

Halal Food Tourism: Perceptions of Relevance and Viability for South African Destinations

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Abstract

The main aim of this study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders with regard to the viability of halal food tourism in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Other cities within South Africa and internationally have embraced this concept and have embarked on halal tourism initiatives. Through purposive sampling 25 in-depth interviews with restaurateurs and South African Muslim tourists were conducted. Findings reflect that stakeholders believe that Durban does have the capacity to incorporate halal food tourism into their existing tourism marketing strategies. In addition, this research presents additional findings on the concept of halal food tourism and discusses the contribution that this type of tourism can make to Durban Tourism. The study recommends a large scale quantitative study to understand the extent of the contribution halaal food tourism can make to the economy of the city's tourism sector.

Keywords: Halal food tourism, halal tourism, Muslims, food tourism, Durban

Introduction

Halal food tourism, its economic benefits, relevance to the varying hospitality sectors and its socio-cultural influences are continually being explored by relevant stakeholders (international and local hospitality sectors, tourism organisations) and scholars (Battour, Ismail & Battor, 2010; Davids, 2015; Gilette, 2019; Scot & Jafari, 2010; Sultan, Abed & AL Musawi, 2020). Scholarly literature documents the travel of Muslims and their needs as tourists in reference to halal food and travel patterns. Timothy & Iverson (2006) indicate that these tourists are a distinct group with different needs (Timothy & Iverson, 2006 cited in Scott & Jafari, 2010). Halal tourism can be a tourism type which is defined and guided by the provision of special products and services which are in accordance with Islamic principles and teachings most suited to welcome the Muslim tourist. Muslim tourists also engage in other types of tourist activities such as sightseeing, shopping, visiting religious shrines, business and other social activities, but central to halal tourism is the consumption of halal foods, having access to halal restaurants and appropriate places of prayer that are available to all Muslims. The need for an economic boom through multiple industries is a priority for South Africa's economy post the Covid 19 pandemic. The recent downgrade of South Africa being rated below investment value based on present weak fiscal growth and a continual deterioration over the last few years imposes greater pressure on all industries to become more attractive to international clientele (Winning, 2010). The worldwide implications of the Coronavirus pandemic has placed South Africa's tourism sector under greater duress, making this study more valuable to local tourism authorities in the wake of the post coronavirus pandemic when travel resumes.



In May 2013, Durban held the first ever Halal Tourism Conference in South Africa. The main aim of this conference was to address marketing strategies, stakeholder inputs and international market values so that South Africa can be marketed as a ‘halal friendly’ tourist destination (Davids, 2015). Cape Town Tourism began their halal tourism initiative in 2018 (Moodley, 2019), whilst other South African cities are lagging behind. Recently a halal focused travel agency located in Cape Town which services local and international clientele launched their online advertising initiative with a website titled Halal tourism South Africa. This company is engaged in marketing Cape Town and other international cities as halal tourism destinations. Similarly, Cape Town Tourism took the lead in South Africa by being the first region to engage in a number of culinary tourism initiatives both locally and internationally. More than a decade ago, scholars Timothy and Iverson (2006) recommended that countries that were keen to accommodate Muslim tourists have to include halal tourism in their tourism advertorials, with explicit details such as gender divided facilities for prayers and the availability of halal foods. According to the managing director of a South African tour company (Islamic Travel and Tours), the growth of halal tourism has been steady and Cape Town has hosted Muslim tourists from regions like The Middle East and South-East Asia. In addition, “we seeing a growth in young Muslim travellers from the US and the UK.” (Khalid Vawda, 2019 cited in Masihlelo, 2019). He further indicates that despite the Western Cape being an ideal location for halal tourism, provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal can offer this type of tourism because of the regions’ Muslim community and depending on their capacity to adapt their services to the prescriptions of Islamic lifeways (Masihlelo, 2019).

Durban has a number of mosques, and community spaces such as halls and designated open grounds available for Muslim communities to use. These mosques and community spaces emerged in response to the needs of various sub-cultural and linguistic groups in Durban’s Muslim community. Within the South African diaspora of Muslim communities, divisions exist between those of Indian and Pakistani origin and those that are from the Urdu, Memom, Kokney and Gujarati linguistic groups (Vahed, 1999). Central to understanding the needs of a Muslim tourist are the religious needs which can vary amongst these tourists. Their religious beliefs, the lifeway choices and their socioeconomic personal influences all influence the choices they make when they travel to another country (Sultan et al., 2020). To support this type of tourism, scholars (Davids, 2015; Hassan & Hall, 2003; Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2018) have identified the various needs of Muslim tourists. Their travel trends and habits have also been researched and documented by scholars and tourism organisations (Battour et al., 2010).

