

## DO CULTURE, LOCAL STORE IMAGE, PRICE AND HALAL CONCERNS STRENGTHEN TOURIST LOYALTY POST PANDEMIC (CASE STUDY IN INDONESIA)

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to investigate the experiences related to Indonesia's local so-called 'famous' culinary shops among domestic tourists visiting cities in Indonesia since the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, this study aims to further understanding of the effect of culture, the image of local stores, prices, and halal concerns in the context of loyalty towards popular local food stores, especially since the pandemic. Data from a total of 430 respondents were collected using questionnaires distributed to tourist shoppers who visited local stores while vacationing or visiting several areas in Java and Bali, and bought and consumed local snacks. Statistical analysis was done using SmartPLS. The findings indicate that culture, local store image, halal concerns, and price affect customer loyalty. The results of this study help to better understand the elements that influence domestic tourists' consumer loyalty. They also provide the Indonesian Government with important information about a crucial aspect of the Indonesian tourism industry.*

**Keywords:** Culture, local store image, price, halal concern, loyalty

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country characterised by diversity in various aspects, including ethnicity, race, language, culture, and religion. As the fourth most populous country in the world, Indonesia has a population of 240 million in 2022, of which around 86.9% or about 237.53 million are Muslim, as of December 31, 2021 (Kemendagri). So, with Indonesian Muslims being the majority, the halal food industry has great potential.

A survey conducted from November 2019 by Travel-app Pegipegi, in collaboration with the international survey agency YouGov, revealed that 8 out of 10 Indonesians intended to travel in 2020. The survey, involving 2,000 respondents spread across Indonesia, aimed to find out the travel preferences of Indonesians for 2020. The results show that three types of travel destination are of interest to Indonesian travelers: destinations with beautiful natural scenery, destinations within affordable budgets, and destinations with historical and cultural heritage attractions. When visiting interesting destinations, tourists can also find a variety of souvenirs, ranging from food, trinkets and handicrafts that are the hallmarks of the places. Indonesians have a tradition of bringing home souvenirs for family and friends. Upon their return, travellers are expected to bring with them purchases that are characteristic of the area they have visited. A popular souvenir is local snack food, of which Indonesia with its 34 provinces has a great variety. Domestic tourists will unconsciously associate the term 'gudeg' with Jogjakarta when hearing it, since it is the most popular dish in that city. They will associate spring rolls or *lumpia* with Semarang, the food having been brought there by Chinese immigrants over years. In addition, Bali is famous for its *ayam betutu*, Madura for its *sate* and Sumatra for its *rendang*; every locality is known for its unique cuisine.

This culinary wealth of traditional snacks and local products such as coffee or tea can provide economic benefits for vendors and contribute to the tourism economic sector. One of 16 subsectors of the Indonesian creative industry is the culinary industry, a subsector of which may be interpreted as the manufacture of regional culinary specialties. The Indonesian culinary industry is experiencing rapid development. The largest contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the creative economy is the food and beverage subsector, which contributed IDR 455.44 trillion or nearly 41% of the total GDP of IDR 1,134.9 trillion in 2020 (<https://traveltext.id/2021/>).

This research was motivated by the fact that Indonesian tourism experienced a marked slump due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the implementation of social distancing policies, both domestic and foreign tourists were not allowed to travel for vacations in an effort to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Entering 2022 with the incidence of COVID-19 infections decreasing and more under control, tourists have started to venture out to take a vacation or travel to locations they have visited in the past. Based on a survey in 2018 (<https://traveltext.id/2021/>), about 98 percent of Indonesians buy local culinary specialties while on vacation. By incorporating these factors that have been examined by Pandey and al. (2015), this study adds to existing research on local store loyalty and culture, as well as price. The rationale for including halal concerns and local store image as additional factors stems from research literature that suggests they are closely related to loyalty (Muhammed, et al., 2019; Naehyun et al., 2016).

