Strategic Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Halal Tourism Development in ASEAN: A SWOT–PESTEL Perspective

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Abstract

Halal tourism represents an expanding segment of the global tourism economy, presenting substantial development opportunities for ASEAN while requiring coordinated responses to diverse institutional, economic, technological, environmental, and regulatory conditions. This study examines the strategic factors influencing sustainable Halal tourism development in ASEAN and explores how empirical tourism performance evidence can inform a broader regional development perspective. A sequential analytical approach was employed. Tourism efficiency and productivity were initially assessed using Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) and the Malmquist Productivity Index (MPI), while Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) indicators represented Halal tourism competitiveness. The resulting empirical evidence was subsequently integrated into SWOT and PESTEL analyses to assess internal capabilities and external macro-environmental conditions shaping the ASEAN Halal tourism ecosystem. The strategic assessment identified strengths associated with ASEAN's substantial Muslim market, established tourism infrastructure, cultural diversity, geographic connectivity, and tourism accessibility, alongside challenges involving fragmented Halal certification, uneven regional policy coordination, technological disparities, and differences in tourism readiness. Opportunities emerged from expanding Muslim travel demand, regional integration, digital transformation, sustainable tourism development, and Islamic investment, while regulatory fragmentation, external tourism shocks, environmental vulnerability, and increasing destination competition remain significant concerns. The study concludes that sustainable Halal tourism development in ASEAN requires an integrated ecosystem approach combining regional governance, certification harmonisation, Muslim-friendly infrastructure, technological development, community participation, environmental sustainability, and coordinated regional positioning.

Keywords: Tourism and Hospitality Management; Sustainable Halal Tourism; SWOT–PESTEL Analysis; ASEAN