Understanding the concepts of Halal and halal tourism

Battour et al. (2010) attempt to explain the term halal tourism and discuss its relevance. The term “halal” is linked to Islamic faith and is relative to various types of products and services specifically for the Muslim population. It is also an indication of compliance of the Shariah law which is embedded in Islamic teachings. Dutiful Muslims have an assurance that they are consuming a product that has been approved by the Shariah law (Samori, Salleh & Khalid, 2016). The terms Islamic tourism and Halal tourism have been used interchangeably by scholars, and the tourism fraternity members around the globe. However, halal tourism found its origins in Islamic tourism, with the latter term initially making reference to tourism which is a pilgrimage and religious teachings related (Scott & Jafari, 2010).

Sultan et al. (2020) indicate that there are 5 main components to halal tourism and they are Halal accommodation and hotels (inclusive of food), halal transport, halal places, halal tour packages and halal finance. They explain that halal accommodation and hotels make reference to a facility to pray, the availability of the Qur’an (the Islamic holy text) with separate provisions for men and women and the availability of halal foods. These places should also be



free of gambling, alcoholic beverages, have gender divided recreational facilities and Islamic hygiene practices in place.

Halal transport makes reference to elements of varying modes of transport (aeroplanes, cars, buses and trains) that are in accordance with the principles of the Islamic practices such as cleanliness and the absence of alcoholic beverages. The majority of large, established international airline companies serve alcohol to their passengers in first class, business class and economy whilst on board with the exception of a few international carriers that are based in Muslim countries such as; Pakistan International Airlines, Air Saudia, and Air Arabia. Other airlines from predominantly Muslim countries such as Egypt Air, Jazeera Airlines, Turkish Airlines and Iraqi Airlines allow for the consumption of your own alcohol on board (Grant, 2018) with airlines such as Emirates serving alcohol on board, To sustain Islamic principles of halal transport can be difficult for many Muslims around the world considering the dominant global trend of alcohol consumption as a lifestyle. There has been a limited research focus on halal food tourism and developing marketing strategies specifically on halal food tourism.

An overview of relevant theoretical perspectives

Halal Tourism studies, its multiple core concepts, its definitions and its value in relation to economic and social growth has been supported by a number of appropriate and related theories. Theory is a description of a phenomenon and acts as a directive to understanding and supporting research methodologies, data collation and for scholars, it has the capacity to explain or create a representation of reality is seen as a theory. Jafari and Scott (2014) suggest that Islamic tourism or models alike are ‘new interpretations of pilgrimage that merge religious and leisure tourism’ (2014: 9). Theoretical perspectives assist in merging the principles of the Muslim world with tourism and all its facets. Theories can contribute effectively towards the ongoing semantic debate between religious tourism and Islamic tourism. A theory often applied is Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943). This theory holds relevance and value to Halal Tourism and it highlights the 5 needs (physiological needs, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualisation) whilst indicating 2 central variables such as personality and habits. This theory combined with the development of other theories still has value within an era of globalisation and in a post-Covid 19 pandemic period (Hassan, 2015).

Rokeache’s value scale (RVS) is commonly used by travel scholars to analyse travel behaviour patterns and some of the variables include personality traits (ambitious) and social attitudes (clean, loving and polite). Other theories that have been incorporated into broad tourism studies include theories of planned behaviour and congruent theory. The Theory of Leipers Tourism system affirms that the value halal compliance and certification can bring to destinations is vital to build continued support from Muslim tourists (Hassan, 2015). These theories have influenced numerous tourism studies and the conceptualisation of Halal tourism. Theories on the value of halal tourism postulate several factors which influence Muslim tourists in selecting their vocational destinations. These determinants include motivations, perceptions, learning and attitudes, factors which are influenced by personality, culture and society at large. Other scholars, use Islamic values as central determinants as to why Muslims globally want to travel, to understand their behaviour and motivations for travel. Battour et al. (2010) have indicated the importance of push and pull motivators in this regard. Motivating factors include life way structures and facilities in place which make destinations appropriate places to travel to for Muslim tourists. These structures include adherence to the Islamic dress code and the general rule of no public display of affection between sexes as well as overall Islamic morality at a destination. Destinations should have access to mosques, prayer facilities at tourism places of attraction and at hotels, the provision of a copy of the Koran and spaces where halal foods are easily available. These push and pull factors are then affirmed by Shafaei (2013) with the



emphasis being placed on tourists needs to be relaxed within an environment which is aligned to Islamic teachings. Battour et al. (2010) explain that access to facilities that are within the Islamic teachings and food ways are the core pull factors which serve as a primary attraction for destinations that wish to be marketed as halal friendly. The push and pull theory has highlighted the interdependency between traditions, cultures, relaxation, food ways and the tourist and touristic destinations.