Indonesia's well-known local specialty food shops that operate in popular tourist areas, sell a variety of traditional food, which is typical of each destination, and is very popular among Indonesians. In many cases, the culinary tours they are undertaking now typically include locations they had visited prior to the pandemic. The research question in this study is: Do cultural values, local store image, price and halal concerns influence Indonesian consumers' loyalty to local specialty food stores?

The reason for this research is to study the impact of culture, local store image, price, and halal concerns on travelers' loyalty to local shops, in particular local food shops as representative of the traditional meals of the area they visit. It contributes to the literature on how tourist behavior and experiences are associated with their responses to Indonesia's local specialty food shops.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory Reasoned Action (TRA) is the theoretical foundation of this study, and it assumes that individual intentions are formed by subjective attitudes and norms (Fishbein and, Azjen 1975). Subjective norms are influenced by beliefs in other people's opinions as well as their motivations to obey those beliefs and opinions. Attitude is one of the variables that influences behavior, as is past behavior. Simply put, people will act if existing experiences provide value to their actions and those actions are supported by their environment. In addition, this study implements TRA in the context of the traditional culinary industry to see how culture, local store image, price, and halal concerns can create a loyal attitude in tourists.

### Culture

Culture is defined as the "collective programming of the spirit that sets apart members of one group or one class of persons from another" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 5). Culture is a lifestyle. It is impossible to completely disassociate a person from their culture. Therefore, Kittler and Sucher (2008) state that culture is usually defined as "values, beliefs, attitudes and practices accepted by the group or community members". Souvenirs of traditional cuisine have social and symbolic meanings, and represent the cultural identity of the place that was visited. According to many academics (Leung et al., 2005; Nguyen et al., 2007), each culture has its own cultural traditions that are deeply established in its social norms and values, and that have a significant influence on its people's attitudes and behaviors. Given that service interactions are intrinsically social, the research of Malhotra et al. (2005) reveals that culture is crucial to investigating service.

### Local store image

According to Bigné et al. (2001), the tourism and hospitality industries are heavily reliant on the perceptions of the destination and the local businesses that ultimately produce the tourism product. The image of a local specialty food store is a view or perception and an expression of a shop's name or product. This can also be interpreted by effectively positioning the shop in terms of value, quality, price and past experience that an individual or group may have of a particular local store (Naehyun et al., 2016). Furthermore, image is influenced by diverse sources of information, which include company name, atmosphere and environment, the characteristics of the service or product, and the consumer's personal experience (Keller, 2003). In general, image can be considered to be a holistic assessment of the market of a company's key attributes (Bloemer et al., 1998). In the context of this study, a local specialty food store's image is a function of how people generally see it. The outlet might provide traditional food served on banana leaves, for example. At traditional Sundanese and Balinese restaurants customers use their hands to eat, with finger bowls of water with a slice of lemon to give a fresh scent being provided.

### Price

Price is an important factor which may influence consumers' decisions to buy or consume goods and services. There is a need to develop a clear explanation of the process via which image and fair prices effect product consumption to inspire loyalty, because the price is such a significant factor in the post-consumption evaluation of an experience (Martin-Consuegra et al., 2007). Braun and Soskin (2008) report that successful amusement parks go to great lengths to build visitor loyalty by setting admission prices at a suitable level for the services that are provided and, especially, prices that meet expectations of those services.

### Halal concerns

Concerns that Muslim consumers have about the issue of halal certification are addressed by the stages in the process that are made based on Islamic law, in this case the fulfillment of religious requirements when producing goods and providing services. For example, the Islamic standards for slaughtering an animal must be adhered to, with evidence in the form of a halal certificate. In addition to assuring Muslims that what they consume is in accordance with Islamic law, halal certification and halal trademarks on products inspire producers to adhere to the halal requirements (Ariff and Ahmad, 2011). The research findings of Briliana and Mursito (2017) reveal that the lack of knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the concept of halal, not only among Muslims but also the producers of halal food products, can result in the failure to appreciate and value halal. Othman et al. (2009) report that consumer confidence is enhanced by the halal logo on products, because of its broad acceptance among Muslim consumers.

