

Halal Tourism in Thailand: Unraveling Muslim Tourists Perspectives on Culinary Practices and Requirements

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ABSTRACT

Thailand experienced a remarkable surge in tourism, welcoming 19 million visitors in the first nine months of 2023—an impressive 271% increase from the previous year. Notably, 3.2 million of these tourists were Muslim, present an opportunity for Thailand to bolster its appeal by fostering a Muslim-friendly tourism environment, encompassing halal amenities. A key focus is on halal restaurants, as research indicates that Muslim tourists prioritize certified halal cuisines, playing a pivotal role in destination selection. This study diverges from culinary-centric approaches, employing the theory of social practices to explore the evolving awareness of dietary preferences among Muslim tourists in Thailand's major cities. By examining religious beliefs and lifestyle factors, the research seeks to document and analyze the perspectives of Muslim tourists on halal restaurants, shedding light on the interplay between food preferences, religious considerations, and tourism dynamics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Thailand revered as a captivating global tourist heaven, has successfully garnered heightened attention, with an impressive surge in visitor numbers. As per the meticulous records maintained by the Department of Tourism in Thailand, the period spanning January to September 2023 witnessed an influx of 19 million tourists, signifying a remarkable surge of 271% when juxtaposed against the preceding year's statistics. Noteworthy within this surge is the discernible presence of 3.2 million Muslim tourists.

Analyzing the 2023 data disseminated by the Department of Tourism (DoT) in Thailand, it emerges that the Muslim sojourners exhibit an average residency of 13 days, during which they conscientiously contribute to the local economy by expending an estimated 6,000 baht per diem. The tapestry of this distinctive tourism landscape is adorned predominantly by Malaysian travelers, constituting an impressive 70% of the Muslim tourist cohort. Following in succession are Indonesian visitors, comprising 21.4%, with Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Kazakhstan contributing 4.3%, 2.9%, and 1.4% respectively (Sriprasert, P., et al., 2014).

In light of this, Thailand has the opportunity to elevate its tourism appeal by cultivating an atmosphere conducive to Muslim travelers, thus embarking on the journey of Muslim-friendly tourism. As articulated by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2012, Muslim Friendly Tourism denotes activities underpinned by services and amenities provided by governmental bodies, entrepreneurs, and the local populace that align harmoniously with Sharia principles. This immersive tourism experience encompasses the provision of halal hotels, transportation adhering to Islamic principles, dining options embracing halal standards, thoughtfully curated halal tour packages, and financial services that adhere to halal practices (Zulkifli et al., 2011).

Consequently, Muslim travelers exhibit a proclivity for prioritizing the availability of halal restaurants in their gastronomic choices. They steadfastly adhere to the tenets of a halal diet, necessitating the preparation of food in accordance with Islamic principles. Consequently, Muslim tourists gravitate towards establishments that proffer certified halal cuisines, adhering to halal practices to ensure the permissibility of their meals, devoid of proscribed substances. The presence of halal restaurants assumes a pivotal role in attracting Muslim tourists to a destination (Mohsin & Ryan, 1997; Syed, 2001; Mohsin, 2005).

Most prior research in the field of tourism and hospitality concerning food revolves around the adept delivery and destination-related branding of distinctive dishes (Hall, 2019; Lee, Packer, & Scott, 2015). This study takes a novel approach to food presentation. The primary focus of this research lies in documenting religious beliefs and lifestyles that effectively constrain, rather than augment, the types of food tourists desire to consume. Furthermore, within the realms of tourism and hospitality, our attention is specifically directed towards providing information that addresses the escalating concerns regarding dietary needs.

In the realm of tourism and hospitality, previous studies predominantly delved into the proficient presentation and destination-linked branding of unique culinary offerings (Hall, 2019; Lee, Packer, & Scott, 2015). This research, however, charts a distinctive course in its exploration of the religious documentation and lifestyle factors that not only circumscribe but also redefine the culinary preferences of tourists. Moreover, within the purview of tourism and hospitality, our concentration is finely tuned to delivering information that aptly addresses the burgeoning concerns surrounding dietary requirements.