Theoretical frameworks based on push and pull motivators and the brand equity theory have been identified as most suitable for this study (Shafaei, 2013; Battour et al., 2010 cited in Hassan, 2015). Durban as a halal holiday destination needs to be marketed and labelled as a place of relaxation which is halal compliant for Muslim tourists. There is easy access to a variety of halal cuisines in the city and surrounding areas. Long (2004: 1) explains that, “food is central to travelling” and that it serves as a doorway to many other cultures. Durban is home to people of multiple ethnicities, cultures and nationalities which has contributed towards the emergence of a variety of cuisines and local blended dishes (halal compliant) which can serve as a primary attraction for Muslim tourists.

Brand equity has been effective in analysing customer behaviour and their intentions in general tourism studies and for Halal tourism. The relevance of this theory to Halal tourism is its explanations of destination selection. The marketing approach of a selected halal tourism destination combined with tourist perception which encompasses value and quality assist in determining and creating tourist loyalty towards the particular destination. The above theories indicate that the foundation of halal tourism lies in religious tourism. Although definitions of religious tourism vary, they share a central theme of religious based values and principles which guide behaviour and travel patterns. Ozedemir and Met (2012) indicate that Islam is a religion which is related with all areas of life” (2012: 324). They further explain that Muslims should adhere to all Islamic guidelines as much as possible. In their research based on Turkish tourists, they found that Muslim Turkish people primarily care about their food being halal compliant. This affirms the significant role food plays in contributing towards creating a halal tourism destination. Putit, Muda, Mahmood, Taufek and Wahib (2016) also note that Muslim tourists are guided by Islamic teachings when making decisions about their travel and leisure plans.

Reflecting on halal tourism at present:

Today Muslim populations are the majority in the Middle East and North Africa. According to a 2009 study, Muslims comprised at that time a total of 23% of the global population, and according to Pew Research Centre (2017), the global Muslim population is expected to reach 2.2. Billion in 2030 which can result in this religious sect of people comprising almost 25% of the world’s population. Maris Gillette (2019) indicates that the world’s Muslim population will remain youthful in comparison to non-Muslims populations and she estimates that at least 9 countries are expected to have sustainable growth of their Muslim peoples in the near future. These statistics suggest that larger numbers of Muslims will travel in future. With such envisaged Muslim population growth and an increasing need to boost South Africa’s tourism sector, the possibility to adopt, develop and implement a halal food tourism marketing strategy can be important for Durban. This paper is timely as this is the first qualitative study that researches and proposes the initial phase of developing the city as a halal food tourist destination.

Numerous studies that focus on halal tourism, its viability, economic and sociocultural propositions have been located in other regions of the world. Samori et al. (2015) focus on halal tourism challenges and developments in Asian countries and Oktadiana et al. (2016) look at Muslim tourists’ needs in Malaysia. Mohsin et al. (2016) discuss potential halal tourism



destinations in Turkey, Thailand, The United States of America, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, India and Indonesia. In this study, Asia and the West has been included, with Africa being the only continent excluded by these scholars. Carboni et al. (2015) question the viability of Tunisia becoming an Islamic tourism destination. Despite North Africa being a region that comprises of a number of countries that have Muslim majority populations, scholarly work on halal tourism and or halal food tourism in this region and related concerns are scarce. There are two publications which focus on South Africa that have relevancy and contribute to the lacunae of literature that focus on halal tourism in South African spaces and cities. Davids (2015) discussed the viability of marketing South Africa as a halal tourist friendly destination. Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2018) focused on hotels in Cape Town and their capacity to host Muslim tourists appropriately within the realm of halal tourism requirements. Therefore, this study's contribution is unique to this subject area of research as it focusses specifically on restaurants that meet halal requirements in Durban, the availability of a variety of halal foods and the viability of the development of a marketing framework for Halal culinary and tourism promotion.

