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Building Partner Loyalty through Trust and Relational Commitment: Evidence from the Halal Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Business-to-business (B2B) relationships are fundamental to the success of the halal tourism industry, where long-term collaboration among tourism stakeholders is essential for delivering integrated services. Although commitment-trust theory has been widely applied to explain successful interorganizational relationships, empirical evidence in the context of halal tourism remains limited. This study examines the relationships among trust, commitment, and loyalty in B2B relationships within NTB halal tourism industry. A quantitative survey was conducted among 223 halal tourism businesses located in five leading halal tourism destinations in Indonesia. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, and the proposed model was analysed using covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM). The findings reveal that trust has a significant positive effect on relational commitment and partner loyalty. Relational commitment also positively influences partner loyalty, indicating that firms with stronger commitment are more likely to maintain long-term cooperative relationships. Furthermore, relational commitment partially mediates the relationship between trust and loyalty, confirming the central propositions of commitment-trust theory in the halal tourism context. These findings extend the application of commitment-trust theory to interorganizational relationships in halal tourism and

provide practical insights for tourism associations, destination managers, and business practitioners seeking to strengthen trust-based partnerships and sustainable collaboration among halal tourism stakeholders.

Abstrak

Hubungan business-to-business (B2B) merupakan faktor penting bagi keberhasilan industri pariwisata halal karena kolaborasi jangka panjang antarpelaku usaha diperlukan untuk menyediakan layanan yang terintegrasi. Meskipun commitment-trust theory telah banyak digunakan untuk menjelaskan keberhasilan hubungan antarorganisasi, bukti empiris dalam konteks pariwisata halal masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis hubungan antara kepercayaan (trust), komitmen relasional (relational commitment), dan loyalitas mitra (partner loyalty) dalam hubungan B2B pada industri pariwisata halal di Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan melibatkan 223 pelaku usaha pariwisata halal yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dianalisis menggunakan Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap komitmen relasional serta loyalitas mitra. Selain itu, komitmen relasional juga berpengaruh positif terhadap loyalitas mitra, yang mengindikasikan bahwa perusahaan dengan tingkat komitmen yang lebih tinggi cenderung mampu mempertahankan hubungan kerja sama jangka panjang. Lebih lanjut, komitmen relasional terbukti memediasi secara parsial hubungan antara kepercayaan dan loyalitas, sehingga mendukung proposisi utama commitment-trust theory dalam konteks pariwisata halal. Temuan ini memperluas penerapan commitment-trust theory pada hubungan antarorganisasi di industri pariwisata halal serta memberikan implikasi praktis bagi asosiasi pariwisata, pengelola destinasi, dan pelaku usaha dalam membangun kemitraan yang didasarkan pada kepercayaan dan kolaborasi yang berkelanjutan.

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Introduction

Indonesia is one of the world's leading countries in the Islamic economy and halal tourism. As

the country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia ranked third in the State of the Global Islamic Economy (SGIE) 2023 and has become one of the world's top halal tourism destinations (Bank Indonesia, 2023; Dinar Standard, 2023; GMTI, 2023). These achievements make Indonesia an appropriate setting for studying business relationships in the halal tourism industry.

The halal tourism industry depends on strong collaboration among businesses, including hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and other tourism providers. Therefore, business-to-business (B2B) relationship marketing plays an important role in building long-term cooperation. Previous studies have widely applied commitment-trust theory to explain successful B2B relationships (Casidy & Yan, 2022; Moliner-Velázquez et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). This issue is especially important in the halal tourism industry, where business activities are expected to reflect Islamic values as well as business objectives. Previous studies have shown that trust, commitment encourages stronger loyalty (Milliman et al., 2003; Rego & Cunha, 2008), but most have focused on employee–organization relationships. To address this gap, commitment-trust theory to examine B2B relationships in the halal tourism industry.

Literature Review

Trust and Commitment

Trust and commitment are key to the success of relational marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nadeem et al., 2020). Previous studies comprehensively investigated the relationship between trust and relational commitment. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies have comprehensively examined the relationship between commitment and trust in relationships B2B contexts within the halal tourism industry. Moliner-Velázquez et al. (2023) explore the relationship between trust and relational commitment in tourism businesses and their suppliers. Previous research has demonstrated that trust positively influences relational commitment across various sectors including Bapat and Khandelwal (2023), Soren and Chakraborty (2024), and Zhang and Liu (2022). Based on these prior studies, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The higher the trust among business actors, the higher is the commitment among business actors in the halal tourism industry.

Trust and Loyalty

The construct of trust is crucial for the relationship B2B (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Partner loyalty is a positive consequence of these relationships (C. B. Zhang & Li, 2019). Trust in a partner's abilities, virtues, and integrity can enhance relationship effectiveness (Saleh et al., 2013, 2014) and commitment. Specifically, the trust that a partner will demonstrate high competence in performing certain tasks can save time and effort during supervision and negotiation (Dowell et al., 2015). Research by Abid et al. (2023), Bapat and Khandelwal (2023), and Zhang et al. (2021) empirically indicates that trust is positively related to loyalty. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: The higher the trust among business actors, the higher is the loyalty among business actors in the halal tourism industry.