### Loyalty to a local store

"The repeat buying behavior at a particular store for either the same products or any other products," (Muhamed, et al., 2019) is how store loyalty is described. Meyer and Dornach (1998) found that loyal customers are more likely to suggest the shop to other customers and make larger purchases during subsequent visits. Consumers who are considered loyal usually do more than just keep buying from a particular company; besides buying more, they will recommend the retailer to others (Kim et al., 2014).

### The effect of culture on loyalty to a local store

Consumer behaviour, action and perception are impacted by culture (Chow et al., 2000). It is widely recognized that culture has a huge influence on an individual's personality, thought processes and behaviour. Employing the Hofstede cultural framework, Straughan and Albers-Miller (2001) analysed the impact of culture on loyalty to domestic or local stores among consumers in the United States of America (USA), France, South Korea, and Australia. The results show that consumers in the USA and Australia were more responsive to foreign retailers, whereas South Korean and French consumers were more loyal to local stores. Consumer purchasing decisions may be influenced by local market conditions, the exchange or transaction system, and other cultural factors

(Yoo and Lin., 2011). Each group of people or company has a culture, and the way in which culture tends to influence purchasing behaviour can vary greatly from country to country (Seidenfuss et al., 2013). Cultural values influence consumer behaviour (Leung et al., 2005; Nguyen et al., 2007; Blodgett et al., 2008). The influence of diverse cultural values on domestic culture affects consumer lifestyle and values (Pandey et al., 2015).

**H1. The culture has a positive impact on loyalty to a local store.**

**The effect of local store image on the loyalty it attracts**

Consumers often associate certain stereotypical beliefs in product attributes with the product of a country. Crompton & Ankomah, (1993) argue that image has a relationship with satisfaction and destination choice. Thus, it is agreed that a favorable image results in a tourist being satisfied with a destination. Keller (2003) reveals that a company’s image can give a reliable prediction of a consumer’s intention to stay loyal to a brand. In various areas of hospitality, image has a positive association with consumer loyalty (Kandampully et al., 2015).

**H2. The image of a local store has a positive impact on the loyalty it attracts.**

**The effect of price on loyalty to a local store**

Customer loyalty ranks as one of the most valuable assets of a company (Shugan 2005), as it reduces price competition (Narasimhan 1988; Chatterjee, and Wernerfelt 1991). Be and Chiao (2001) argue that prices being perceived as fair can promote customer satisfaction and loyalty, and that the former is also a determinant of the latter. Yieh et al. (2007) found that both customer perceptions of price and their satisfaction are positively associated with customer retention. When they perceive prices as being fair, consumers are more likely to consider being associated with the company (Bolton et al., 2003). On the other hand, when consumers feel that prices are unfair, they are less likely to plan purchase intentions in the future (Grewal et al., 2004). Other studies have found that a key determinant of loyalty to a local store is price (Shivendra et al., 2015; De Vries, 2010; Clarke and Banga, 2010)

**H3. Price has a positive impact on loyalty to a local store.**

**The effect of halal concerns on loyalty to a local store**

Muhammed et al., (2019) found that religious values (halal concerns) have a significant influence in determining consumer behavior towards halal food products. When a company promises to supply halal goods, the consumers’ already favorable perceptions of the brand contribute to their increased trust in the product and eventual conversion to becoming loyal customers (Ali et al.,2020). For instance, if the halal brand image, in the concept of halal food branding constructions, is a node in the consumer memory, brand constructs like perceived brand quality, brand satisfaction, brand trust, and brand loyalty could be other significant nodes connected to the halal brand image (Ahmed, 2008). Lada et al. (2009) found that attitude and intention have a positive relationship with choosing halal products. In particular, attitude and intention have a positive relationship with choosing halal meat products (Bonne et al.,2007, 2008) and halal cosmetics (Briliana and Mursito, 2017).