Understanding Halal food tourism:

As early as 1966, Mary Douglas also indicated the relationship between food and ritual. Bon and Hussain (2010) indicate that there are minimal studies that pay attention to the relationships and influences of religious beliefs and tourist food consumption patterns yet anthropologists have focussed on food studies, its social meanings and relevancy to society for decades. Debevec and Tivadar (2006) highlight that cuisines, food preferences and practices allow people to make connections and explore controversies that are not necessarily about food, but about religion, culture and a wide variety of social milieus and influences. Communities are influenced by religious socialisation in relation to food choices and consumption. People of different religions adhere to different consumption norms which are guided by regulations and principles that reinforce permissibility and prohibition. Some individuals are rigid in regard to their food choices and abide by their religious teachings whereas others tend to be more flexible.

People of Hindu faith within the South African Indian diaspora that are followers of the Hare Krishna sect follow strict vegetarian diets and avoid the consumption of garlic and onion. This diet is sometimes also maintained when these individuals travel (Kumar, 2013). The value of marketing halal foods appropriately and ardently is also noticeable in Mohsin and Mohammed (2011) study that stipulated that Omani students were attracted to a destination based on the availability of halal foods. Halal foods were rated as one of the “most attractive pull travel motivations’ for tourists (Mohsin & Mohammed, 2011 cited in Putit et al., 2016: 45). More than a decade ago, scholars have noted that in secular countries like New Zealand halal foods are not easily accessible to their Muslim tourists. Hassan and Hall (2003) affirmed that there was a growing need for halal foods in New Zealand.

The advent of halal food tourism has a close relationship with culinary or food tourism. Brotherton and Himmetoglu (1997) identified and categorised the culinary tourist as one of many specific tourist types in the world. This categorisation clarified misnomers and contributed towards academic debates that questioned the definition of a culinary tourist. Their definition of culinary tourist is a tourist who has a special interest in food. Defined by South African anthropologists, food is the primary interest which influences travel preferences in relation to the destinations selected to visit (Singh & Bhoola, 2018). According to Hall and Sharples (2003:10) “food is considered to be one of the significant aspects that influence visitors' satisfaction with a destination, as it allows for a more fulfilling sensory experience by utilizing all of a tourist's senses”. They further explain that local cuisines can become identity



markers of a destination and these food descriptions are widely marketable. In addition, local cuisine can provide tourists with an authentic cultural experience. Examples include the wide variety of ethnic cuisine restaurants that are established in the United Kingdom and other countries. In the contemporary era, we note global American founding franchises such as Kentucky Fried Chicken becoming Halal friendly in numerous international cities. Durban, in particular, is home to more than 70 branches of Kentucky Fried Chicken of which at least 70 branches are halal friendly according to The Halal Foundation South Africa which is responsible for the assessment and accreditation of halal certification. The certification of halal foods have been existent since the early 1950s in South Africa and initially, the certification was predominantly managed and facilitated by poultry, lamb and cattle abattoirs. Halal certification in the United States of America only began in the 1960s. Halal certifying companies typically charge a levy for their services which include an investigation of the product ingredients and an inspection of the production site and methods of production. If the commodity meets the approval of the organisation a halal trust mark or certificate is handed to the manufacturer (Gillette, 2016).

Today there are 5 dominant halal certifying bodies in South Africa viz. the Islamic Council of South Africa (ICSA), Muslim Judicial Council Halaal Trust, South African National Halaal Authority, National Independent Halaal Trust, and The Halaal Foundation South Africa. These organisations have certified more than 4000 establishments' nationwide as halal friendly. There are continual engagements and debates amongst all stakeholders about the varying measures in place to assess and allocate halal certification and trust marks. The above 5 halal certifying bodies in South Africa do not have standardised assessment measures that can serve to diminish uncertainties about the comprehension of the term halal and its criteria. In 2017, it was reported that some restaurants were not halal compliant in Durban, yet were endorsed with the halal certification. The media reported that a restaurant which was halal certified served pork and alcohol on its premises (Shaikh, 2018).

