent variables: Islamic Work Ethics, the independent variable, and Halal Service Branding, the

dependent variable. Measurement items were adapted from prior studies to ensure content validity and reliability.

Table 1. Outer Loadings

Variable	Measurement Indicators	Source
Islamic Work Ethics	I perform my job honestly and sincerely as a form of worship	Ali & Al-Owaihnan (2008); Rokhman (2010)
	I am committed to fulfilling my work responsibilities ethically	Ali & Al-Owaihnan (2008)
	I treat colleagues and customers fairly and respectfully	Yousef (2001)
	I strive to achieve excellence (ihsan) in my work	Rokhman (2010)
	I avoid unethical behavior even when it benefits me personally	Ali & Al-Owaihnan (2008)
Halal Service Branding	The hotel's services consistently reflect Islamic values	Wilson & Liu (2011); Battour & Ismail (2016)
	Employees' behavior strengthens the hotel's halal image	King & Grace (2010)
	The hotel delivers halal services that are trustworthy and authentic	Han et al. (2019)
	The hotel's halal brand is credible and reliable	Burmann et al. (2009)
	The hotel's halal service branding distinguishes it from competitors	Wilson & Liu (2011)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Outer Loading

Indicator reliability was assessed using outer loading values. Indicators with outer loading values greater than 0.70 are considered reliable

(Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1. Outer Loadings

Construct		Indicator	Outer Loading
Islamic Work Ethics	Work	IWE1	0.821
		IWE2	0.843
		IWE3	0.798
		IWE4	0.867
		IWE5	0.784
Halal Service Branding	Service	HSB1	0.812
		HSB2	0.845
		HSB3	0.829
		HSB4	0.858
		HSB5	0.801

All indicators show outer loading values above the 0.70 threshold, indicating good indicator reliability.

Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR), while convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE)..

Table 2. Convergent Validity (Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, AVE)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Islamic Work Ethics	0.881	0.912	0.674
Halal Service Branding	0.889	0.919	0.693

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The coefficient of determination (R²) was used to assess the explanatory power of the model.

Table 3. R-Square

Endogenous Construct	R-square
Halal Service Branding	0.487

The R-square value of 0.487 indicates that Islamic Work Ethics explains 48.7% of the variance in Halal Service Branding, which can be categorized as moderate explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019).

Effect Size (F²)

The effect size (f²) was calculated to assess the impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Halal Service Branding. According to Cohen (1988), f² values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Therefore, the f² value of 0.949 indicates a large effect size, suggesting that Islamic Work Ethics plays a substantial role in strengthening Halal Service Branding.

Table 4. F-square Value

Relationship	Relationship
Islamic Work Ethics → Halal Service Branding	0.949

Hypothesis Testing (Path Coefficients)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples.

Table 4. Path Coefficient Results

Path	Coefficient (β)	p-value
IWE → HSB	0.698	0.000

The path coefficient result shows that Islamic Work Ethics has a positive and significant effect on Halal Service Branding (β = 0.698, t = 12.437, p < 0.001). Thus, H1 is supported.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the role of Islamic Work Ethics in strengthening Halal Service Branding at Sharia Hotel X. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis provide strong empirical support for the proposed hypothesis, indicating that Islamic Work Ethics has a positive and significant effect on Halal Service Branding. The path coefficient (β = 0.698, p < 0.001) indicates a substantial influence, and the large effect size (f² = 0.949) confirms that Islamic Work Ethics plays a critical role in shaping halal service branding.

From the measurement model evaluation, all indicators demonstrated satisfactory outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the constructs were well-measured. Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeded 0.70, and AVE values were above 0.50, confirming that the constructs of Islamic

Work Ethics and Halal Service Branding possess strong internal consistency and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). These findings indicate that employees' perceptions of ethical values and halal service branding were consistently and reliably captured.

The R-square value of 0.487 indicates that Islamic Work Ethics explains 48.7% of the variance in Halal Service Branding, which is considered a moderate level of explanatory power. This suggests that while Islamic Work Ethics is a major determinant of halal service branding, other organizational and marketing factors may also strengthen halal brand identity in Sharia hotels. Nevertheless, the relatively high R-square value reinforces the importance of internal ethical values as a foundational element in halal service branding strategies.

The significant relationship between Islamic Work Ethics and Halal Service Branding supports the theoretical argument that ethical employee behavior serves as a key mechanism for translating Islamic values into tangible service experiences. Islamic Work Ethics emphasize values such as honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), fairness (*adl*), and excellence (*ihsan*), which are essential for service-oriented industries like hospitality (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). When employees internalize these values, they are more likely to deliver services that align with the hotel's halal brand promise.