In the realm of scholarly inquiry, we posit a discernible empirical lacuna pertaining to our comprehension of the tourism sector's nuanced responses to this quandary. Particularly germane to matters of service culture and the collaborative genesis of experiential

phenomena, we discern unexplored vistas for a more incisive and customer-centric exploration.

In endeavoring to communicate this study in a manner both sophisticated and accessible, the authors adopt the micro-sociological theory of change, specifically immersing themselves in the theory of social practices articulated by Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012). The foundational tenets of this theory draw inspiration from the scholarly oeuvres of Bourdieu (1977, 1984) and Giddens (1984). Bourdieu's (1922, 1984) contention that societal behavioral patterns are inextricably linked to practices designed to signify power, prestige, and social capital intertwines seamlessly with Giddens' (1984) assertion that ingrained behavioral proclivities are shaped by social exigencies and the regulatory principles of conduct, meticulously negotiated at the level of practical engagement. This sociological vantage point significantly informs the theory of social practices, positing that individuals are intricately influenced by the contextual milieu, the nuanced meanings attributed to behavior by social cohorts, and their own levels of knowledge and proficiency.

The key components of the theory of social practices, an approach proven to be relevant to various emerging social changes within the context of tourism (James & Halkier, 2016; Jin, Moscardo & Murphy, 2019), assist in framing the topic of changing awareness regarding food. Concerns of the social practice theory—materiality, participant skills, engaging arrangements, and the meaning of activities—are employed in the design and subsequent presentation of the work. These elements of social practice contribute to shaping a comprehensive explanation of the transitioning social phenomenon. Altering attitudes toward food globally can be regarded as a subject where changes occur due to widespread interest in health, identity, and well-being (Alizadeh & Filep, 2019). However, not all food restrictions and diets undergo transformation (Casson, 2019). Religious-based food practices, for instance, are likely to endure amidst other changes concerning dietary needs.

The theory of social practices is particularly well-suited for the subject of dietary requirements due to its emphasis on the variability of arrangements. The components of this theory indicate that a close examination of the dispersed responses within the tourism sector to customer needs may be valuable and diverse. The primary objective of this study is to document and analyze the perspectives of Muslim tourists regarding halal restaurants in Thailand. The researchers concentrate on major tourist cities in Thailand.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Halal Tourism

The present global Muslim population constitutes approximately 30% of the total population (Kim, Im, & King, 2015). Projections suggest a substantial increase, surpassing the growth rates of other religious groups (Pew Research Center, 2017). The Global Muslim Travel Index 2018 indicates that the Muslim travel market is a rapidly growing segment in the global travel industry. In 2017, around 131 million international Muslim travelers were recorded, with an expected increase to 158 million by 2020. Expenditures on Muslim travel are anticipated to reach USD 300 billion by 2026. Furthermore, it is expected that Muslims will represent one in three individuals by 2050.

Halal tourism, as defined by scholars like (Boğan and Sarıışık 2018), is characterized by specific criteria serving as its foundational principles. To be considered halal tourism, activities must comply with a rigorous set of requirements. The primary criterion involves adherence to Islamic principles, necessitating meticulous alignment with Islamic rules and beliefs in

activities, products, and services. This includes compliance with behavioral norms, dress codes, conduct expectations, and dietary requisites, all intricately attuned to Islamic teachings. Building on these criteria, halal tourism, as explained by Battour and Ismail (2016), is a purposeful curation of tourism elements. This form of travel is defined by its steadfast adherence to the sanctioned (halal) standards stipulated in Islamic teachings, going beyond dietary preferences to include behavior, attire, and conduct. This holistic approach aims to harmonize the entire travel experience with Islamic principles, creating a sanctified space where Muslim tourists can manifest their faith authentically.