Halal cuisines and foods within the context of Durban:

Bon and Hussain (2010) indicate that Muslim tourists have stipulated that they have had difficulty in locating halal friendly restaurants and fast food franchises in non-Muslim countries. Years later, scholars analyse global trends in the availability or unavailability of halal foods. There are no scholarly studies that document, discuss and analyse the availability of halal foods in Durban although there are mass media publications that focus on the availability of halal foods. Islamic teachings are prescriptive in their stipulations within the context of food. "In Islam, eating is regarded as a matter of worship, like prayer and other religious activities" (Hassan & Hall, 2003: 85). There is a distinct categorization between foods that are haram (literally meaning non-permissible) and foods that are Halal (meaning permissible) food. Forbidden foods include pork, alcohol and meats that are not slaughtered according to Islamic prescriptive teachings. Pork has traditionally been associated with harm and disease and in Middle Eastern societies pigs are regarded as the carriers of swine diseases to humans. Alcohol consumed on its own or used in the preparation of food is perceived as an intoxicant and stimulant according to Islamic teachings and the Koran forbids alcohol and substances alike (Hassan & Hall, 2003: 86). Under the scope of Islamic teachings, the term halal also has spiritual connotations which encourage an Islamic way of life (Yousaf, 2016 cited in Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018). Halal meat is slaughtered in a very distinct manner in comparison to traditional ways of slaughtering. It is important that once foods are deemed as halal that they do not become contaminated with haram substances during the preparation, storage and preservation of these foods. The combination of halal foods and the utilization of universal emulsifiers, preservatives and or enzymes is seen as haram by some Muslims. Some halal



certification groups such as the Canadian Halal Food encourage Muslims to only consume food that comprises of fish gelatine or vegetable-based gelatines. Most standardised gelatines are often made from pork or other animals that many not necessarily slaughtered the halal way (Gillette, 2016).

According to Islamic law, seafood is exempt from the law of halal slaughtering and therefore its consumption is permitted. A recent online assessment which analysed the availability of seafood in Durban revealed that there are approximately 35 seafood restaurants listed across a few online dining guides in Durban (Bhoola & Singh, 2018). Seafood restaurants in Durban have become popular dining options for many Muslim Durban patrons and tourists. Websites such as tripadvisor.co.za list a few popular halal restaurants located in various suburbs of the city. The online Trip Advisor website makes mention of 22 restaurants that are halal compliant and indicates their cuisines and their localised specialities such as bunny chows and Durban curries. This site is also open to restaurant patrons to review the restaurants that are listed. For instance, an annual traveller to Durban indicated that a restaurant called Smokin Joes located in the Musgrave area has the best halal burger in Durban. This review was posted in the year 2017. Other websites such as hungryforhala.co.za, halaltrip.com and halaltravels.co.za also indicate some established halal friendly restaurants in Durban. All of the above mentioned sites indicate the locality of the restaurant, its operating hours and contact details (telephone number and email). There are more than 50 restaurants that are halal friendly within four main areas of Durban. These areas include Umhlanga and the surrounds, the Musgrave, Overport, Berea area, Westville, and North Beach. The types of cuisine on offer is inclusive of Durban Indian food, Continental foods, Steak houses, Italian, Portuguese amongst others. A number of restaurants located in hotels are not halal compliant which can be problematic for this strategy if these restaurants do not choose to become halal compliant.

The Halal Foundation website lists the national franchises and their branches in various localities that are halal certified. There is a minimum of 9 national food franchises that have branches dispersed in and around Durban that are certified by the Halal Foundation South Africa. They are namely, Hungry Lion; Kentucky Fried Chicken; Wimpy, Debonairs Pizzas, Africaz, Simply Asia, Fishaways, Jimmy Killer Prawns and Nandos. Other halal restaurants (independently owned and franchises) are located in a number of Durban suburbs.

Research methodology:

A qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate as this approach allows for the comprehension of actions in relation to the subject's beliefs, history and context (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 270). Due to religious sensitivities respondent's participation is based mainly on a trust relationship with the researcher something possible only with a limited number of in-depth interviews. It was therefore prudent to select a purposive, non-probability sample of a manageable number of 25 respondents. The purposive sampling plan allowed for the inclusion of restaurant owners who were Muslim and non-Muslim, South African citizens as well as restaurant owners who are foreign nationals and a gender balance.

The initial aimed sample size was a total of 50 respondents. Many possible study interviewees declined to be interviewed due to varied reasons; one of which was the onset of the Covid 19 precautionary lockdown measures that all South Africans were forced to adhere to. This affected the sample size. The 25 in-depth interviews conducted comprised of 8 interviews with halal friendly restauranters, and the remaining 17 interviews were with patrons from Durban, Gauteng and surrounding areas in KwaZulu- Natal. All the interviews took place at cafes, restaurants and other eateries in Durban. Face to face interviews with the restauranters took place during the first half of the day, whereas the interviews with Durban patrons and tourists took place during the afternoons and evenings. Face to face interviews



were informative, usually about 30 minutes long. The remaining 8 interviews (4 Durban patrons and 4 restaurateurs) were telephonic because these individuals voluntarily opted to practice social distancing prior to the official Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in South Africa. Nevertheless, these telephonic interviews were informative and contributed effectively to this study. All study participants were guaranteed anonymity and privacy prior to agreeing to partake in this study.