This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the role of Islamic Work Ethics in enhancing employee performance, organizational commitment, and service quality (Rokhman, 2010; Yousef, 2001; Zaman et al., 2022). In the context of Sharia hotels, service quality is inseparable from ethical conduct, as guests expect not only halal-certified facilities but also Islamic values to be reflected in employee behavior. Thus, Islamic Work Ethics function as an internal driver that reinforces the authenticity and credibility of halal service branding.

Moreover, this result aligns with internal branding theory, which emphasizes that employees act as brand ambassadors who communicate brand values through their behavior and interactions with customers (Burmam et al., 2009; King & Grace, 2010). In halal hospitality, employees who demonstrate Islamic ethical values effectively embody the hotel's halal identity, strengthening customer

perceptions of brand integrity and trustworthiness. This supports the notion that halal service branding cannot rely solely on external marketing communication but must be supported by consistent ethical practices within the organization.

This study contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, it extends Islamic Work Ethics theory by demonstrating its relevance not only to internal organizational outcomes such as performance and commitment but also to branding outcomes, particularly halal service branding. While prior studies have focused primarily on employee-related consequences of Islamic Work Ethics, this study empirically links ethical values to brand-related constructs in the hospitality sector.

Second, this research contributes to the literature on halal branding and Islamic marketing by highlighting the importance of internal ethical alignment in strengthening halal brand identity. Existing studies on halal branding often emphasize customer perceptions, halal certification, and marketing communication strategies (Wilson & Liu, 2011; Battour & Ismail, 2016). This study complements those perspectives by showing that halal service branding is strongly influenced by internal employee ethics, thereby supporting a more holistic view of halal branding.

Third, this study supports internal branding and service-dominant logic perspectives by confirming that value creation in services is co-created through employee–customer interactions (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). In Sharia hotels, Islamic Work Ethics serve as a key value framework that guides employee behavior and ensures consistency between brand promises and service delivery.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for managers and practitioners in Sharia-compliant hotels and the broader halal hospitality industry.

First, hotel management should recognize Islamic Work Ethics as a strategic resource rather than merely a moral or religious obligation. Integrating Islamic ethical values into human resource management practices such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and reward systems can help ensure

that employees consistently demonstrate behaviors that support halal service branding. For example, training programs can emphasize Islamic service values such as sincerity, responsibility, and excellence as core competencies for service employees.

Second, Sharia hotels should align their internal culture with their external halal branding strategies. The strong effect of Islamic Work Ethics on halal service branding indicates that branding efforts will be more credible and effective when employees internalize and practice Islamic values in their daily work. This alignment reduces the risk of inconsistency between marketing claims and actual service experiences, which could otherwise undermine customer trust.

Third, managers should position employees as key drivers of halal brand differentiation. Since halal service branding is largely experienced through service encounters, empowering employees to act as ethical brand ambassadors can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is particularly important in competitive halal tourism markets, where customers increasingly seek authentic and trustworthy halal experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the role of Islamic Work Ethics in strengthening Halal Service Branding within the context of Sharia Hotel X using a quantitative approach and PLS-SEM analysis. Based on data collected from 85 employees, the findings provide strong empirical evidence that Islamic Work Ethics has a positive and significant effect on Halal Service Branding.

The results demonstrate that employees' adherence to Islamic ethical values such as honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and excellence significantly contributes to the credibility and authenticity of halal service branding. The high path coefficient and large effect size indicate that Islamic Work Ethics is a key internal factor in translating Islamic values into consistent and meaningful service experiences. Furthermore, the moderate R-square value suggests that Islamic Work Ethics explains a substantial proportion of variance in Halal Service Branding, underscoring its strategic importance in Sharia-compliant hospitality.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the literature on Islamic Work Ethics by linking ethical values not only to internal organizational outcomes but also to branding outcomes in the halal hospitality sector. The findings also enrich halal branding and internal branding literature by emphasizing the critical role of employees as ethical brand ambassadors who embody and communicate the halal brand promise through their service behavior.

From a practical perspective, the study highlights the importance of integrating Islamic Work Ethics into human resource management and internal branding strategies. Sharia hotel managers are encouraged to strengthen ethical training, align organizational culture with Islamic values, and empower employees to consistently deliver halal services that reflect the hotel's brand identity. By doing so, hotels can enhance brand credibility, customer trust, and long-term competitiveness in the growing halal tourism market.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a single Sharia hotel and a single explanatory variable. Future research is recommended to involve multiple hotels, incorporate additional variables such as service quality or employee brand behavior, and adopt longitudinal designs to capture dynamic changes over time. Nevertheless, this study provides valuable insights into how Islamic Work Ethics can serve as a strategic foundation for strengthening Halal Service Branding in Sharia-compliant hospitality.

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