A critical aspect of halal tourism is the provision of halal food, ensuring consumables adhere to permissible guidelines outlined in the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadith. The terms "halal" and "haram" denote what is permissible or prohibited for consumption according to Islamic principles. The availability of halal food in restaurants and as souvenirs is indispensable for the appeal of halal tourism destinations (Addina., et al., 2020). The importance of halal food extends beyond sustenance, influencing destination selection, travel experience satisfaction, and the retention of Muslim travelers (Mannaa, 2020). Halal food plays a significant role in attracting Muslim tourists, addressing their distinct needs, and contributing to the success of the halal tourism sector (Sthapit., et al., 2023). The conceptualization of halal tourism emphasizes the necessity of satisfying both material and spiritual criteria, aligning with activities adhering to Shariah regulations (c). Thus, the provision of halal food is integral, ensuring the permissibility of food for Muslim tourists and contributing to the overall success of the halal tourism industry.

Halal tourism refers to Muslims traveling for pleasure or business to tourist sites in non-Islamic and Islamic nations, where their specific needs, such as halal food and prayer facilities, are catered to. This segment is the fastest-growing market in the travel and tourism industry, encompassing various sectors, including transportation, entertainment, restaurants, and lodging (Suban, S.A., Madhan, K. and Shagirbasha, S., 2023). Muslim travelers' demand for halal food is essential during their travels, and the availability and quality of halal food significantly influence their overall tourism experiences (Han, H., Lho, L. H., Raposo, A., Radic, A., & Ngah, A. H., 2021). Muslim travelers are concerned with finding halal food and performing daily prayers when visiting destinations, and they conduct extensive research on the destination prior to their visit (Said, M. F., Adham, K. A., Muhamad, N. S. A., & Sulaiman, S., 2022). Halal tourism includes various sectors such as halal hotels, halal transport, halal food restaurants, halal tour packages, and halal finance, all designed to cater to Muslim considerations and address their needs (Akyol and Kilinc., 2014).

The progression of halal tourism in nations with Muslim minorities poses a fundamental question regarding the capability of service providers to adhere to the stipulated requirements of Islamic teachings. Meeting these stringent requirements demands not only a comprehensive comprehension of the concept of halal tourism but also its adept application. Presently, the absence of standards in the provision of halal services, particularly within the realm of hoteliers, remains conspicuous (Bogan and Sarıışık, 2019). Given that the halal concept is deeply ingrained in the lifestyle of Muslims (Adham et al., 2020), service providers in nations with Muslim majorities may encounter fewer challenges in offering halal services. In contrast, Muslim-minority nations, unfamiliar with the intricacies of the halal concept within their societies, confront hurdles in implementing halal services. These challenges stem from a lack of knowledge about Islam, coupled with an unfamiliarity with Islamic culture and customs.

2.2. Social Practice Theory

Practice theory constitutes a branch of social theory within anthropology and sociology, offering an explanation for societal and cultural phenomena resulting from the interplay between structure and individual agency. Originating in the late 20th century, it was initially articulated by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a reaction to the Structuralist paradigm, which perceived human behavior and organizational systems as products of inherent universal structures. Core tenets of practice theory include conceptualizing practices as "open-ended spatial-temporal manifolds of actions" and scrutinizing how individuals engage with objective and normative structures in their surroundings (Spaargaren, G., Lamers, M., & Weenink, D., 2016).

According to this theoretical framework, social practices emerge from interdependencies among various elements, encompassing bodily and mental activities, material objects, background knowledge, emotional states, and motivational knowledge. Emphasizing the relationship between individual actions and the surrounding social world, social practice theory serves as a lens to understand the dynamics of social life (Frost, J., et al., 2020). In clinical settings, social practice theory provides a framework for guiding and analyzing the evaluation processes of complex interventions, shedding light on the dynamics of their implementation (Frost, J., et al., 2020).

Furthermore, this theory has recently been applied to tourism and hospitality research, offering a novel approach that shifts the focus from individual agents or social structures to social practices (Bargeman, B., & Richards, G., 2020). By concentrating on social practices, it provides insights into why individuals engage in specific tourism and hospitality activities through in-depth analyses of both the actor and context (James, L., Ren, C., & Halkier, H. Eds, 2018).

Alizadeh and Filep (2019) integrate social-psychological factors into a social practice theory framework to analyze routinized energy consumption. This theory's applicability extends to diverse fields, including learning and becoming across contexts and time, forecasting, implementation science, and creativity analysis (Città, G., Gentile, M., Augello, A., Ottaviano, S., Allegra, M., & Dignum, F., 2019).