The interview questions that were included were in line with the objective of the study. The objective was to elicit the perceptions of hospitality employers and employees, tourists and Durban patron towards the development of Durban as a halal food destination. Interviewees were asked whether they thought halal food approach would be viable in attracting both local and international tourists to Durban.

Demographics of interviewees:

The demographics of the 25 study participants are tabulated below.

Table 1 Demographics of interviewees

Category	Nationality		Religion		Gender	
	South African	Other Nationality	Muslim	Non-Muslim	Male	Female
Restaurateurs or restaurant managers	4	4	7	1	7	1
Durban Patrons	5	5	2	8	4	6
Tourists	7	0	1	6	4	3
Totals	16	9	10	15	15	10
	25		25		25	

Of the 8 restaurateurs or restaurant managers that were interviewed, 5 were managers and 3 were the restaurateurs (owners and directors) of their restaurants. Of the 7 tourists interviewed, 3 were from Gauteng, 2 were from Pietermaritzburg and 1 was from Cape Town. Sixty-four percent of all interviewees (restaurateurs and Durban patrons) were South Africans and the remaining interviewees (36%) were from India, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Malawi. These 9 interviewees migrated to South Africa between the years of 2011 and 2017 with an intent to venture into business initiatives. All of these immigrants were male and I was informed that their families relocated to Durban after their initial immigration. In Durban, people of Indian origin and new immigrants have integrated themselves into the hospitality sector by purchasing franchise restaurants and becoming renowned for signature local restaurants in the suburbs of Durban.

Findings and discussion

The perceptions of tourists and patrons of the viability of marketing Durban as a halal tourist destination

More than half of the restaurateurs indicated that they would support the notion for Durban to become known as a halal food tourism destination. They explained that there is an increasing number of halal compliant restaurants in Durban, which can accommodate both international and local Muslim tourists, but were uncertain about the number of hotels that are halal compliant. Respondents made mention of other halal compliant facilities in Durban include the numerous mosques and the available prayer facilities in public spaces. Durban has also hosted a number of annual Muslim events which can attract Muslim tourists to the city. A Muslim tourist indicated that they enjoyed a wide variety of dining places that were halal friendly and



visiting a number of mosques whilst they were visiting Durban. He indicated that, “*it was a pleasure to have so many restaurants to choose from*” and reference was made to the wide variety of cuisine types and variations available. The city has become renowned in recent years for the Durban Indian cuisine along with a wide variety of cuisines and restaurants. Mass media publications such as The Mail and Guardian discerning traveller section and many online and newsprint publications have paid attention to the foods Durban has to offer (Singh & Bhoola, 2018). Interviewees also indicated that this marketing strategy can also encourage tourists other than Muslims to come to South Africa in lure of learning about South African Muslim culture and their food ways. Similarly, Hassan and Hall (2003) explain that halal compliant restaurants and other venues assist in promoting harmonious interaction between people of all ethnicities and religious groups. “Muslims and non-Muslims can share the same food and eat at the same table” Hassan and Hall (2003: 100).

Restaurateurs’ perceptions of the viability of marketing Durban as a halal tourist destination

Approximately one third of restaurateurs stipulated that this marketing approach has the potential to showcase Durban comprehensively so that the city can compete effectively with Cape Town for Muslim tourists. Approximately half of the restaurateurs were aware of the Halal tourism marketing campaign that Cape Town has already embarked on, and had no indication of whether Durban too will be engaging in a similar marketing approach. One interviewee indicated that Cape Town Tourism takes the lead in marketing their city effectively to attract a variety of tourists. Mass media publications confirmed this opinion and their online halal tourism initiatives have already been operational (Halal Travels, 2020).