**H4. Halal concerns have a positive impact on loyalty to a local food store.**

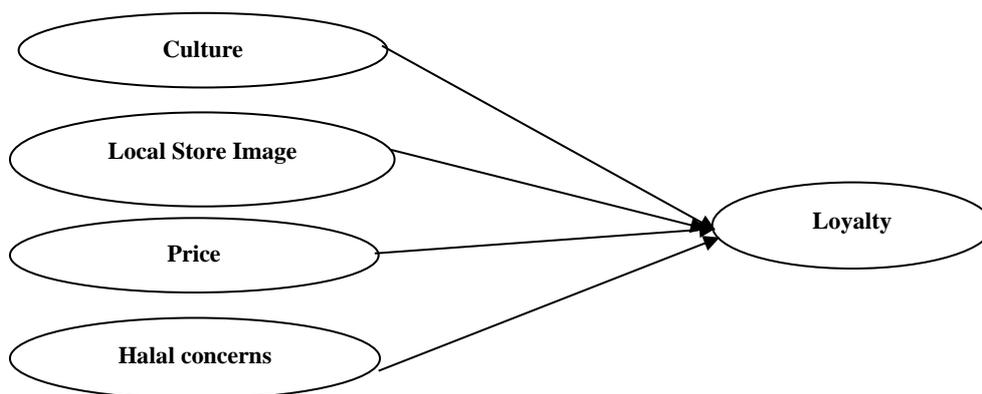


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To test structural relationships between the proposed constructs together, this study uses a statistical test adopting SmartPLS structural equation modeling (SEM). The demographic profiles of the 385 respondents collected for analysis were those who used the survey questionnaires distributed online to domestic tourists, with the criteria of their having visited tourist destinations in big cities such as Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang, Surabaya and Bali before the COVID-19 pandemic [i.e., before 2 March 2020, when President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) announced Indonesia’s first confirmed case of COVID-19]. The respondents must also have visited the place again after the pandemic and bought specialty souvenir food while there.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic characteristics of the respondents show that they range in age between 18 and 60 years old, with 61.8 percent of the respondents in the age range of 21 to 39 years old. Male respondents are almost 71.1 percent of the total sample. Almost 90 percent of the respondents are at an undergraduate or postgraduate education level. The majority of respondents are not married (58.4 percent). All respondents stated that they bought and consumed well-known local culinary delights in the tourist destinations they visited, and 98 percent bought culinary souvenirs to take home.

Validity testing was carried out using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test. The AVE value of each variable in this study meets the validity requirements because the resulting value is > 0.5. Furthermore, the reliability test based on Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability scores obtained > 0.7, so it can be said that the research instrument used met the reliability requirements.

**Table 1: Measurement items of the study**

		Factor Loading
<b>Culture (C) – adapted from Shivendra et al., (2015)</b>		
C1	It is important to honor traditions.	0.755
C2	The most important social values are cultural adaptability or culturally plural behaviour among individuals.	0.725
C3	People identify with their position in their own social networks.	0.732
C4	It’s normal to be willing to put others above yourself for a goal.	0.782
C5	Each person grows to care for him/herself and their immediate family only.	0.773
C6	Individuals are identified independently of who they are.	0.718
C7	Close family must protect extended family members out of loyalty.	0.787
C8	Uncertainty is a normal aspect of life, every day is taken as it comes.	0.779
C9	Social obligations have to be met regardless of the costs.	0.720
<b>Local store image (SI) - adapted from Naehyun et al., (2016)</b>		
SI1	Local food shops have diverse facilities.	0.890
SI2	Local food shops have good reputations.	0.803
SI3	Local food shops have unique features.	0.859
<b>Price (P) – adapted from Shivendra et al., (2015)</b>		
P1	I prefer local shops because they accommodate me at the price.	0.769
P2	I negotiate deals with local store.	0.724
P3	My local stores respond to my price requests.	0.814
P4	I usually try to work out how to negotiate the price.	0.824
<b>Halal Concerns (HC) – adapted from Ali et al., (2020)</b>		
HC1	I usually prefer buying local hawker products, because it helps increase the halal integrity of the product.	0.851
HC2	I avoid buying certain local snack products, because their halal status is still debatable.	0.837
HC3	I have read newsletters, blogs, magazines and social media, etc. to get information and discuss halal integrity issues.	0.828
<b>Loyalty (L) – adapted from Shivendra et al., (2015); Zhong and Moon (2020)</b>		
L1	I shall continue to visit this local snack food stand in the future.	0.889
L2	I would refer this local snack food stand to someone else.	0.781
L3	I shop at local outlets because it helps local people.	0.723
L4	I will tell others about my great experiences at this local snack food stand.	0.792
L5	In my opinion, this local snack is the best food choice in the area.	0.883