Social practice theory offers a dynamic framework that focuses on the implementation of practice bundles or sets of interconnected elements, examining how practices are reproduced, maintained, stabilized, challenged, and surpassed (Frost, J., Wingham, J., Britten, N., Greaves, C., Abraham, C., Warren, F. C., & Taylor, R. S., 2020). Moreover, it provides insights into identity formation, agency, and the historical production of individuals.

In the context of tourism, social practice theory serves as a lens through which to study how tourism is performed and experienced. It highlights the role of competence, encompassing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of both tourists and tourism providers. Additionally, the theory considers the influence of materiality, such as the physical environment, infrastructure, and artifacts, on shaping tourist behaviors and experiences. Exploring the meanings attributed to tourism practices, it delves into the symbolic, cultural, and social significance of tourist activities and interactions (Lamers, M., Van der Duim, R., & Spaargaren, G., 2017). In conclusion, social practice theory, despite its categorization, proves to be a robust theoretical framework, particularly useful for interpretive purposes when understanding common or habitual practices influenced by dynamic social traditions. Its applications extend across various fields, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of social life, complex interventions, and the performance and experience of tourism practices.

3. METHOD

To comprehensively explore halal food handling issues in Thailand, researchers need a thorough understanding of the rationale behind the selection of specific locations and businesses among the diverse array of halal restaurants. Additionally, providing crucial details is essential to instill confidence in the research findings and facilitate replication of the work (Gomm, 2009).

In the face of the extensive distribution of restaurants, researchers employ systematic and multilevel case selection rationale (Flyvbjerg, 2006 and Yin, 2017). The planned steps involve (a) selecting specific areas in Thailand, (b) focusing on prominent tourist cities catering to Muslim visitors, (c) examining the restaurant menu types, (d) objectively assessing the popularity of restaurants, (e) considering company independence, (f) evaluating online menu availability, and (g) exploring various culinary offerings. An a priori planning hypothesis is formulated, suggesting that major tourist cities in Thailand may differ in their approach to and emphasis on food restrictions.

The initial step, the consideration of areas in Thailand (1), plays a pivotal role in selecting the research locations, given Thailand's status as one of the most visited countries globally over the past five years (gowithguide, 2022). Moving to the subsequent (2), the chosen tourism city centers are Bangkok and Phuket. These cities, recognized for their popularity among tourists, particularly those of the Muslim faith, are identified through The Global Muslim Travel Index, 2023. Importantly, the researcher possesses personal familiarity with each of these locations. This strategic case selection enables researchers to leverage their understanding of the chosen sample, with the awareness that the generalizability of findings may be constrained by sampling considerations (Gomm, 2009).

Proceeding to the subsequent (3) in the selection process entails determining the specific category of restaurants within the chosen locations. Aligning with the terminology employed on TripAdvisor, the selected restaurants encompass a mix of casual and everyday dining, alongside fine dining establishments. To provide more granularity, 10 restaurants were chosen from each of the two locations, resulting in a total of 18 casual and everyday dining venues, along with 2 fine dining establishments.

The preference for casual and everyday dining is due to the prevalence of halal restaurants catering to local residents in these categories. The consideration of restaurant popularity (4) then influences the actual restaurant selection. To identify suitable candidates, the top 10 list within the popularity section on TripAdvisor is consulted. Criteria for inclusion involve restaurants with more than 100 reviews and the highest ratings, ensuring a focus on establishments with a track record of operating for more than 5 years.