Another third of respondents were despondent about Durban being marketed as a halal food destination. Their responses included the following perceptions; a halal tourism marketing approach could act as a deterrence for other international tourists because of pre-existing notions of ethnic biasness and prejudices that exist against Muslims both locally and nationally. Scholar, Kenneth, J. Long in his book published in 2017 titled, “Contemporary Anti-Muslim Politics, Aggressions and Exclusions” explicitly discusses in detail the attacks on Muslim by non-Muslims over the last decade and he explains the roles that various nation states have played in sustaining anti-Muslim sentiments around the world. He explains that these anti-Muslim sentiments come in many varieties, perspectives and degrees. (Long, 2017). A discussion with interviewees followed which focussed on the possibility that these perceptions are temporary and can be representative of a small percentage of people in the world. A positive interviewee indicated that these perceptions and “ideas of Muslims can be a thing of the past”. Despite Islamophobia perceptions being rife globally, these respondents were optimistic in their responses. Long (2017) makes reference to Muslims peoples and the Islamophobia perceptions which are evident in the behaviour of non-Muslim people towards Muslim people. The majority of interviewees believed that the halal food tourism marketing approach could deem lucrative for the city’s hospitality sector and boost the overall number of tourists that visit Durban all year through. In addition, restaurateurs also indicated that if the city does become a halal food tourism destination, other retail sectors within Durban can be positively impacted.

Are all Durban restaurants really halal compliant?

The Muslim restaurateurs informed me of the fact that some restaurants are “not really halal” and that the discerning Muslim would opt not to eat at these places. These type of restaurants serve pork and alcohol alongside halal foods in the same dining area and these interviewees were uncertain as to whether these places had separate kitchen areas for the preparation of halal meals. There was a concern in relation to the use of alcohol as an ingredient for dishes such as



pastas, steaks and seafood. Durban patrons in their interviews indicated that at some restaurants the waitrons are not aware of the dish ingredients and will affirm that the meal is halal compliant despite their uncertainties. There are disputes around franchises such as Kentucky Fried Chicken and Nandos that are certified as halal compliant based on the fact that the raw chicken supply is from a halal compliant abattoir and that there is no alcohol sold on the premises. The fact that these fast-food franchises may use preservatives that use ingredients like pork based gelatines and other animal fats that have not being slaughtered according to Islamic teachings is ignored. It was established that each halal certifying organisation has its own assessment criteria and mechanism in South Africa which causes much disturbance and discernment when Muslims go out to eat. Seafood franchises such as Ocean Basket and restaurants alike serve alcoholic beverages in their restaurants but no alcohol is used as an ingredient in their preparation of their dishes. According to an interviewee, Durban Muslim citizens comprise approximately 4% of his total patronage. In the peak seasons, this percentage doubles and he accommodates full Muslim families and tourists which contributes towards the varied complexities of what is permissible and forbidden by Islamic teachings.

Muslim Durban patrons indicated that one's choice of restaurant and consumption patterns has become dependent on an individual's perception and understanding of the 5 dominant halal certification organisations mentioned earlier. She explains, "Muslim people today have their own preference as to which halal certification board to trust and not to trust as each one has their own set of rules that they follow". I was also informed that within Muslim communities telephonic messages are shared which indicate which eating houses are halal compliant (according to the belief system of a community) and which are not. In addition, the websites of these certification organisations are continually upgraded with restaurants that lose their halal certification after the annual assessments and those that retain their halal hallmark approval.

Restaurants or franchisee businesses that are resold to Muslim restaurateurs have become halal compliant if they were not before the change of ownership. Interviewees indicated that a number of small takeaway places and eateries especially within the Overport area of Durban are renowned for their Indian and Pakistani blended dishes and flavours. The majority of these places have been halal certified by one of the above mentioned 5 organisations, but 5% of Durban Muslim patrons question their standards of hygiene and the use of food colorants of which some brands comprise meat or pork enzymes. Perceptions and comprehensions of the term halal has become a personal preference for many Muslim people. Some perceive halal to be foods completely void of prohibited preservatives and enzymes, whereas other Muslims perceive halal in reference to good hygiene and the slaughtering of meat according to Islamic teachings. Many restaurants located in hotels are not halal compliant and currently there is no indication of their intention to adhere to halal food tourism practices so as to become halal compliant. This is possibly because the majority of tourists that visit Durban do not require halal compliance.

Conclusion

The concept of marketing Durban as a halal food tourism destination is based on notions of Durban being marketed as a culinary tourism destination presented in scholarly work (Bhoola & Singh, 2018; Singh & Bhoola, 2016; Singh & Bhoola, 2018) and the wide variety of cuisine and restaurants (halal friendly) that Durban is home to. Respondents that expressed support for this initiative based their perceptions on existing facilities presently available for Muslim tourists, such as the many mosques and accessibility to a wide variety of halal foods. Durban's capacity to be halal food compliant was affirmed by being selected to be a host city for the World Halal Day 2020, which has been postponed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This



conference has been postponed due to the Covid19 pandemic. The event aimed to increase the awareness of halal tourism in Durban and provide a springboard for local businesses and entrepreneurs to realise and identify their potential within the Halal industry internationally. (World Halal Day, 2020).