Commitment and Loyalty

Commitment is crucial for long-term B2B relationships, paralleling the role of trust (Abid et al., 2023). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of loyalty in business contexts, emphasizing the need for continued support and recommendations (Abid et al., 2023; Bapat & Khandelwal, 2023). Partner loyalty is integral to effective and efficient B2B strategies. Previous research, including studies by Abid et al. (2023) on commitment and loyalty in customer relationships, Bapat and Khandelwal (2023) on digital payment usage, Nadeem et al. (2020) on brand loyalty, and Čater and Čater (2010) on customer commitment in manufacturing, consistently show that commitment positively influences loyalty. This study empirically tests the relationship between commitment and loyalty in inter-business relationships within the halal tourism industry, leading to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H3: The higher the relational commitment, the higher is the loyalty among business actors in

the halal tourism industry.

Methodology

The constructs were measured using a Likert scale, as outlined by Cooper and Schindler (2014, p. 278), ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)." Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Uma Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) from five different provinces recognized as the best halal tourism destinations in Indonesia (GMTI, 2019; IMTI, 2023).

A total of 223 companies agreed to complete the questionnaire and data were collected from March to August 2022. The companies were located across various provinces including West Nusa Tenggara. To obtain respondents, the researcher contacted companies via phone and email (company offices) at each survey location to inquire about their availability to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, and the responses were returned to the researcher.

Results and Discussion

The analysis results show satisfactory factor loadings, as each indicator's value exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.60 (see Table 3). The CFA results indicated good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.539$, CFI = 0.925, TLI = 0.913, RMSEA = 0.069). Given that the scale items were adopted from previous studies, it was crucial to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. To ensure that the reliability and validity met the accepted standards, we conducted several tests on the data and the model.

The results of the discriminant validity test using HTMT, shown in Table 2, indicate that discriminant validity is below the recommended threshold of 0.85 Henseler et al. (2015), which suggests no issues with discriminant validity. Additionally, the threshold values recommended by Hair et al. (2021) for composite reliability (CR) >0.7 indicate adequate internal consistency, and average variance extracted (AVE) >0.5. All AVE values exceed 0.5, and CR values are above 0.7 (see Table 3). Therefore, both reliability and validity were acceptable.

Table 3. CFA and SEM and Reliability

Construct	Dimention	Code	LFCFA	LFSEM	R2	CR	AVE
Trust		Tr1	0,824	0,806	0,650	0,920	0,743
		Tr2	0,817	0,810	0,656		
		Tr3	0,871	0,847	0,717		
		Tr4	0,783	0,749	0,561		
Commitment		Cm1	0,819	0,821	0,675	0,918	0,694
		Cm2	0,771	0,775	0,601		
		Cm3	0,844	0,842	0,708		
		Cm4	0,671	0,665	0,442		
		Cm5	0,767	0,766	0,587		
Loyalty		Ly1	0,892	0,890	0,793	0,941	0,761
		Ly2	0,856	0,856	0,732		
		Ly3	0,807	0,809	0,654		
		Ly4	0,847	0,842	0,710		
		Ly5	0,748	0,744	0,554		

LFCFA: Loading factor confirmatory factor analysis; LFSEM: Loading factor structural equation model; CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted

Table 4. Structural Equation Model

Measurement Model	B	S.E.	T-Value	LL 95%	C.I 95%	UL 95%	C.I	P-Value	Decision
H5: TR-->CM	0,838	0,094	7,805	0,475	1,394		***		Supported

H6: TR-->LY	0,459	0,112	4,11	-0,11	3,18	***	Supported
H7: CM-->LY	0,333	0,126	3,03	-2,237	1,075	0,002	Supported

Discussion

Hypothesis H₁ posits that trust positively influences relational commitment. This finding validates previous research by Bapat and Khandelwal (2023), Soren and Chakraborty (2024), and Xing Zhang and Liu (2022), which highlights trust as a key antecedent affecting relational commitment. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), commitment is a crucial factor in ensuring successful relationships. These factors promote cooperation and enhance long-term partnerships, ultimately increasing organizational profitability. Hypothesis H₆ underscores that trust is positively correlated with business partnership loyalty, and the empirical results support this hypothesis. This indicates that strong partnership trust significantly boosts business-partner loyalty. This finding aligns with those of Abid et al. (2023), Bapat and Khandelwal (2023), and Zhang et al. (2021) in various fields.

Hypothesis H₂, which proposed that relational commitment is positively related to partnership loyalty, was confirmed. This positive relationship has been validated in the context of technology organizations (Abid et al., 2023) and manufacturing organizations (Čater & Čater, 2010). These results suggest that partnership loyalty is driven by trust and relational commitment, which ultimately enhance partnership loyalty in the halal tourism industry. Finally, Hypothesis H₃ confirms that relational commitment partially mediates the relationship between trust and partnership loyalty. This finding reinforces Morgan and Hunt's (1994) commitment-trust theory of RM, which posits that relational commitment is a crucial mediating variable in relational marketing. These results underscore the importance of relational commitment as a key factor for achieving partnership loyalty.

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