Table 1. Information Written On The Menus And Tripadvisor Regarding Halal Menu

RESTAURANT NAME	CITIES	RESTAURANT TYPE	CUSINES MENU	PRICE RANGE	RATE SCORE IN TRIPADVISOR
Nadimo's Lebanese Restaurant	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Middle Eastern cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.0
Al Saray	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Middle Eastern cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.5
Rang Mahal Restaurant	Bangkok	fine dining	indian Cusines	\$\$\$\$	4.5
Usman Thai Muslim Food	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Thai Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.5
Amritsr	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Indian & Thai Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	5.0
Yana Restaurant	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Thai Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.0
Maya Restaurant And Bar	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.5
Kebabs & Kurries	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	5.0
Masala Art Bangkok	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.5
Indian Essence Art Cuisine	Bangkok	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	5.0
Sultan's Grill Authentic Turkish & Indian Cuisine	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.5
Cappadocia Turkish Restaurant Patong	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Turkish Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	5.0
Istanbul Turkish Restaurant	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Turkish Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	5.0
Royal Kitchen Indian Restaurant	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	5.0
Siam Thai Restaurant	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Thai Cusines	\$	4.5
Tantra	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	4.5
Tandoori Flames	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Indian Cusines	\$	4.5
Laimai Courtyard Restaurant And Bar	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Thai Cusines	\$\$\$\$	4.5
Soha Cuisine Halal Restaurant	Phuket	fine dining	Thai Cusines	\$\$\$\$	4.0
Efe Old Town	Phuket	casual and everyday dining	Turkish Cusines	\$\$ - \$\$\$	5.0

Moving on to the next crucial criterion (5), the availability of restaurant menus online becomes a significant factor in the further selection process. This requirement ensures accessibility for researchers and potential patrons seeking information about the offered dishes.

Adding to the complexity of the selection process is the consideration of diverse culinary options (6). These variations emerge as a result of meticulous filtering based on other selection criteria. The encompassed culinary categories include Malay cuisine, Indian cuisine, Middle Eastern cuisine, and authentic Thai dishes.

Data collection spanned from January to December 2023. The researchers meticulously gathered information by scrutinizing the websites of each restaurant to thoroughly examine their menus. Additionally, they perused and documented any relevant details gleaned from TripAdvisor reports. In the selection process for casual and everyday dining establishments, the criteria included identifying restaurants with one to three dollar signs (\$-\$\$\$), while for fine dining establishments, a four-dollar sign (\$\$\$\$) benchmark was applied. The identification of halal restaurants was facilitated by TripAdvisor's dedicated category for such establishments.

All collected data were systematically recorded in Excel, followed by coding and manual analysis using thematic analysis techniques as outlined by Braune and Clark (2017). Ensuring the trustworthiness of the gathered data involved cross-referencing information obtained from both TripAdvisor and the individual restaurant websites.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information provided by restaurants regarding the potential food needs of tourists is presented in Table 1. The results are in Table 1 includes direct coding of information from menus and results from the TripAdvisor section which contains suggestions about the menu served. Table 1 serves as the repository for insights into how restaurants communicate information relevant to the dietary preferences of tourists. The data within this table comprises a direct encoding of menu details and insights culled from the TripAdvisor section, providing suggestions related to the featured menu.

Several noteworthy observations emerge from the tabulated data. Notably, this investigation reveals a prevalent trend in the menus of halal restaurants in Bangkok and Phuket, wherein a substantial number feature Indian or Middle Eastern cuisines, overshadowing the prevalence of authentic Thai or local dishes. Moreover, an overarching theme is evident, with the majority of these establishments targeting an international audience, thereby opting to offer international menus as opposed to local fare. The corroborative evidence from TripAdvisor not only substantiates these observations but also contributes additional nuances to the narrative.

An interesting revelation is the disparity between the information available on TripAdvisor and the explicit mention of halal options on the physical menus of restaurants. Some establishments indicate the presence of halal menu choices on the TripAdvisor platform without a corresponding inclusion on their printed menus.

Analysis of customer reviews on TripAdvisor reveals that some patrons acquire information about halal menu options through online reviews or recommendations from the Muslim community. This trend is particularly pronounced in restaurants specializing in Indian, Turkish, and Lebanese cuisines, where visitors commonly rely on recommendations from their respective cultural communities.

Remarkably, visitor reviews consistently lack any evident uncertainty regarding the halal or haram status of the restaurant's menu. This confidence is attributed to the perceived safety and familiarity with the restaurant's ambiance, often characterized by a homely atmosphere. In contrast, restaurants with a modern aesthetic, catering predominantly to non-Muslim communities, often feature halal certification prominently alongside contemporary decor, serving as a visual reassurance for patrons.

5. CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this research is to comprehensively document and analyze contemporary practices within the tourism sector pertaining to the fulfillment of food requirements in prominent restaurants frequented by tourists in a designated tourist city in Thailand. The findings presented in Table 1, coupled with relevant excerpts sourced from the restaurants' official websites, constitute integral components of the research documentation.

Within the sampled establishments, discernible variations were observed across cities in terms of the provision of menu-based information addressing the halal dietary needs of tourists. Notably, the literature on this subject suggests that the options categorized under "lifestyle" considerations are the most commonly addressed, whereas adherence to Islamic religious dietary restrictions tends to be more prevalent in restaurants, either directly or indirectly. The reliability of this data is bolstered by the uniformity of outcomes derived from the analysis of menus and materials obtained from TripAdvisor.

Examining and understanding these patterns is facilitated by applying social practice theory components, as outlined by (Shove., et al. 2012). The menus, which serve as tangible representations of restaurant policies and ideologies, are crucial elements in informing this study. These menus exhibit significant variability. The crafting of menus to align with social values and norms has a historical precedent. Initially, menus were extensive to showcase the restaurant's prestige, evolving later to become information-rich to cater to connoisseurs interested in the origins of food and wine.

Delving into the second tier of social practice theory allows for speculative insights into the origins of both inclusions and omissions within the culinary landscape. Central to this inquiry is the exploration of competencies, raising the crucial question of whether restaurants exhibit confidence in their ability and acumen to fulfill assertions of providing cuisine aligning with the diverse dietary restrictions delineated in the study.

One could ponder whether establishments are assured in their capacity to deliver meals purportedly free from haram material, adhering to specified religious practices in ingredient selection, and upholding the highlighted requirements of lifestyle-oriented foods. Considering the potential for customer dissatisfaction arising from such discrepancies, one might contemplate whether a more prudent approach involves refraining from outright claims regarding halal requirements on the menu.

In this strategic contemplation, there arises the possibility of transferring the responsibility to the guest to articulate their specific dietary needs for halal food. From a managerial perspective, such a maneuver could be perceived as a risk mitigation strategy, minimizing the potential for errors and alleviating the associated workload linked to the adherence of additional procedures. This nuanced perspective introduces a managerial dimension to the discourse, acknowledging the intricate balance between culinary assertions and the practicalities of execution in the realm of gastronomic hospitality.

The third tier of social practice theory delves into the inherent meanings embedded in social practices within the context of a dynamically evolving world. For independent restaurateurs, particularly those not affiliated with global or regional hotel and resort chains, a primary consideration revolves around the image and identity of their establishments. In this milieu, the significance of operations extends beyond the mere provision of food; it becomes intricately tied to the cultivation of a distinct identity.

The concept of conspicuous consumption has been lauded by social science researchers as a means to carve out a personally defined identity (Harris, 2005). However, the landscape of consumption is susceptible to imitation. Individuals seeking to construct identities through leisure experiences often turn to the development of distinct identities grounded in key values and specialized knowledge. In this realm, knowledge about food, adherence to healthy eating patterns, and voluntary consumption restrictions assume significance. Restaurants aligning with these values not only attract but also garner favorable ratings from customers.

Observing the seminal work of (Giddens 1984), it is evident that crucial interactions occur between actors and settings, shaping practices such as types of food consumption. Restaurants stand to gain substantially by strategically positioning and branding themselves to reflect prevalent trends and societal needs. Operators, in turn, derive benefits not only by satisfying patrons' physical needs but also by augmenting their personal capital.

It is essential to underscore that these observations are not intended as a disparagement of restaurant trends but rather aim to illustrate the diverse provision of information regarding dietary restrictions as an emergent response to society's evolving consciousness concerning personal and planetary well-being. The integration of the triad of materiality, competence, and meaning is elucidated in Figure 1.

The researchers aim to underscore the significance of the current findings, primarily centered around the diverse patterns in dietary information provision across selected tourist cities. While acknowledging the study's limitations, the detailed specification of sampling procedures is intended to facilitate potential replication of the research. However, caution is warranted, given that the modest set of cases, meeting specific criteria, may not fully encapsulate the broader diversity present in a larger and more varied pool of elements.