**Table 2. Reliability, convergence, discriminant validity and Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

	C	HC	SI	L	P	Cronbach’s alpha	CR	AVE	R Square	R Square adjusted
C	<b>0.762</b>					0.851	0.883	0.656	---	---
HC	0.510	<b>0.839</b>				0.789	0.877	0.703	---	---
SI	0.574	0.700	<b>0.756</b>			0.704	0.711	0.666	---	---
L	0.472	0.501	0.678	<b>0.816</b>		0.873	0.908	0.866	0.944	0.974
P	0.469	0.495	0.441	0.430	<b>0.768</b>	0.745	0.809	0.590	---	---

**Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Criterion Assessment**

	C	HC	SI	L	P
<b>Culture ( C )</b>					
<b>Halal Concern (HC)</b>	0.609				
<b>Local store image (SI)</b>	0.592	0.824			
<b>Loyalty (L)</b>	0.541	0.793	0.808		
<b>Price (P)</b>	0.537	0.694	0.770	0.577	

**Table 4. Hypotheses Testing Results**

Relationships	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Error	t-Statistics	p-values	Supported
C → L	0.253	0.257	0.046	5.505	0.000	Yes
HC → L	0.538	0.536	0.035	15.502	0.000	Yes
SI → L	0.342	0.340	0.051	6.748	0.000	Yes
P → L	0.194	0.095	0.029	3.280	0.001	Yes

This study aims to investigate how the determinants, i.e., culture, local store image, price and halal concerns, can affect tourist loyalty. The results of this study indicate that culture, local store image, price and halal concerns have a positive and significant effect on loyalty to local stores. This finding is consistent with research on loyalty to local stores by Pandey (2015); Muhamed, et al., (2019); Naehyun et al., (2016). Moreover, halal concerns were found to be the greatest predictor of tourist loyalty. Meanwhile, store image has more influence on loyalty than culture.

The degree to which initial expectations of the 'local specialty food stores' are met will be a measure of tourist satisfaction with the destination and the experience there. In addition, the satisfaction of travelers is also a factor affecting customer loyalty and motivating them to visit the destination again in the future. Traveling is not complete without bringing souvenirs home for relatives and family. Usually, souvenirs such as food or drinks are the favorite choice, because the prices are cheap and they come in large quantities. so that they can be shared with many people. Since Indonesian society is predominantly Muslim, halal concerns influence consumer spending behavior and, therefore, the practice of obtaining halal certification permits from influential authorities should be an important marketing strategy for most local cuisine souvenirs in Indonesia. In essence, regional food, especially souvenirs, cannot be separated from tourism activities. Vacationers will definitely ask about tourist attractions and what the souvenirs or the special foods are. The potential of the souvenir industry in every region of Indonesia is very high, so the tourism sector of the area will develop, and the contribution to the economy will be even greater. The improvement of the community's economy, on the other hand, will further encourage the ability of the community to travel and shop for souvenirs typical of the archipelago.

This is Indonesia, a country that is rich in natural resources so that it has great potential to become a developed country and compete with other countries in various parts of the world. In addition, the government must also continue to develop its potential and provide assistance in order to encourage and maintain small entrepreneurs who are creating and selling various kinds of typical Indonesian souvenirs.

Future research could explore some of the areas that this study suggests. The results show how crucial it is to incorporate halal concerns into the nation's service culture. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the study's limitations. Firstly, because data were gathered from a variety of locations within the Indonesian province of Java and Bali, there may be a difficulty with the generalizability of the results. In order to improve sample representativeness and research generalizability, future studies should aim to collect larger samples from a greater variety of tourism sites.

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