The availability of Durban's cuisines and other favourable tourist attractions have been marketed widely to attract both international and local tourists. However, at present, their initiatives do not entice the niche market of Muslim tourists which the city can host successfully. Durban's locally infused dishes such as the Durban curries (a variation of authentic Indian cuisine) and the Bunny chow that are prepared according to Islamic prescriptions are unique to KwaZulu-Natal and if marketed appropriately can lure local and international Muslim tourists. Some restaurants that specialise in local cuisines in Durban have been endorsed as halal friendly for many years and are frequented by local Muslim patrons living in Durban, but its halal endorsement remains unknown to Muslim tourists because of poor marketing initiatives. Durban Tourism and provincial tourism associations can focus on strategizing to attract the emerging Muslim international travel market. These strategies can include the identification of a designated number of restaurants within hotels that could become halal endorsed as Putit et al (2016) affirm in their research that the availability of halal food is a crucial factor when Muslim tourists select their accommodation spaces whilst travelling. The variety of halal compliant restaurants that Durban has to offer needs to be marketed appropriately along with tourist attractions and Islamic prayer and other facilities.

Studies have alerted us to soaring statistics (Pew Research Centre, 2017) of the growing Muslim community and servicing their estimated demands can be lucrative for the city of Durban. In addition, Muslim cultural food ways can be showcased internationally and in this way the relationships between food, ritual and religion can be understood and further researched. The fiscal contribution of halal compliant restaurants in Durban can be calculated and analysed and assist current marketing approaches. For the South African Muslim communities this research has highlighted the need for the standardisation of halal assessments of restaurants in South Africa if halal tourism is to be promoted.

The continuation of varying personal comprehensions and opinions of the applicability, value and belief in the endorsement of halal hallmarks allows for two types of Muslim tourists. The inflexible Muslim traveller and the flexible Muslim traveller i.e. one not as rigid in his or her food choices when away from home. One cannot ignore that fact that Muslims too constitute many Muslim diaspora's globally and that their outlook towards halal foods have been influenced by their dominant local food ways and life ways. Gillette (2016) indicates that even though Koranic guidelines appear simplistic, they are interpreted and followed differently by Muslims around the world, although there are dominant beliefs that prevail. The prohibition of eating pork for instance is widely seen as haram by most Muslims globally, whereas some Muslims do not make the attempt to avoid pork and or meat based preservatives and enzymes such as gelatines found in prepacked foods. For some the consumption of these items remains halal as long as the food item has been endorsed by a valid regulatory company. "Muslims around the world adapt, adopt, reinvigorate and reaffirm their eating practices in relation to products and trends originating from various commercial, cultural and religious sites. As an Iranian Muslim businessman I know put it, halal is a living tradition." (Gillette, 2016: 49). The presence of 5 valid halal endorsing companies, a totality of over a 70 halal compliant restaurants and approximately 30 mosques makes Durban a viable halal food tourism destination for many Muslim tourists irrespective of their place of birth, diaspora community and globalised cultures. The city can be attractive to many Muslims, and not necessarily only attract Muslim culinary tourists as Durban has a wide range of other tourism activities.



A present concern which warrants further investigation is the value of encouraging hotel based restaurants to become halal compliant if they are not, taking into consideration that these restaurants satisfy non-Muslim tourists. This can be seen as a hindrance as it will impact the city's capacity to accommodate a large number of Muslim tourists who adhere strictly to Islamic prescriptions. This excludes the Muslim who chooses to be nonchalant about their accommodation facilities not adhering to the 5 halal principles.

Limitations of the study include the fact that hotel based restaurants were excluded from this study as well as a limited sample size. Few respondents had the view that non-Muslim tourists can be deterred from visiting Durban and that the city will have an overall lasting impression that only prioritises Muslim clients. If the majority of establishments become halal compliant, will it become unattractive to people of all other faiths and if this is the case, then halal tourism can undermine Durban's tourism industry and not enhance it.

These perceptions need further clarity and a more defined approach to understand the possible impact such a scenario can have on the city's tourism sector if the halal food tourism strategy is implemented. An in-depth investigation which focuses on the monetary value which halal tourism can bring into the province should also be investigated in further studies. The marketing initiatives implemented need to be parallel and complementary to other marketing strategies to avoid perceptions that the city is solely geared for Muslim tourists and not suitable for other tourists.

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