The exploration of dietary restrictions as a theme offers avenues for future study. Drawing inspiration from the work of (Marine-Roig, et al. 2019), where restaurant types are linked to destination image, represents one potential trajectory. Additionally, conducting interviews with both restaurateurs and customers could contribute to verifying the explanations grounded in social practice theory. Exploring food practices within host communities and assessing community acceptance of different food styles could provide a complementary context for this type of study.

A nuanced examination of the kinds of food served could offer an alternative criterion not explored in this study. Similarly, delving into the nationality and food preferences of tourists, while acknowledging the inherent diversity in global destinations, could be relevant for specific restaurant types. Furthermore, there is ample scope for investigating other cities and countries in subsequent research efforts.

The diffusion of practices and the sequential adoption of the idea of presenting detailed dietary information on menus across diverse countries and continents emerge as substantive themes. These could complement the study of tourist flows and the processes of internationalization. While the certainty lies in the significance of halal restrictions, there remains a rich landscape for exploration and expansion in the realms of culinary practices and globalized hospitality.

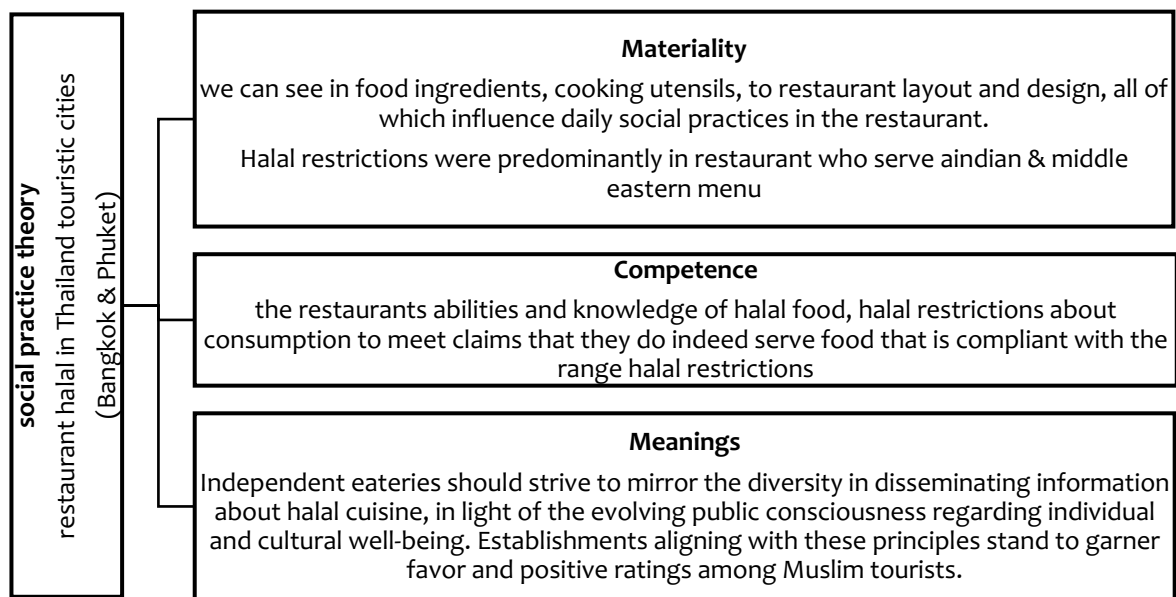


Figure 1 Social practice theory in the halal restaurant settings in Thailand (adapted from Shove et al., 2012)

The study's managerial contributions are twofold. Firstly, it offers valuable insights for restaurant management and operators to pay closer attention to the diverse needs of Muslim tourists looking for halal-friendly dining options. Secondly, the research encourages businesses to think about how they can improve the knowledge and skills of their staff in properly preparing, cooking, and serving food for Muslim tourists.

There are also two theoretical contributions. This study highlights the usefulness of applying social practice theory in addressing the changing dietary needs relevant to the choices of Muslim travelers. Additionally, the documentation and analysis of religious dietary requirements broaden the knowledge base for tourism and food research beyond just delivering local or distinctive cuisine and the associated branding of destinations.

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